

# Teaching Strategies of Enhancing Motivation among Ethnic Minority Students\*

Lili Zhao

Department of Foreign Language Teaching, Inner Mongolia University for the Nationalities, Tongliao, China

**Abstract**—Motivation is one of the non-intellectual factors that affect language learners' learning abilities. Motivation plays a very important role in language learners' learning activities and their performance. The paper mainly studies the motivation of ethnic minority students and the effective teaching strategies it brings about. Firstly, the author gives a brief introduction about the teaching object and learning situation of ethnic minority students. Secondly, the author introduces the definition and types of motivation. Then a research is done to study the motivation of students and its relevant influencing factors. In addition, an inquiry about the type of teacher that is popular among students is conducted. After that, a discussion of the teaching strategies is made so as to cultivate and stimulate students' learning motivation and thus improve the teaching effect.

**Index Terms**—motivation, ethnic minority students, teaching strategy

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. *The Teaching Object of Ethnic Minority Preparatory Education in English*

Ethnic minority preparatory education of English teaching is an integral part of higher education. It is a transitional education level between high school education and university education. It is an important stage of cultivating talents of ethnic minorities, and developing the economy of minority areas. English course is a basic course of ethnic minority preparatory education. Ethnic minority preparatory English education is instructed by foreign language teaching theory, and its main content is composed of English language knowledge and application skills, cross-cultural communication and learning strategy. The teaching system is an integration of a variety of teaching mode and teaching means.

### B. *The Learning Situation of Ethnic Minority Students*

The ethnic minority students in Inner Mongolia University for the Nationalities are mainly from the mountain areas in Inner Mongolia and its surrounding regions. Students differ from each other due to their different customs, national cultures, traditional ideas, religious beliefs, etc. Some students take a positive role in class activities and some students participate in the classroom activities passively. Some students hold a wrong motivation of learning English that they think it is useless to learn English. Some students like to study English because they want to get high scores and win scholarship. Other students enjoy learning English because they are willing to communicate with foreigners and a good command of English can help them get a better understanding of English cultures. The above-mentioned phenomena are obviously concerned with nonintellectual factors of students and above all, motivation is responsible for achievement in the second language. The next part is going to discuss the important role motivation plays in the second language learning.

## II. THE DEFINITION OF MOTIVATION

Motivation is probably the most frequently used catch-all term for explaining the success or failure of virtually any complex task (<http://www.docin.com/p-55564485.html>). Motivation is commonly thought of as an inner drive, impulse, emotion or desire that moves one to a particular action ([www.springerlink.com](http://www.springerlink.com)). Motivation refers to "the magnitude and direction of behavior and the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid and to the degree of effort they will exert in that respect" (Keller, 1993). Gardner (1985) defines motivation to learn a second language as "the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experience in this activity."

Motivation refers to goal-directed behavior (cf. Heckhausen, 1991), and when one is attempting to measure motivation, attention can be directed toward a number of features of the individual. The motivated individual spends effort, is persistent and attentive to the task at hand, has goals, desires, and aspirations, enjoys the activity, experiences reinforcement from success and disappointment from failure, makes attributions from success concerning success and/or failure, is aroused, and makes use of strategies to aid in achieving goals. That is, the motivated individual exhibits many behaviors, feelings, cognitions, etc., that the individual who is unmotivated does not. (A.-M. Masgoret &

\* Supported by the Teaching Project of Inner Mongolia University for the Nationalities "An Empirical Research on Ethnic Minority Students of Preparatory Education Under The Influence of Nonintellectual Factors and Some Innovative Teaching Suggestions" (MDZD201303).

R.C.Gardner, 2003)

### III. THE CATEGORIES OF MOTIVATION

Motivation can be divided into the following types: integrative motivation, instrumental motivation, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, assimilative motivation.

