

A Survey of the Foreign Language Learning Motivation among Polytechnic Students in China

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Abstract—A Survey of the foreign language (English, French and Japanese) learning motivation among polytechnic students in China has been made. In the Study I (English learning motivation); participants are 200 freshmen from Shenzhen Polytechnic, Guangdong province. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, multiple regression, independent t-test, and ANOVA were conducted. Results indicate that: students study English for integrative, instrumental, and requirement reasons; orientations are predictors of learners' motivation; positive English learning or using experience of other family members increases students' motivation, and students with higher entry exam scores also demonstrate higher motivation. In the Study II (French and Japanese learning motivation), interviews were conducted with 70 first-year students. After similar questionnaire and same analysis method like the Study I, it was found that both groups share more characteristics than they differ in the process learning a second language. The main difference in integrative orientation is greater in French & Japanese than English.

Index Terms—foreign language learning motivation, integrative orientation, instrumental orientation, requirement orientation, polytechnic students

I. INTRODUCTION

Motivation or orientation is very important in language study, and the orientation including integrative, instrumental and requirement three models (Dornyei, 2001a). For the past few decades one of the most influential theories in second language acquisition has been the social psychology advocated by Gardner, which addresses the role that affective factors play in second language acquisition. Among the affective factors motivation stands out as a vital issue. According to Gardner (1985) motivation is a central element along with language aptitude in determining success in learning another language in the classroom setting. This view was echoed in many studies (Robin and Oxford, 1992; Peng, 2006; Robert, 2008). Oxford & Shearing (1994) suggest that motivation is one of the main elements that determine success in developing a second or foreign language; it determines the extent of active, personal involvement in second language learning. Warden (2005) states that motivation determines the extent of active personal involvement in second language learning. In other words, language learning motivation is the inner driving force of an individual toward the learning of another language, which explains why he or she decides to study a particular second or foreign language, how hard he or she will pursue it, and how long he or she is willing to sustain the action of studying the language chosen (Dornyei, 2001b).

II. LITERATURE REVIEWS

A. Definition of Motivation in Social-educational Model

Robert Gardner (1985) defines in his social-educational model of language learning that “motivation” is the combination of effort plus desires to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language. In other words, motivated language learners have positive affection to the language they are learning, they strongly want the achievement of the learning goal, and they will actually expend effort to learn the language. Thus, motivation is at the heart of language learning influencing and being influenced by outside forces in determining the future performance.

B. Motivation vs. Orientation

One of the distinctive features of Gardner's social-educational approach of second language acquisition has been the orientation aspect. Orientation is defined as long-range goals, which, along with attitudes, sustain students' motivation to learn a second language (L2) (Belmechri and Hummel, 1998). In other words, orientation is a class of reasons for studying another language. The main difference between orientation and motivation is that a student might demonstrate a particular orientation, but not highly motivated to achieve that goal (Gardner and Tremblay, 1994). So the importance of these reasons for learning L2 (orientation) is rarely related to the achievement of L2 study, but will directly determine what degree of effort this individual will make or what cost he or she may pay for the learning motivation (Noels et al, 2000).

C. *Integrative and Instrumental Orientations*

Two types of orientation are addressed in Gardner's social-educational model: integrative orientation and instrumental orientation. Integrative orientation or integrativeness reflects a genuine interest in learning another language because of a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other language group (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1991). The instrumental orientation, in contrast with integrative orientation, emphasizes "the pragmatic value and advantages of learning a new language, such as getting a better job or higher salary" (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1991, p77). According to Gardner, integrative orientation is the center determinant of motivation because the L2 learner's ultimate goal is not only to attain language competence but also to achieve "psychological integration" with the target culture (Chang and Cho, 2003). He also states that students with integrative orientation tend to demonstrate greater motivational effort in learning a L2 than that with instrumental orientation, and thus, achieve greater L2 competence than students whose motivation are primarily infused by instrumental orientation (Nakanishi, 2002). However, Dornyei (1990) argues that integrative orientation might be far less relevant for foreign language learners. In an English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) context, students hardly have contacts with the people and culture of the target language. In her study of motivational components of Hungarian English learners, Dornyei (1990) concludes that instrumental goals contribute significantly to motivation for foreign language learners. Ho (1998) and Belmechri and Hummel (1998) have also expressed similar argument in their studies.

