Exploring Language Learning Motivation among Primary EFL Learners

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Abstract—**The present study examined factors contributing to motivation of young EFL learners. Specifically, it explored learners' attitudes and purposes for studying English, and how their perceptions of social support (teacher, family, peers) and that of the formal learning environment (learning tasks and class activities) varied at different levels of motivation. In total, 23 grade six students who studied at a Macau primary school completed a 10-item open-ended questionnaire. Findings revealed that most of the participants were highly motivated and learned English for both instrumental (e.g., for work and travel) and integrative (e.g., wanting to integrate within the target language culture) reasons. Most respondents reported that they viewed their teachers positively, which may explain why most of them also had a positive view of studying English despite indicating that their family expected them to get high grades on exams, and that most of their classmates perceived studying English negatively. Unsurprisingly, participants also reported that games and songs were their favored activities because they increased their intrinsic motivation to learn. The results of this study suggest that young learner motivation may be largely influenced by the learning environment (as opposed to family or peer social relationships), notably the positive relationship with the teacher and the types of learning activities employed to achieve learning aims.**

Index Terms—**young learners, motivation, EFL, Asia, teaching**

I. INTRODUCTION

Motivation is a well-known factor that contributes greatly to success in how a foreign language is acquired (Gardner, 2010). For young learners in particular, motivation is important for long-term learning success. Students with more motivation are consistently found to be more engaged in the learning process, which ultimately leads to higher achievement (Nikolov, 1999). However, fostering motivation in foreign language contexts where English is a compulsory subject, like China, Japan, or Korea, can be quite challenging since learners are not given the choice of what language to study. Varied motivation levels about learning can pose a significant challenge to teachers, as some students have little to no interest in learning while sharing the same class as students who are highly-motivated. Much research has been devoted to examining the motivations of young adult and adult EFL learners (e.g., Tung & Chang, 2014), but less is known about motivation of young learners (Haifa Al-Nofaie, 2016). This research has suggested that motivation can be affected by both personal (e.g., attitude toward studying, reasons for study, desire and effort put in studying) and contextual (e.g., social influences of family, peers, and teacher and the learning context) factors (Williams & Burden, 1997). Gaining a better understanding of how younger learners at different motivation levels may be influenced by these factors can help language teachers identify ways to improve their motivation to learn.

The current study takes place in the Macau primary school context. The education system in Macau includes four main stages: Kindergarten, Primary, Junior Secondary, and Senior Secondary. As English is a compulsory subject in Macau, children begin to learn English at the age of three when they begin Kindergarten. For primary school learners, students have one to two English lessons (40-80 mins) every day, five days a week. A unique attribute of Macau is that schools are not required to implement curriculum, including use of materials or instructional methodology, from the government. Each school chooses its own materials, school curriculum, and approaches for English learning. As a result, there is great variation in proficiency levels throughout Macau.

A. Motivation in L2 Learning

According to Gardner (1985, 2010), motivation to learn consists of the desire to achieve a learning goal, the attitude maintained in pursuit of that goal, and the effort put forth in achieving it. Learners with high motivation typically demonstrate a strong desire and positive attitude to achieve their goals, while exerting much effort to accomplish them. In contrast, lowly motivated learners suffer from weak desire to learn, express negative attitudes toward the subject, and/or exert little effort in accomplishing their goals. Maintaining motivation requires of all of these elements (effort, desire, goal, attitude), and the absence of one would indicate a lack of motivation. For example, if a learner has a goal to be a proficient language user, but fails to make effort, then this goal will not be realized and the learner may be considered unmotivated. This has been illustrated in the Hungarian L2 context by Kormos and Czizer (2014), who

examined the relationship between motivation, self-regulation, and autonomous learning behavior. They reported that even though the learners had a strong goal to study and positive attitude in L2 learning, without making concerted effort to study, they were unable to obtain their learning goals.