#### A. *Intrinsic Motivation* (<http://www.en.wikipedia.org>)

Intrinsic motivation has been studied since the early 1970s. Intrinsic motivation is the self-desire to seek out new things and new challenges, to analyze one's capacity, to observe and to gain knowledge. It is driven by an interest or enjoyment in the task itself, and exists within the individual rather than relying on external pressures or a desire for reward. Intrinsic motivation is a natural motivational tendency and is a critical element in cognitive, social, and physical development. Students who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to engage in the task willingly as well as work to improve their skills, which will increase their capabilities. Students are likely to be intrinsically motivated if they:

- attribute their educational results to factors under their own control, also known as autonomy or locus of control
- believe they have the skills to be effective agents in reaching their desired goals, also known as self-efficacy beliefs
- are interested in mastering a topic, not just in achieving good grades

#### B. *Extrinsic Motivation*

Extrinsic motivation refers to the performance of an activity in order to attain a desired outcome and it is the opposite of intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation comes from influences outside of the individual. In extrinsic motivation, the harder question to answer is where do people get the motivation to carry out and continue to push with persistence. Usually extrinsic motivation is used to attain outcomes that a person wouldn't get from intrinsic motivation. Common extrinsic motivations are rewards (for example money or grades) for showing the desired behavior, and the threat of punishment following misbehavior. Competition is an extrinsic motivator because it encourages the performer to win and to beat others, not simply to enjoy the intrinsic rewards of the activity. A cheering crowd and the desire to win a trophy are also extrinsic incentives. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motivation#Business>)

#### C. *Instrumental Motivation*

Lambert has identified two main types of positive motivation that learners may have for learning a second language. The first is commonly called Instrumental Motivation. This is most typical of foreign rather than second language learning contexts. Instrumentally motivated learners are, usually, learning the second language, mostly within their own first language community, for some business, government or academic related purpose. People learning for instrumental purposes therefore have some specific, personal, identifiable reason for learning the second language. They have clear goals, whose achievement requires them to learn the second language.

#### D. *Integrative Motivation*

The other type is known as Integrative Motivation. This is more common when learning the second language in the second environment. The learner with this kind of motivation is held to be learning the language to become more like, or more accepted as, a member of the second language speech community. The motivation is based on the desire to fit in, to become less obviously an outsider. (Wedell, M, 1995)

#### E. *Assimilative Motivation*

Assimilative motivation is the drive to become an indistinguishable member of a speech community, and it usually requires prolonged contact with the second language culture. (<http://www.docin.com/>)

### IV. THEORIES OF MOTIVATION

#### A. *Achievement Goal Theory*

The study of goals within the field of motivation has a long history (Anderman & Wolters, 2006). Achievement goals are widely recognized as important constructs in understanding behavior in educational settings (Dweck, 1986; Nicholls, 1984). According to achievement goal theory, learners' motivation has been conceptualized as goal-directed behaviors that are used to accomplish an authentic learning task, whereas goals as "the purpose or cognitive-dynamic focus of task involvement" (Elliot et al., 1999). Traditionally, achievement goal theorists have identified two distinct achievement goal orientation, that is, mastery vs. performance goals, depending on whether learning is conceived and valued as an end in itself or as a means to external purposes (Meece et al., 1988). Mastery and performance goals represent different success criteria and different reasons for engaging in achievement activity ([www.zoltandornyei.co.uk](http://www.zoltandornyei.co.uk)). Mastery-oriented learners would tend to set up their learning purposes as mastering skills and increasing competence, whereas learners with a performance goal would typically consider the aims of learning as demonstrating their exceptional competence over peers.

#### B. *Gardner's Socio-educational Model*

Gardner's socio-educational model was influenced by Mowrer. He proposed that the children's success of the first language learning contribute to the interest of gaining identity within the family or wider community. On the basis of Mowrer's theory, Gardner carried on the investigation of motivation which is a very important factor for L2 acquisition. Different from other motivation research, Gardner (1985)'s research expanded socio-psychological model to the socio-educational, and his research focuses on the foreign language classroom. In Gardner's model, he paid attention to four elements, including the antecedent factors (the social and cultural milieu), individual differences variables, language acquisition setting or context and linguistic outcomes.