D. *Requirement Orientation*

To the existing motivation orientations, Ely (1986) has identified another one: "requirement orientation". Foreign language, for example English and French, both of them as a required subject in the school curriculum is a common practice in many Asian countries (such as Japan, Korea, and China. etc.), where they are studied as a second language. In an English or French as a foreign language setting, most people have little contact with the target-language community, and they do not have the pressing needs to use them in their daily lives, yet they are forced to take English or French course as required credits for academic credentials. Many students thus treat English as knowledge for examination, not as a medium for communication or an instrument for career improvement. Considering this unique policy of language education, the author hypothesizes that students' foreign language learning motivation can also be observed through requirement orientation.

Owing to the mixed results yielded by existing literatures discussed in the literature reviews, the author would like to expand Gardner's aspect of L2 learning orientation by conducting a quantitative research regarding language learning to determine if the three orientations (integrative, instrumental, and requirement) exist among participants of this study and the degree to which the orientations and motivation are internally related. Meanwhile, according to Gardner (2001), individuals' personal backgrounds and histories could play a role in their motivations to learn another language. The author would also like to explore the differences in motivation caused by learners' family background and their previous experiences with foreign language.

The following research questions are addressed:

- ★ Do three distinct orientations of language learning exist among EFL non-English major students in China: integrative, instrumental, and requirement orientations?
- ★ To what extent are these orientations of the learners to acquire English and their motivation internally related?
- ★ What are the differences between motivation to learn English among students and different personal backgrounds?
- ★ To compare the similarities and differences of motivation between English and French & Japanese.

III. STUDY I

In Study I, we used a survey to explore Chinese students' motivation beliefs, and how these beliefs influence their acquisition of a second language. In this phase, we mainly research the English learning motivation. Materials and method:

A. *Participants*

Two hundred freshmen (n=200), 105 male students and 95 female students, from three different classes. All participants were native speakers of Mandarin. Before entering college, most students received at least six years of experience with English, for English is a required subject in the curriculum from middle school through college or university. Some students may start learning English since the elementary school as their parents' arrangement.

B. *Method*

A forty-four multiple-choice survey was created for this study (see appendix I). It contains motivation scale, three subscales for language learning orientations, and background information. With the exception of the background information questionnaire, the items on motivation and orientations are answered on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

The Motivation Scale (items 1 to 19) used in this study was adopted from Attitudes/Motivation Test Battery (Gardner, 1985), which measures the degree of the respondents' motivation through three subscales: attitude toward learning English, motivation intensity, and desire to learn English. With a view to examining the orientations of learning English,

this study used the Orientation Scale (items 20 to 29). Questions for integrative and instrumental orientation were also adopted from Attitudes/Motivation Test Battery. To observe the learners' requirement orientation, the paper created a subscale of three questions inquiring if studying English is important simply because they need the credits for school requirement.

The background information questionnaire (items 30 to 44) asked for the following information: the participant's gender, residence, English learning and application experiences outside school curricula, English learning and application opportunities of other family members, their English scores from the college entrance examination, self-rating of English proficiency, whether their English teachers were native or non-native speakers of English, the proportion of English language (L2) Vs Mandarin (L1) used in the classroom, whether the participant had ever stayed in an English spoken country...etc. Information in this part mainly serves as learners' past experience related to English learning.

Participants did the questionnaire in Chinese to facilitate better understanding. The data were analyzed by using the statistical software SPSS11.0.

IV. RESULTS OF STUDY I

A. The Mean Scores of the Variables of Motivation and Three Different Orientations

The mean scores of the variables of motivation and three different orientations as follows (Fig.1). Mean scores over three suggest that three orientations exist among students, mean scores from 2.194 to 3.915. With the highest mean score for instrumental orientation (3.915), followed by requirement orientation (3.317), then integrative orientation (2.194) as the lowest.