These features of motivation may be influenced by the learners' approach to studying. Gardner distinguished between two general orientations towards language learning that may affect motivation levels: learning for instrumental purposes and learning for integrative purposes. When learners study for instrumental reasons, they do so because of the value they place on the language in helping them attain some extrinsic benefit. For the EFL learners, this value may include studying to gain access to higher education, a future job, or simply passing a test. On the other hand, studying for integrative purposes involves having a favorable view of the target culture and wanting to join it. Language learners studying for this purpose are willing to learn a language because they identify with the target culture and want to integrate within that community (Woodrow, 2015). Though often presented as mutually exclusive approaches, Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) note that students can approach learning both instrumentally and integratively. They can want to study because of the benefits that learning that language may bring, while also doing so for the desire to join that target language use community.

Language learning motives may also be classified according to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2002). According to this taxonomy, motivation to learn may be driven by extrinsic or intrinsic reasons. Learners who study for extrinsic purposes do so to earn rewards (e.g., scoring well on a test) or to avoid punishment (e.g., scoring poorly on a test). In contrast, intrinsically motivated learners are inspired to study by the satisfaction they receive from the act of learning. Learners with these motives appreciate the novelty and challenges involved in learning a language and seek opportunities to extend their linguistic competence with the aim of improving themselves as second language users (Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2017). Of the two, intrinsically motivated learners are more likely to persist with their language studies over time, even when encountering obstacles, because they enjoy the engagement in learning the language (Dailey, 2009). For EFL teachers, fostering intrinsic motivation in their learners may be more advantageous for longer term success in language acquisition. Kong (2009) explains that when excessive focus is placed on extrinsic motivators (e.g., achieving rewards), learning for intrinsic reasons may lessen because the sole aim for studying becomes achieving external goals. For young EFL learners like the participants of this study, if parents or teachers constantly stress the importance of getting good scores on assessments, then their intrinsic motivation to learn English may be lower, which ultimately may limit the degree to which they acquire it. This highlights the importance of understanding what may motivate younger learners, as doing so would provide teachers with vital information for how to approach their students' language learning needs.

B. Factors Influencing Motivation

Language learners' motivation can be influenced by factors that are both internal and external to the learner (Williams & Burden, 1997). Internal factors include interest in what is being learned, its perceived value, and attitude toward the subject. External factors influencing motivation are inclusive of social support for learning provided by teachers, parents, and peers, and perceptions of the formal learning context. Though often presented as independent constructs influencing motivation, internal characteristics are considered inseparable from the learner's individual learning context (Waninge, Dörnyei, & de Bot, 2014). Illustrating this, Nikolov (1999) reported that the most important motivating factors for children between 6 and 14 years of age in Hungarian context included positive attitudes toward the learning context, the teacher, and intrinsically motivating activities, tasks, and materials. In that study, children were motivated to learn an L2 if they found classroom activities, tasks, and materials interesting and the teacher supportive. This is unsurprising since being interested in what happens in the classroom would lead to higher motivation. In order to gain insight into learner motivation, it is also important to examine the support they receive outside of the immediate learning context, like from parents and peers. Of the factors influencing motivation, three are of primary importance for younger EFL learners: attitudes toward L2 learning, social support provided by parents, teachers, and peers, and perceptions of the learning context.

C. Attitude and Effort

It has been consistently reported that a positive view of language learning is associated with higher motivation (Conday Ditual, 2012). For example, Chalak and Kassaian (2010) reported that positive attitudes towards studying English was associated with higher motivation to learn for Iranian university learners. Not only does having a positive attitude increase motivation, but it has also been shown to result in higher educational achievement. However, Al-Hoorie (2016) noted that this attitude does not apply generally to L2 learning, but more specifically for attitudes toward L2 speakers. When learners express positive feelings toward the L2 course in particular, higher achievement was not always attained. This is in line with the integrative approach to learning, as language learners who identify with the target language culture may be more motivated to learn and ultimately be more successful as language learners than those who place instrumental value on learning outcomes.