Gardner's socio-educational model for foreign language learning was summarized by Au (1988) in terms of five hypotheses (Schmidt et al., 1996,p.130):

- The integrative motive hypothesis:  
Integrative motivation is positively associated with second language achievement.
- The cultural belief hypothesis: Cultural beliefs influence the development of the integrative motive and the degree to which integrativeness and achievement are related.
- The active learner hypothesis:  
Integratively motivated learners are successful because they are active learners.
- The causality hypothesis: Integrative motivation is a cause; second language achievement, the effort.
- The two process hypothesis: Aptitude and integrative motivation are independent factors in second language learning. (<http://wenku.baidu.com/>)

#### V. AN INVESTIGATION OF MOTIVATION AMONG ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS

The ethnic minority students in Inner Mongolia University for the Nationalities are mainly from the mountain areas in Inner Mongolia and its surrounding regions. Students differ from each other due to their different customs, national cultures, traditional ideas, religious beliefs, etc. Some students take a positive role in class activities and some students participate in the classroom activities passively. A few students show a nervous and anxious mood when they answer the teachers' questions. Some students hold a wrong motivation of learning English that they think it is useless to learn English. Some students like to study English because they want to get high scores and win scholarship. Other students enjoy learning English because they are willing to communicate with foreigners and a good command of English can help them get a better understanding of English cultures. The above-mentioned phenomena are obviously concerned with motivation factors of students.

In order to explore the influences that motivation factors bring about, the author conducts a self-administered questionnaire survey among 106 students from two classes in an attempt to find out how much non-intellectual factors affect students learning process. The survey contains two figures. The first figure is an investigation of students' motivation of learning a foreign language. The second figure is an inquiry about the image of a popular teacher that most students prefer. Through the survey, one hundred valid replies are received. The students surveyed are all Mongolian students in the University of Inner Mongolia for the Nationalities. And they have different English levels. Some have a good command of English while others can not master English very well. Through this study, the author aims to get an overall knowledge of the students' learning status. (Zhao, 2015)

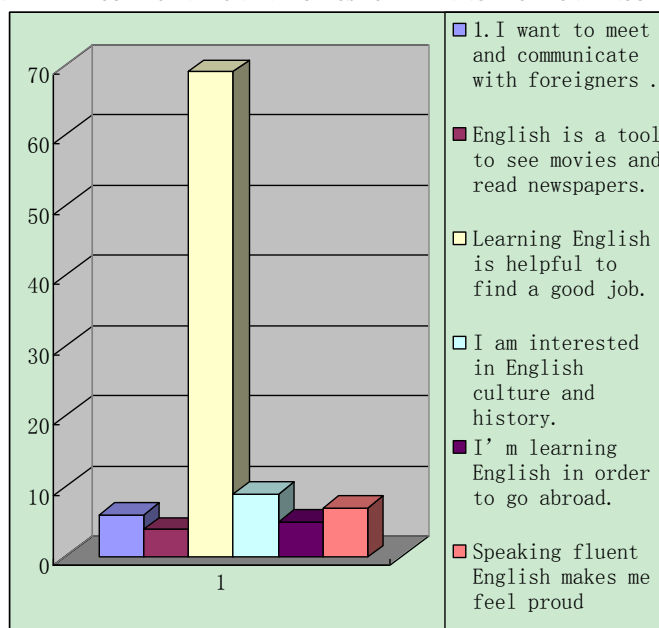
The survey is made in the following steps.

(1) In the first chart, the teacher collects some typical questionnaires that investigate students' learning motives when learning English. A major purpose of the investigation is to estimate the magnitude of the contributions that motivation makes to achievement in the second language learning.

In the second form, the teacher designs a self-administered survey containing seven aspects of a teacher, and they are the character, language style, teacher-student relationship, speaking speed, intonation, after class talk and attitudes towards underachievers. In this way, the teacher tries to find out what kind of teacher is more popular and welcome among students.

(2)The teacher asks students to fill in the two investigation forms with regard to the motivation factors affecting students' learning abilities and some important qualities that a teacher ought to have. Afterwards, the teacher collects the data and count out the percentage of each item. And then the teacher makes an analysis of the data and gets the conclusion. Look at the figure below.

TABLE I  
WHAT ARE YOUR MOTIVATION AND PURPOSE OF LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE?