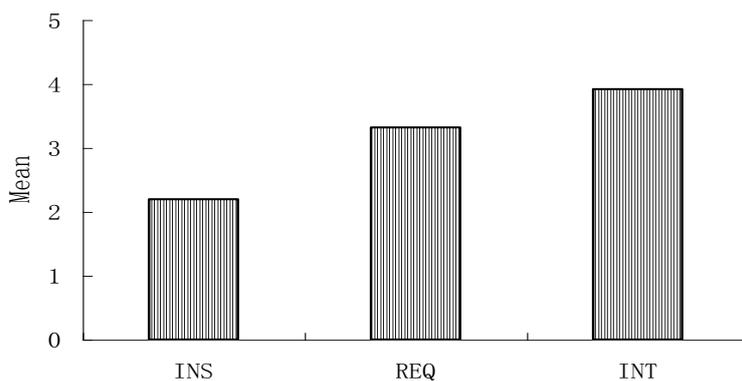


Figure 1. The mean scores of the variables of motivation and three different orientations

B. Correlation Analysis between Motivation and the Orientations.

The results of the correlation analysis between motivation and the orientations discussed are presented in Table 1. There is a high positive correlation between learners' motivation and integrative orientation ($r=0.580^{**}$, $p=0.01$, $n=200$), also between learners' motivation and instrumental orientation ($r=0.575^{**}$, $p=0.01$, $n=200$), and a low correlation between learners' motivation and requirement orientation ($r=0.193^{**}$, $p=0.01$, $n=200$).

TABLE 1.
PERSON CORRELATION ABOUT CORRELATION ANALYSIS BETWEEN MOTIVATION AND THE ORIENTATIONS

	INT	INS	REQ	MOT
INT	1.000			
INS	0.571 ^{**}	1.000		
REQ	0.402 ^{**}	0.466 ^{**}	1.000	
MOT	0.580 ^{**}	0.575 ^{**}	0.193 ^{**}	1.000

^{**} Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

C. Multiple Regression Analysis, Independent Sample T-tests and ANOVA

A multiple regression analysis was used to determine how well the different orientations can predict English learning motivation. All three factors were entered in stepwise multiple regression procedures as independent variables and the score of motivation were entered as the dependent variable. The results show that integrative orientation and instrumental orientation can account for 35.6 percent of the variance of the dependent variable (Appendix II).

Independent sample t-tests and ANOVA were used to investigate motivation differences among some personal data inquired in the questionnaire (Questions 30 to 44). Significant differences are found in the following personal data: (* is significant at the 0.05 level; ** is significant at the 0.01 level.)

1. The Chances of using English outside the Classroom

The chances of using English outside the classroom (Q36, $F=2.674^{**}$, $p=0.01$) are presented in Table 2. From the table we can see the opportunities of talking in English with foreign friends hold the highest mean score on motivation.

TABLE 2.
RESULTS OF MEAN SCORES AND ANOVA ABOUT THE CHANCES OF USING ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

	Number	Mean	F	p
1. Hardly	134	2.293	2.674*	0.01
2. Sometimes with other teachers or peers	29	2.491		
3. Sometimes with foreign friends	11	2.663		
4. Sometimes with my family members	5	2.571		

2. Past English Learning Experience

Past English learning experience (Q37, $F=4.406^{**}$, $p=0.01$) are presented in Table 3. Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons indicates that the experience of having studied at only school has the highest score, much higher than the experience of private institutes and training school.

TABLE 3.
RESULTS OF MEAN SCORES AND ANOVA, AND MULTIPLE COMPARISONS ABOUT PAST ENGLISH LEARNING EXPERIENCE

	N	Mean	F	p	Multiple Comparisons
1. Only at school	175	2.896	4.406**	0.01	(1,2)**
2. Have learned at private institutes	30	2.517			
3. Have studied in a training school	15	2.385			

3. English Learning Experience & Family Background

English learning experience of other family members (Q38) ($t=1.994^*$, $p=0.05$). English using experience of other family members (Q39) ($t=2.504^{**}$, $p=0.01$), and abroad living experience of other family members (Q40) ($t=2.025^{**}$, $p=0.01$) are present in Table 4.

Independent t-test shows that scores appeared to be higher when participants had family members who majored in English or English related subjects than when no family member ever majored in English or English related subjects. Results with family members using English at work also have higher score than no family members using English at work. And the experience of having lived abroad of other family members scored higher than when no family members ever lived abroad.