Attitude toward L2 learning may also affect how much effort is given when studying the language. Ro and Chen (2014) reported that learners with positive attitudes towards L2 reading tended to read more than those with negative attitudes toward reading. Replicating an earlier study by Crawford Camiciottoli (2001), who reported that attitudes and effort made in reading were influenced by previous learning experiences and existing reading habits, Ro and Chen

found that effort made in reading was influenced by the attitude about reading and the amount of time available to read. This later finding provides additional support showing that having a positive attitude towards an aspect of L2 learning may result in higher motivation and greater efforts made to engage in activities that promote L2 learning, including finding time to do so.

D. Social Influences

Research has indicated that teacher, parent, and peer support for learning may influence student motivation (Bambirra, 2017, Wadho, 2016, Kiefer, Alley, & Ellerbrock, 2015). For example, Wadho (2016) reported that college students in Pakistan were heavily influenced by their parents and teachers to study English. The learning context placed a heavy emphasis on learning for extrinsic purposes, as parents reportedly offered rewards for positive learning outcomes and teachers focused on achieving strong test performance. The test-focused culture described in that study is similar to the learning context in which the current study was conducted, where performance on high-stakes standardized tests are given high priority by parents and teachers alike.

When learners are supported by their teachers and peers, they tend to be more motivated to learn, but what kind of support is helpful in this regard? Kiefer, Alley, and Ellerbrock (2015) reported that effective teacher and peer support can be academic and emotional in nature. Results from quantitative analysis showed that teacher involvement (β=.22, p<.01) in learners' academic and emotional development (e.g., teacher showing she cares) was the strongest predictor of motivation. Fostering autonomy by demonstrating the relevance of the learning material to student lives outside of the classroom (β=.15, p<.05) was also a predictor, as was the perception of academic (want peer to perform well) and emotional (I like my peer) peer support (β=.18, p<.05). These findings were corroborated by qualitative interviews showing that learners felt more motivated when they perceived teachers as being approachable and caring about their well-being and academic progress. Similarly, when they viewed their peers as supporting their academic goals and emotional well-being, they were more motivated. Altogether, these studies show that when learners perceive their parents, teachers, and peers to be supportive of their learning, they feel motivated to learn.

E. Formal Learning Context

Within the formal learning context, the teaching activities and learning tasks are essential for student motivation because if they find them interesting, then they will be more inspired to study (Aguierre, Bustinza, & Garvich, 2016; Liu & Chu, 2010; Nikolov, 1999, Yilmaz, 2018). Several studies have examined this issue by investigating how perspectives of teaching activities may affect motivation. For example, Aguierre, Bustinza, and Garvich (2016) reported that songs can have a positive influence on student motivation. Students were more willing to participate when the teacher used a song in their study. The authors further reported that students seemed to be more committed to the activities when there was a song playing in the class; they paid more attention and they were more involved with the activities. Liu and Chu (2010) also demonstrated that incorporating games into the English learning process could achieve a better learning outcome and higher motivation than using a non-gaming method. They further reported that the higher motivated learners also achieved better learning outcomes, which is consistent with the existing literature showing that motivation and learning are positively correlated.

F. Factors Influencing Demotivation

In addition to factors that have been found to motivate students, there are also factors that reportedly influence motivation negatively. Kikuchi (2009) listed five demotivating factors for language learners, including when 1) teacher behavior in the classroom was perceived negatively (unsupportive or using ineffective instructional methods); 2) the grammar-translation method was the preferred method of instruction; 3) curriculum focused on tests and university entrance examinations; 4) tasks consistently involved memorization required for vocabulary learning; and 5) students perceived their textbook/reference book negatively. Kikuchi recommended that in order to avoid demotivating students, the teacher should interact with them in the target language as much as possible, that the number of tests given to during a learning period should be minimized, textbooks with interesting topics should be used, and students should be provided with numerous and consistent opportunities to communicate in English.

Although these factors have been found to affect L2 motivation, the findings can be different in various context and learners. Also, a majority of the research to date has focused on young adult and adult learners, but less is known about young learner motivation, especially those in Macau. Therefore, with the consideration of both individual (e.g. goal, attitude) and contextual factors (e.g., teacher, task, class, parents, and peers), this study aims to help us to better understand the relationship between the different components in the present context.