On table 1, item 1,4,6 can be concluded into integrative motivation and item 2,3,5 can be classified into instrumental motivation. Some researches show that learners with integrative motivation have much stronger desire to learn than those with instrumental motivation. However, things are not always the case. Learners with instrumental motivation may become more likely to study hard. From table one, we can find out that most of the students have instrumental motivation which is concerned with future careers. Among them, over half of the students learn English in order to get a good job. 4% of the students want to see movies or read newspapers in English. 5% of the students learn English because they want to go abroad. While students with integrative motivation only take 22% of the total number of the students. 9% of them learn English in order to know English culture and history. 6% of the students want to get involved in the second language community activities and make friends with foreigners so they begin to learn English. Besides, Students who are able to speak fluent English may possess a strong sense of pride.

TABLE II  
WHAT KIND OF ENGLISH TEACHER DO YOU LIKE?

Items	options	AA(%)	BB(%)	CC(%)	CD(%)
character	A. mature B. lively C. gentle and humble D. I don't care	27%	59%	12%	2%
Language style	A. vivid B. humorous C. plain D. I don't care	17%	78%	3%	2%
Teacher-student relationship	A. intimate B. friendly C. strict D. distant	52%	33%	10%	5%
Speaking speed	A. fast B. slow C. moderate D. I don't care	9%	11%	76%	4%
intonation	A. appropriate B. sonorous C. plain D. I don't care	59%	32%	7%	2%
After class talk	A. everything B. language learning C. hobbies D. nothing	60%	25%	13%	2%
Attitudes towards underachievers	A. intimate and don't care about their scores B. respect them without scorn C. pay attention to them D. neglect them	18%	34%	43%	5%

From table 2, we can get the conclusion that most of the students like lively teachers, because lively teachers are easy to get along with students and are popular among them. Some students like mature teachers because they leave students an image of being experienced. 12% of the students like gentle and humble teachers and only 2% of the students don't care what their English teacher is like. As for the aspect of language style, a large majority of students tend to expect their teacher to be humorous. A small number of students hope that their teacher should give them a vivid picture of what he is going to teach. Teacher with plain language style can attract few students. Over half of the students hope to get an intimate relationship with their teachers and 33% of the students expect to have a friendly relationship with their teachers. From the survey, we know that sometimes a strict teacher is not so popular among students. As for the speaking speed, being moderate is chosen by most of the students. Neither too fast nor too slow is a speaking speed suitable for students. Students would like to choose appropriate or sonorous intonation instead of plain intonation. After class, more than half of the students are willing to talk everything with their teacher in order to get acquainted with their teacher, While 25% of the students want to talk with their teacher their study. A small number of students like to talk with teacher something except their study, for example, their hobbies. In every class, there are some underachievers and the teacher's attitude toward them plays a vital role in their language learning. Nearly half of the students hope their teacher can pay attention to them and give them more help. 34% of the students expect their teacher's respect rather than their scorn. 18% of the students want to maintain an intimate relationship with their teachers though their scores are not so satisfactory. Only a few students don't care about the teacher's attitude.

#### VI. THE TEACHING STRATEGIES OF ENHANCING STUDENTS' MOTIVATION

(1) The usual meaning of motivation for the teacher is probably the interest that something generates in the students. A particular exercise, a particular topic, a particular song, may make the students appear involved in the class, to the teacher's delight. (Vivian Cook, 2000) Teachers should arrange a good and harmonious learning environment and improve students' learning interest. Interest is a lasting factor to motivate students' learning abilities. In view of students' different personalities, characteristics background and learning style, the teaching methods vary from person to person. A close and pleasant atmosphere may make students feel at ease and students are more likely to take an active part in classroom activities. A variety of activities such as pair work, team work or class presentation are encouraged to carry out among students so as to cultivate their learning initiative and creativity. In the form of interaction between teachers and students, the combination of language practice, knowledge acquisition and the training of language skills is carried out by the students, which is a good way to stimulate their interest in language learning.