TABLE 4.
RESULTS OF MEAN SCORES AND T-TEST ABOUT ENGLISH LEARNING EXPERIENCE & FAMILY BACKGROUND

		N	Mean	t	p
Q38	1. Yes	32	3.356	1.994	0.01
	2. No	168	3.119		
Q39	1. Yes	29	3.452	2.504	0.01
	2. No	171	3.137		
Q40	1. Yes	8	3.691	2.205	0.01
	2. No	192	2.998		

4. English Achievement (Q41).

Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons strongly indicate that scores of College Entrance Examination (CEE) between 80~89 obtain higher mean score on motivation than scores of CEE under 69 (Table 5).

TABLE 5.
RESULTS OF MEAN SCORES AND ANOVA, AND MULTIPLE COMPARISONS ABOUT ENGLISH ACHIEVEMENT

	N	Mean	F	p	Multiple Comparisons
1. Under 69	90	2.921	5.856**	0.01	(1,3)**
2. 70~79	62	3.139			
3. 80~89	35	3.460			
4. 90 and up	13	3.175			

5. Self-rating proficiency of English (SRPE) (Q42)

Self-rating proficiency of English (SRPE) is present in Table 6. No participants rated themselves as higher intermediate and advanced level user of English. Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons show that SRPE as intermediate has the highest mean score, followed by SRPE as lower intermediate, and the lowest mean score goes to SRPE as beginner.

TABLE 6.
RESULTS OF MEAN SCORES AND ANOVA, AND MULTIPLE COMPARISONS ABOUT SELF-RATING PROFICIENCY OF ENGLISH

	N	Mean	F	p	Multiple comparisons
1. Beginner	109	3.156	16.95**	0.01	(1,2)**
2. Lower intermediate	71	3.400			(1,3)**
3. Intermediate	20	3.667			(2,3)**

V. STUDY II

A. Object and Methods

Study I quantitative results provided us with broad findings about English (main foreign language in China) motivation patterns of students in China. The goal for the second phase of the study was to extend and add depth to our quantitative findings, and to provide comparative results between English and French or Japanese (rare foreign language in China).

To accomplish this, we used the similar questionnaire like used in Study I, and used the same methods to analyze the data.

In this phase, seventy first-year students, 37 students registered in language course in the French class and the other 33 students registered in language course in the Japanese class. All participants were native speakers of Mandarin. Most of them received at most one year of experience with French or Japanese before entering colleges, for the two languages are not a required subject in the curriculum from middle school through college or university. They select to learn French or Japanese based on their individual's interest.

B. Result from Study II

The mean scores of the variables of French and Japanese motivation and three different orientations as follows: mean scores over three suggest that three orientations exist among students, mean scores from 2.315 to 4.075, with the highest mean score for instrumental orientation, followed by requirement orientation, then integrative orientation as the lowest. In addition, the result of correlation parameters between motivation and the orientations show that there is a high positive correlation between learners' motivation and integrative orientation ($r=0.67^{**}$, $p=0.01$, $n=70$), also between learners' motivation and instrumental orientation ($r=0.49^{**}$, $p=0.01$, $n=70$), and a low correlation between learners' motivation and requirement orientation ($r=0.24^{**}$, $p=0.01$, $n=70$).

A summary of findings in terms of similarities and differences of learning motivation between English and French & Japanese is presented in Table 7 for the four aspects relevant to a second language experience that were examined. Overall, learner's motivation in English and French or Japanese did not differ in main respects; the biggest difference in integrative orientation is higher in French or Japanese than English. The summary presented in Table 7 is discussed in the next section.

TABLE 7.
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF LEARNING MOTIVATION BETWEEN ENGLISH AND FRENCH OR JAPANESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AT THE POLYTECHNIC COLLEGE IN CHINA

Similarities	Differences
Antecedents	
Gender	
Age	
Type of studies	
High school foreign language (English is a an obligatory course)	High school foreign language (French or Japanese is a an optional course)
Individual difference	
Language anxiety levels	
Visits to foreign language environment (less in English)	Visits to foreign language environment (more change to do in French or Japanese)
Context	
Course level (English: four years)	Course level (French or Japanese three years)
Multiple regression analysis	
The changes of using foreign language outside the classroom (more in English)	The changes of using foreign language outside the classroom (less in French or Japanese)
Past foreign language learning experience mainly from higher school (English)	Past foreign language learning experience mainly from training school or parents (French or Japanese)
Family background. English learning and using experience of other family members is about 15%.	The radio of French and Japanese learning and using experience of other family members is about 4%.
Abroad living experience of other family members is about 6%	Abroad living experience of other family members is about 20%
Self-rating proficiency of L2	