G. Research Questions

Based on the gaps identified in the literature, the following research questions were articulated:
1. What are primary EFL learners' attitudes towards studying English?
2. Why do primary EFL learners study English?
3. What kinds of activities do primary EFL learners engage in outside of English class?
4. Does social support differ for learners at different motivation levels?
   a. How do Macau primary EFL learners perceive their teacher?

      b.   What are their family's expectations for learning English?

      c.   What are their peers' attitudes towards learning English?

   5. How do primary EFL learners perceive their formal learning context (tasks and their class)?

II. Methodology

A qualitative research design was adopted in this study to investigate the motivation of young EFL learners in a primary school. Qualitative approaches can provide researchers with descriptions of feelings and opinions of L2 learning which can lead to a deeper understanding of the motivation of young learners (Ushioda 2003, 2007).

A. Participants

In total, 23 primary six students, aged 11-12 years old (7 males and 16 females) participated in the study. They were recruited from two classes at the Chinese primary school that one of the researchers taught at in Macau. All of participants use Chinese as their L1, with Cantonese serving as the medium of instruction in school. The participants have learned Mandarin as a second language and English as a foreign language since Kindergarten. Despite these years of language instruction, the proficiency level is still very low for these learners. The socio-economic status of these learners and their families is considered medium-level, or middle class.

B. Instrument

Inspired by earlier frameworks of L2 motivation and with consideration of the Macau learning context, an open-ended questionnaire was developed (see Appendix A). The instrument explored three dimensions of motivation: individual differences (motivation level, attitudes towards learning English, effort put into studying, and desire to study), social influences (family, peers, teacher), and formal learning context (task, overall class). In total, 10 questions were posed in Chinese and English so that participants could respond in whatever language they felt comfortable and able to clearly express themselves. Table I shows the questionnaire items and associated characteristics of motivation.

TABLE I.
QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS AND RELEVANT CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTIVATION

10 open-end questions	Relevant characteristics of motivation
1. How do you feel about studying English?	Individual differences—attitude
2. Why do you study English?	Individual differences—desire
3. How much time do you spend on studying English per week?	Individual differences—effort
4. What kind of English learning activity do you like most? What kind of activity do you like least? Why?	Formal learning context—task
5. How do you feel about your English teacher?	Social influence—teacher
6. How do you feel about your English class?	Formal learning context—overall class
7. What kind of score do your parents want you to get on English test?	Social influence—family
8. How will you use English in the future?	Individual differences—desire
9. What do your friends think about studying English?	Social influences—peers
10. Other than English class, how else do you study English? How much time do you spend doing it?	Individual differences—effort

C. Procedure

After receiving ethical clearance from the University of Macau, approval from the primary school administration, and informed consent from parents and the participants, the questionnaire was administered to a pilot group consisting of two primary 6 students who were selected randomly. Based on their feedback, it was not deemed necessary to make adjustments to the original survey. Subsequently, the researcher administered the questionnaire to the participants, explaining the research purpose and each item of the questionnaire to ensure understanding. After confirming the participants knew what to do, the researcher gave them the questionnaires to the classes. The participants answered the questions in 30 minutes. Then the researcher collected all the questionnaires and entered their responses into an Excel spreadsheet for subsequent analysis.

D. Data Analysis

The data was analyzed through a multi-stage analysis based on Dornyei (2007). In the first round, the data was read through to gain a general understanding of the responses. In the second stage, responses for question one were assigned a code based on the nature of the response. For example, when the response was positive (e.g., *I think studying English is very interesting.*), the learner was labeled as positive attitude. If it was negative (e.g., I think it is very complicated and difficult.), the learner was labeled as negative attitude. If it indicated neither a positive nor negative response (e.g. *[I think English is] ordinary.*), the learner was considered to be at a neutral attitude level. The responses for the remainder

of the items were then read through multiple times and assigned codes. Each time the responses and codes were read, the codes that were deemed similar were combined together for each item until the data was saturated. Next, the item responses were divided by their associated level of motivation—highly, moderately, or lowly —to answer the research questions.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Attitudes towards English