(2) Teachers should change their traditional teaching methods and make a careful design according to the teaching content. Teachers should create suitable teaching context to satisfy student's needs. According to the investigation of table one above, most of the students' motivation is instrumental, and only a small part of students' motivation is integrative. Learners hope to benefit from their knowledge of foreign language in terms of later career. However, it is often the case that students with neither instrumental motivation nor integrative motivation will find it hard to learn English well. Therefore, teachers may have to go along with the students' motivation, or at least be sufficiently aware of the students' motivation so that any problems can be smoothed over. It is of essential importance for teachers to cultivate both types of motivation in their students, by emphasizing the career benefits that knowledge of second language learning brings, or by building up interest in the foreign culture and history through comparison of the culture differences between Chinese and foreign countries. Teachers should design a lesson relevant to students' professional knowledge according to students' practical needs. Besides, it is helpful for teachers to introduce some interesting background information or foreign culture to increase their knowledge and broaden their views.

(3) The emotional communication between teachers and students is an important factor to create a relaxed classroom atmosphere. A bad teacher-student relationship is harmful to the second language learning. Students will feel depressed and nervous in class and they will not get interested in English learning because they don't like the teacher. In order to create a harmonious classroom environment, first of all, teachers should respect and trust their students. Teachers ought to realize that each student is unique and has their own characteristic. Every student has both advantages and disadvantages. Teachers should treat every student equally. They should neither look down upon underachievers nor favor towards top students. Teachers should give students moderate encouragement and praise in order to mobilize students' learning enthusiasm. When students make mistakes or give wrong answers, teachers should be patient and carefully listen to students' thoughts. When teachers give students more encouragement instead of criticism, students will not feel hurt and will be more confident to participate in the classroom activities. A research shows that praise and encouragement is a good way to arouse students' learning motivation and help them make rapid progress. Appropriate praise and encouragement is helpful to spur students' enthusiasm and is a kind of affirmation to students. Teachers' sincere help and encouragement to students can enhance their confidence to learn a foreign language well.

(4) In an ideal teachers' world, students would enter the classroom admiring the target culture and language, wanting to get something out of the L2 learning for themselves, and thirsting for knowledge. In practice teachers have to be aware of the reservations and preconceptions of their students. What they think of the teacher, and what they think of the course, heavily affect their success. This is what teachers can influence rather than the learners' more deep-seated motivations. (Vivian Cook, 2000). Therefore, teachers should become critically reflective to improve their teaching practice. According to the research of table 2, we may find out that a lively, humorous, easygoing and affectionate

teacher is more popular with the students. Therefore, teachers should rethink their teaching behaviors and develop their teaching abilities. Zeichner and Liston propose that "A reflective teacher is defined in this literature as one assesses the origins, purposes and consequences of his or her work at all level." Becoming critical means that as teachers we have to transcend the technicalities of teaching and think beyond the need to improve our instructional techniques. Becoming a critically reflective teacher within this orientation therefore involves the realization that as second language teachers, we are both the procedures and creators of our own history.(Jack C. Richards & David Nunan, 2000) Therefore, teachers should engage in constant and systematic inquiry of the origin and results of teaching so that they can find out the factors that hinder their development and thus improve their teaching effect.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Motivation is a complex concept and many studies have shown that motivation is essential for successful language learning. Brown (2001) gives an interpretation of motivation is that motivation is "the extent to which you make choices about goals to pursue and the effort you will devote to that pursuit". Learning motivation is an important factor, which has significant impact on students' English learning. A strong learning motivation can facilitate students to learn English well. Based on the previous literature review and theories of motivation, the research concerning learning motivation is carried out among ethnic minority students and the findings of the research are to some extent worthwhile. It helps the teacher to get a clear clue about the present learning situation of the students, and rethink their teaching procedures. The research offers teachers effective ways to stimulate students' learning motivation and obtain better learning outcomes. However, there are some other variables that affect students' motivation and a further study is needed to investigate the aspects that relate with motivation.

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**Lili Zhao** is a lecturer in the department of foreign language teaching of Inner Mongolia University for the Nationalities. Her researches mainly include English language teaching and linguistics. She has published several papers in both Chinese and international journals.