VI. DISCUSSION

A. Based on Study I

The first question is about whether the three orientations (integrative, instrumental, and requirement) exist among the participants. Mean scores over three on all three orientations in question suggest that these students study English for integrative, instrumental, and requirement reasons. Among these orientations, instrumentality appears to be the most important factor for students to study English. To pass school requirements places second in importance-slightly higher than integrative orientation. These results are consistent with Dornyei (2001) and other researchers' view of language learning orientation discussed in the literature review, which argues that for EFL learners, instrumental orientation may be more relevant than integrative orientation. Requirement orientation is at the same time confirmed in the results. To

the participants of this study, school credits are an important reason for studying English.

The second question is to investigate the correlation of learners' language learning orientations and their motivation. The results of the correlation analysis indicate that integrative orientation and instrumental orientation are strong determinants of students' motivation to learn English. And the high, positive correlation between integrative and instrumental orientation suggests that students start with the instrumental orientation in language learning may at the same time develop integrative attitudes towards the target language and vice versa. In comparison, requirement orientation appears to be a weak determinant of students' motivation. Students study English because of school requirements may not be motivated to commit extra efforts to English studies.

As for the personal data, there are no differences in language learning motivation among students with different gender, majors, residence, or experience of traveling abroad, the native language of the English instructors, or the language used in the classroom.

Students whose family members had English-related experiences, such as majoring in English, experience of living abroad, or using English at work, seem to demonstrate higher motivation than those who do not. It may be concluded thus that these family members serve as role models to the learners and encourage them to be more engaged in English studies, either for integrative or instrumental reasons.

Students who have chances to speak English with foreign friends outside the classroom appear to be more motivated than those who do not. A real chance of using the language instead of practicing it in a stimulated situation gives the learners a sense of usefulness of the language and stimulates their desire to learn that language.

The experience of learning English in school which offer mostly English conversation skills with native speakers, scores much higher in motivation in relation to that of training school, which are examination-oriented with the only purpose of helping students pass the college entrance examination or that of no extra English learning experience outside the classroom (Murphey, 2003). The results again confirm that integrativeness and instrumentality are the stronger determining factors of motivation. Students studying a foreign language for requirement purpose may stop engaging themselves in the study once the requirement is fulfilled.

The scores of college entrance examination in this study as students' language learning achievements. Obviously shown in the results, the better the performance in college entrance examination and the higher self-rating in language proficiency are, the stronger the motivation is. It could be interpreted that higher motivation leads to successful learning outcomes. Also, higher self-estimated ability in language skills contributes to the motivation to achieve the learning goals.

B. Based on Study II

Gardner's motivation construction has often been understood as the interplay of two compounds, integrative and instrumental motivations. The former is associated with a positive disposition toward the L2 group and the desire to interact with and even become similar to valued members of that community. The latter is related to the potential pragmatic gains of L2 proficiency, such as getting a better job or a higher salary. In this study, we observed that learning motivation of English and French or Japanese share more characteristics than they differ. The main difference in integrative orientation is greater in French or Japanese than English. There are two possible reasons for this. 1) The existence of power relationships between languages. Subjects, who select instrumental reasons over integrative ones, often take into consideration the economic and practical advantages of learning a foreign language. We observed in our study that learners faced with the choice between English and French or Japanese; generally choose the former as it has become a kind of *lingua franca*, placing those who are able to use it in a more favorable position than those who are proficient in French or Japanese. In the same way, members of a minority group may have different attitudes and motivations when learning the language of a majority group than those of majority group members learning a minority language. Here, case of immigrants is perhaps the most relevant. 2) The difference between English and French or Japanese is partly due to the policy in China. English is not only a foreign language, but also is a second official language in Chinese mainland. The status or role differ may yield different results in motivation. It must be noted, however, the reasons mentioned above are not absolute or sole. This is because motivation is complex and itself is dynamic (Gardner's state). Further research is required to obtain more data to explain the reason that affects the pattern of results in second language acquisition.

As indicated in this paper, motivation is a crucial factor in learning a foreign language, which is influenced by different variables: personality variables, the attitudes of learners, their learning styles, and even the power relationships between languages.