The first research question asked about primary EFL learner's attitudes towards studying English. Based on their responses, participants were divided into three levels of attitude: positive attitude (14 students), negative attitude (3 students) and neutral attitude (6 students). Most of the students indicated that they viewed English learning positively. They reported that studying English was interesting, fun, and enjoyable for them. These respondents expressed more positive attitudes toward learning English, with most indicating they do so for intrinsically motivated because they found English interesting and enjoyable to learn. For example, Participant 16 stated *I think it is very fun [to learn] and I can use English in my life. When I see foreigners getting lost, I can use English to talk to them. I can talk to my teacher too. This is so good.* The students with neutral attitudes toward learning offered neither positive nor negative opinions about English, stating that they found it ordinary (e.g., *I think English is ordinary*) or acceptable (e.g., *English is acceptable to me*).

In contrast, responses from learners with negative attitudes reported that their perceptions of English study were largely influenced by their formal learning context. Respondents indicated that they felt that it was difficult to understand their teacher and/ or the instructions given in their English classes (e.g., *I don't understand what my English teacher says*), with one respondent going so far as to express despair regarding their English study (*Sometimes I don't understand [the teacher] and feel helpless*). This is in line with Kikuchi's (2009) findings that when teachers and teaching methods are perceived negatively, learners will be less motivated. For the young learners in the current study, the formal learning context in which English is taught appears to play an important role in their attitudes toward learning the language.

Because of the strong and well-established relationship between attitudes toward learning and motivation to learn, the respondents who reported positive attitudes toward English were regarded as highly motivated learners. Likewise, those who indicated negative attitudes were considered as lowly motivated, and respondents who demonstrated neutral attitudes toward English study were labelled as moderately motivated. The remainder of the data collected from the questionnaire will be analyzed from these perspectives.

B. Reasons to Study English

The second research question asked why primary EFL learners study English and how they envision using it in the future. The questionnaire elicited responses for the immediate purposes for studying English (Item 2), and to gain a sense of what may motivate these younger learners in the longer term, the questionnaire also asked what learners envision their future use of English being (Item 8). The results show that highly motivated learners had both intrinsic and extrinsic purposes to study English (questionnaire item 2). Eight of them indicated that they learned English because they were interested in communicating with foreigners, for improving themselves, and feeling that English as a subject was interesting and fun, all of which are considered intrinsic reasons to study. This is to be expected of higher motivated learners, since they are interested in studying it because they enjoy doing so. However, many of the respondents also indicated that they were extrinsically motivated. They thought that studying English could help them to find a better job, be of use in the future, and aid in travelling. All three reasons indicate that some of the highly motivated learners view English as a means to achieve some external goal. This was an interesting finding since it would be expected that highly motivated learners would be mostly intrinsically motivated to learn. One reason for this may be the learning context influencing how these learners perceived their purpose for learning English. The students learn English as a compulsory subject, and success in the acquisition of English is deemed necessary for future success.

The moderately motivated learners indicated that they studied English for mainly for extrinsic reasons. This included studying for future work or travel, and because it is required of them as a school subject. Though two respondents noted that they study in order to communicate, a majority of the reasons were for instrumental purposes, where they highlight the facility of the English language.

The responses of lowly motivated learners showed that they were negatively and primarily extrinsically motivated to learn English because they seemed to be forced to learn by the educational system in which English is a compulsory subject. They stated that they studied English because of having to face high-stakes exams or deal with it as a school subject. These results are consistent with Dorneyi and Ushida (2011), who reported that learners are more motivated to learn when they study for intrinsic reasons and that when forced to meet extrinsic requirements on a consistent basis, may become less motivated. The respondents reporting that they view English as a means to accomplish an educational goal suggest that even at a young age the EFL learners in this study may view English as a means to achieve external goals and less as a means to improve themselves or even something interesting and fun to learn.

An interesting pattern emerged from the data regarding how the learners envision their longer-term use of English. The data is rather consistent across the three levels of motivation, showing that the students studied for future work,

communication, and travel. All three of these reasons suggest that the cultural importance of learning English for instrumental purposes may be ingrained in learners as early as primary school.

C. Learning Activities Outside of Class

Research question three was interested in the types of learning activities primary school EFL learners engage in after class. This is considered an indicator of the effort put into learning, as students willing to engage in more activities after class would be putting in more effort to acquire the language. The results showed that all participants indicated that they engage in some form of activity outside of class. However, the nature of the activities are quite varied. The types of activities can be classified as school-related (e.g., revising homework or studying with a tutor), literacy-related (e.g., reading books), social-related (e.g., speaking with classmates), or entertainment-related (e.g., watching movies or animations). The highly-motivated learners reported using a wide variety of activities, consisting of all four types. The most frequently reported were literacy-related, entertainment related, and school-related, while social-related activities were least engaged. This is somewhat anticipated, since being more motivated to learn would lead to greater engagement beyond the classroom context, as has been previously reported in the literature (e.g., Ro & Chen, 2014). The nature of the activities for the lowly-motivated and moderately-motivated learners were mostly school-related and literacy related. This is also unsurprising, since it has been reported that the less students feel motivated, the less effort they would make in studying (Noels, Clement, & Pelletier, 1999). Interestingly, these learners did not report engaging in activities that were socially oriented, despite listing communication as their immediate and longer-term purposes for studying. However, learners at this motivation level did note that their reasons for learning in the short-term were also driven by the school and the need to perform well on assessments. It is therefore understandable why they view English as a subject that needs to be studied for scholastic purposes, as opposed to a means for communication. This indicates that these learners may not yet have made the connection between the social function of English as a means to communicate and subject they learn in school.

D. Social Support for Learning

The fourth research question asked about the participant perspectives of the teacher, the expectations of their family, and the opinions of their peers for studying English. The responses indicate that the participants overwhelmingly viewed their teacher positively, regardless of the level of motivation. The respondents described the teacher as kind, patient, and attentive to their needs. This type of emotional support viewed by the students is consistent with findings from Kiefer, Alley, and Ellerbrock (2015), who reported that when learners felt their teacher was supportive of their emotional and academic well-being, they were more motivated to learn. It would be expected that only the highly motivated learners would view their teacher this way, as it has been reported that positive views of the teacher can reduce demotivation (Hamada, 2014), but the findings indicate that even moderately and lowly-motivated learners felt supported by their teacher. Only two negative comments were offered by the participants and appeared more to do with classroom management (*Except for controlling the class, everything else is good*) and low linguistic competence in the target language (*I don't know what the teacher is talking about*) than the direct support they received from the teacher. Though perceptions of ineffective teaching has been noted by Kikuchi (2009) as being potential demotivators, it appears not to have had this effect on the primary learners in this study.

The questionnaire also inquired about how the participants thought their peers viewed English study, as peer support for the subject may contribute to the motivation of L2 learning. Interestingly, regardless of the level of motivation, most of their participants reported that their friends had an unfavorable view of English learning. Only a few students reported having peers with a positive feeling towards L2 learning, for both intrinsic reasons (e.g., *He is interested in studying English*) and instrumental purposes (*[English is] useful for all purposes*) given. It would be expected that primary school learners would share similar views as the peers they share a social community with, but this was not the case. The negative responses offered were oriented towards the learning context, specifically the nature of the class in terms of interest (*My friend feels bored in class*), workload (*Hope to have little homework, exam, test*), task difficulty (*...it is difficult to memorize English words*), tasks utilized (*Want to use games to learn in class*), and teacher instruction (*Want the teacher to explain more clearly*). These perceptions are likely influenced by the specific learning context, where English classes in Macau primary schools encourage the use of English only during English class time and instructional tasks are focused on improving language competence needed for successful performance on high-stakes tests.