VII. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study present three implications. First, the results confirm the existence of three language learning orientations: integrative, instrumental, and requirement. Course requirements, though ranking the second at the reason for learning the language, correlate little with English learning motivation. Second, students tend to be more motivated in learning a foreign language if their family members have to use L2 either at work, or in studies, or in life. Students may obtain the positive attitudes or see the usefulness of L2 through these role models. Third, teacher can help students build up self-confidence in language skills by creating an encouraging and flexible learning environment where

students can reflect on their expectations of their “language” learning and develop a strong sense of self-efficacy (Wen, 1997).

Since the sample of present study is composed of students of a college. The generalization of its findings to other populations or contexts may be limited. It would be worth conducting further studies to include a much larger scope of samples. Finally, results of this study have implications for policy-makers.

APPENDIX I (QUESTIONNAIRE)

Student Questionnaire

Attitudes toward Learning English (Motivation)

1. I hate English.
2. English is an important part of school program.
3. I really enjoy learning English.
4. I think that learning English is dull.

Motivational Intensity (Motivation)

5. I will try to understand all the English I see and hear.
6. I do not try to understand the more complex aspects of English.
7. I keep up to date with English by working on it almost every day.
8. I don't bother checking my corrected assignments in my English course.
9. When I am studying English, I ignore distractions and stick to the job at hand.
10. I don't pay too much attention to the feedback I receive in my English class.
11. I really work hard to learn English.
12. I tend to approach my English homework in a random and unplanned manner.
13. When I have a problem understanding something we are learning in my English class, I always ask the instructor for help.

Desire to Learn English (Motivation)

14. I haven't any great wish to learn more than the basics of English.
15. I want to learn English so well that it will become second nature to me.
16. Knowing English isn't really an important goal in my life.
17. I would like to learn as much English as possible.
18. If it were up to me, I would spend all of my time learning English.
19. To be honest, I really have little desire to learn English.

Integrative Orientation

20. Studying English can be important to me because it will allow me to be more at ease with fellow foreigner who speak English.
21. Studying English can be important for me because it will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people.
22. Studying English can be important for me because it will enable me to better understand and appreciate art and literature of English spoken countries.
23. Studying English can be important for me because it will be able to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups.

Instrumental Orientation

24. Studying English is important for me because I'll need it for my future career.
25. Studying is important to me because I think it will someday be useful in getting a good job.
26. Studying English is important for me because it gives me the edge in competing with others.

Requirement Orientation

27. Studying English is important for me, so I can pass the required courses in school.
28. Studying English is important for me, so I can pass the selected courses in school.
29. Studying English is important for me, so I can graduate from school.

Background Information (History)

30. Sex: Male Female
31. Major: _____
32. School before entering this college: Vocational school Senior high school
33. Residence: ShenZhen City GuangDong Province Other areas
34. How many times have you traveled abroad? Never 1~2 times > 3 times
35. Have you ever stayed in other countries over two months? Yes No
36. Do you use English outside the class? Hardly Sometimes with other teachers or peers Sometimes with foreign friends Sometimes with my family members
37. What is your English learning experience? Only at school Have learned at private language institutes Have studied in a training school Have studied in a whole English school
38. Are there any family members who majored or are now majoring in English or English-related subject? Yes No

39. Are there any family members who use English at work? Yes No
 40. Are there any family members who have the experience of living abroad? Yes No
 41. My English score of the college entrance examination is Under 69 70~79 80~89 90 and up
 42. I rate my English proficiency as: beginner lower intermediate intermediate higher intermediate advanced
 43. My English teacher is a native speaker of English a non-native speaker of English.
 44. In class, my English teacher speaks mostly Chinese mostly English only English

Appendix II (Multiple Regressions)

MODEL SUMMARY				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
2	0.506	0.332	0.401	6.684

Predictors: (Constant), INT,INS

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
2	Regression	7806.53	6	1301.08	61.59	0.01**
	Residual	11035.61	193	57.18		
	Total	20185.46	199			

a Predictors: (Constant), INT,INS

b Dependent Variable: MOT

COEFFICIENTS						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
2	(Constant)	21.456	3.528		6.12	0.01**
	INT	1.35	0.246	0.385	5.014	0.01**
	INS	1.49	0.318	0.275	4.268	0.01**

a Dependent Variable: MOT

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