The study also explored how the respondents viewed their family's expectation towards learning English. With the performance-oriented learning culture in mind, the questionnaire narrowed this to the score that the students felt their parents expected them to receive on exams. The results showed that only one participant reported that his parents were not interested in his scores (*They never say about the score*), indicating that they may foster an intrinsic motivation to study without the focus on extrinsic rewards. Expectedly, this participant was in the highly motivated group, but the remainder of the respondents in the study noted that their parents expected them to meet a certain standard on their exams. Most of them, regardless of the level of motivation, reported that they were expected to score at least 70% on their tests, with three indicating their parents expected perfection. To pass English exams in Macau, students need a score of 60%, which suggests that parents likely have a similar expectation for non-English subjects and view English as just another class to pass. This also reinforces learners' views of English as one of instrumental value, as opposed to

integrative worth, since the emphasis of learning is to achieve some purpose, as opposed to viewing it as a means to integrate within a culture. This result supports Wadho's (2016) findings that most L2 learners study English due to the extrinsic rewards given to them by their parents. However, unlike that study, whose participants were university students, the findings of this study show that the cultural emphasis on extrinsic rewards for learning for instrumental purposes may be reinforced at a young age and fostered by their parents. This is most likely influenced by the Macau learning context, but Wadho has cautioned that excessive focus by parents on these external motivators may harm long-term intrinsic motivation to learn, which could ultimately limit the amount of English acquired by these learners.

E. Perceptions of the Learning Context

The fifth research question attempted to find out how the formal learning context, including the class and the learning tasks, may differ according to the motivation level of the young learners. To do this, we asked respondents to comment on their overall opinions about the English class, and then to specifically describe what kind of teaching activities and tasks were preferable and not preferable to them. The participants reported mixed opinions about their English class at all three levels of motivation. The highly motivated learners reported positive views of the class, most notably the passion of the teacher in fostering this positive outlook. This is unsurprising considering the respondents reported an almost uniformly positive perception of their teacher. The motivated respondents also stated that they viewed their English class overall as interesting, which is consistent with Nikolov's (2009) results showing that learners who are more interested in the activities engaged in during class are more motivated to learn. When asked about their preferred learning tasks, the highly motivated learners consistently reported that playing games, listening to English songs, and watching movies were among their favored activities. These results are consistent with Liu and Chu (2010) and Aguierre, Bustinza, and Garvich (2016), who suggested that incorporating games and songs, respectively, into the learning process could increase motivation and class engagement. In contrast, the activities the participants reported not enjoying were academic in nature, consisting of reading and answering comprehension questions, completing homework assignments, writing sentences for class, and memorizing vocabulary words. Though these assignments were likely designed to increase the learners' linguistic proficiency, the use of these traditional methods to do so may have lowered the motivation to learn. This result is consistent with Kikuchi's (2009) findings that learners are demotivated when classroom activities involve memorization for learning new words and exercises from textbooks they find uninteresting.

However, these higher motivated respondents also indicated negative attitudes about the physical class setting (e.g., *I think the English lesson is a little bit crowded. My teacher speak English during the class but I cannot understand what my teacher has taught*.) and the outside of class workload (e.g., *homework is too much*). The homework issue may be related to the particular school's approach to learning because of the expectation for teachers to give homework to students every day. The crowdedness concern may be related to classroom size. Primary school classes in the school where the data was collected in Macau consist of up to 31 students. This large class size, which limits the amount of space available to move around the classroom and increases the noise during a lesson, appears to have been a factor for these learners. The inconsistent results for these higher motivated learners may be explained by Al-Hoorie (2016), who reported that learner perspectives of the learning context may not be the strongest motivator for learners. However, the positive responses provided consistently point to the teacher as being a strong motivator indicates that for these young learners, the perceptions of their teacher may also contribute to how they view their English class experience overall.

The pattern of results showing both positive and negative views of the class and learning activities were also held for the moderately and lowly motivated learners. The moderately motivated learners were noncommittal in their evaluation (*[Class is] not bad*), negative (*[I'm] bored [in class]*), but also positive (*[Class is] fun*). The lowly motivated learners were expectedly more negative (*[Class is] very boring; strange*), but also positive (*[I am] very happy [in class]*). Similar to the higher-motivated learners, these participants reported that despite varied opinions of class, they favored listening to English songs and playing games to completing academic tasks like grammar activities, reading and answering comprehension questions, or learning about English grammar. These opinions further reinforce the findings reported by Kikuchi (2009), who noted that motivation can be lessened when learners perceive the learning materials negatively and when tasks involve memorization activities for language learning. Kikuchi also reported that negative views of teacher practices may also lower motivation to learn, but since most learners in this study viewed their teacher favorably, it is likely that this may have resulted in the mixed opinions about their English class.

IV. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide insight into why primary learners of different motivation levels study English. The results suggest that the young EFL learners surveyed in this study view English positively, and that they study mainly for instrumental reasons. This may be in part due to the focus on extrinsic motivators (e.g., scoring well on tests) by the specific learning context, in which English language proficiency is viewed as a means to access higher education and better employment. The findings also have important implications for the classroom, as the results showed that the teacher may play a significant role in how young learners perceive studying English. The respondents viewed their teacher as both emotionally and academically supportive, and this support was consistent for learners of all motivation levels.

The study is not without its limitations, though. The use of a survey limited the amount of explanation the participants could provide in response to the questions presented them. Future studies may utilize an interview data-collection method to elicit more in-depth responses to questions. Despite this, the results of this study provide some insight into what motivates young EFL learners. Because motivation is known to be especially challenging to foster in EFL contexts like the present study, we feel the results discussed here may give primary EFL teachers an insider's view into understanding their own learners and what may be done to motivate them to study.

APPENDIX. OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE

The open-ended questionnaire
English Learner Questionnaire
We would like to ask you to help us by answering the following questions in a survey to better understand the thoughts and beliefs of learners of English in Macau. You do not have to write your name on it. We are interested in your personal opinion. The results of this survey will be used only for research purposes so please give your answers sincerely, as only this will ensure the success of this project. Thank you very much for your help!
英語學習者的問卷調查
為了更好地了解澳門英語學習者的想法和觀念，我们誠意邀請您參加關於"澳門英語學習者"的問卷調查。這份問卷完全保密，亦無需署名。我们關注的是您的個人觀點,請根據您的實際情況填寫。本問卷結果僅供學術研究之用。您的支持对本研究能否取得成功至關重要。非常感谢您的幫忙!
Part 1 - We would like you to answer the questions below.
第一部分 － 請回答以下問題
1. How do you feel about studying English?
   你對英語學習的感覺如何？
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. Why do you study English?
   你為什麼學習英語？
   _____
   _____
   _____

3. How much time do you spend on studying English per week?
   你每周花費多長時間去學習英語？
   _____
   _____
   _____

4. What kind of English learning activity do you like most? What kind of activity do you like least? Why?
   你最喜歡哪一類英語學習的活動？你最不喜歡哪一類英語學習的活動？為什麼？
   _____
   _____
   _____

5. How do you feel about your English teacher?
   你對你的英語老師的感覺如何？
   _____
   _____
   _____

6. How do you feel about your English class?
   你對你的英語課的感覺如何？
   _____
   _____
   _____

7. What kind of score do your parents want you to get on English test?
   你的父母期望你在英語測驗中得到如何的分數？
   _____
   _____
   _____

8. How will you use English in the future?
   你將來會如何應用英語？
   _____

_____
_____

9. What do your friends think about studying English?
    你的朋友對於英語學習有何意見？

_____
_____
_____

10. Other than English class, how else do you study English? How much time do you spend doing it?
    除了上英語課，你還會如何學習英語？你花費多長時間來這樣學習英語？

_____
_____
_____

Part 2 - Please provide the following information by ticking (✔) in the box or writing your response in the space to help us to better interpret your previous answers.
● □ Male   □Female
● □ Chinese   □ non-Chinese (Please specify: _____)
● Your age (in years): _____
第二部分 － 請就以下問題打"√"或根據您的實際情況填寫,以便我们更好地了解您之前提供的信息。
● □ 男 □ 女
● □ 中國人   □非中國人(請注明: _____)
● 年齡(周歲): _____
By submitting this questionnaire I agree that my answers, which I have given voluntarily, can be used anonymously for research purposes.
本人同意: 我自愿填寫並提交的該份匿名問卷可供學術研究之用。
再 次 感 谢 您 的 參 與 !

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