

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTIVATION FOR  
LEARNING AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG  
BASIC AND ADVANCED LEVEL STUDENTS STUDYING  
CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN YEARS 3 TO 6 AT  
ASCOT INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN BANGKOK,  
THAILAND**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to determine the level of motivational goal orientation, and the relationship between the motivational goal orientation and academic achievement among basic and advanced level students studying Chinese as a foreign language in years 3 to 6 at Ascot International School in Bangkok, Thailand. The study respondents were 127 students studying Chinese as a foreign language in years 3 to 6 at Ascot International School in 2014. This study followed a quantitative research methodology employing both a questionnaire and unit quizzes to address the research objectives. There were two main parts included in the study: the level of motivational goal orientation and the relationship between motivational goal orientation and academic achievement among basic and advanced level students. In this study, the motivational goal orientation focused on intrinsic and extrinsic goal orientation. Based on the study objectives, there were eight main findings: 1) the level of intrinsic goal orientation of the basic class was high; 2) the level of intrinsic goal orientation of the advanced class was high; 3) the level of extrinsic goal orientation of the basic class was high; 4) The level of extrinsic goal orientation of advanced class was very high; 5) no significant relationship was found between intrinsic goal orientation and academic achievement among basic class students; 6) there is a significant relationship found between the intrinsic goal orientation and academic achievement among advanced class students; 7) there is a significant relationship found between the extrinsic goal orientation and academic achievement among basic class students ; 8) there is a significant relationship found between the extrinsic goal orientation and academic achievement among advanced class students.

**Keywords:** Motivational Goal Orientation, Academic Achievement, Learning Chinese as A Foreign Language, Year 3 to 6 Students, Ascot International School, Bangkok, Thailand.

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## **Introduction**

Language is not only a tool for communication but also a tool for learning. Language can be considered as a cognitive ability to learn and use a complex communication system. People learn language for purposes of communication, study, socializing as well as many other functions. So it is not difficult to know the importance of language. In this modern world, many people not only learn one language, but also teach a second, third or even more languages. A second language is one that is not a person's first, or native, language (Gass & Selinker, 2008).

Motivation is a critically important factor for learning. Why students learn and how they learn is influenced by their level of motivation to learn. Many authors consider that there are different levels of motivation, and these different levels affect what students learn and how much they learn (McCombs & Miller, 2007). Motivation is an internal force which encourages students to achieve their own goals. It is what drives a student's participation in the learning process. The concept of motivation also includes the students' reasons for learning and the learning achievement goals they set for themselves. Therefore, in the learning process, if students are motivated then they will apply the required effort to learn the necessary knowledge and skills. Then they will achieve their learning goals (Dornyei, 2001). In this study, the researcher was argued that motivation affects Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) study behavior, and so consequently influences the degree of CFL learning. Much research has been done about motivation for second and foreign language learning, e.g., the work of Gardner (1985) and Dornyei (1994). The bulk of this research has focused on learning English as a second or foreign language (ESL, EFL); therefore, there are few studies about learning CFL.

This research focuses on CFL teaching in an international school in Bangkok, Thailand. More than 700 schools in the country offer CFL classes, with some 300,000 students studying the language in elementary and high schools in Thailand in 2013. The figures were obtained from the Office of the Basic Education Commission-OBEC-. This data is only based on the elementary and high schools that teach Chinese as foreign language. There are 125 Chinese schools, 458 public schools and 138 private schools in Thailand (Masuntisuk, 2013).

Ascot International School has been teaching Chinese as a foreign language since 2005. In that time, the school only taught Chinese as an elective course, and then, Chinese class became more and more important. In 2008, Mandarin (Chinese) became one of subjects on the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) examination and so became a required course, with at least 2.5 hours per week (Ascot International School website, 2013).

The researcher has worked as a primary level CFL teacher at Ascot International School since 2013. In Ascot International School, it separated by 4 parts of school, the kindergarten school is included nursery and kindergarten, the early year school is included reception, year 1 and year 3, the primary school is from year 3 to year 6. So the population of this research is only focus on the students in year 3 to year 6. In each year, there are 2 CFL sections, one basic level class, and one advanced level class. The students are separated into two classes for Chinese class, one class is basic group, another one is advanced group. The school separates the classes based on four criteria: 1) the students' individual background knowledge and skill of Chinese

language; 2) whether the students have Chinese background or not; 3) the students Chinese test grade each semester; 4) discipline in the classroom.

Given the researcher's one year of experience as a CFL teacher in Ascot International School, she realized that the students were not highly motivated, especially in the basic classes, where they seemingly had no motivation to learn, leading to very low test scores. In the advanced classes, the motivation of students learning Chinese was higher but even in those classes, students appeared to be minimally interested in learning Chinese.

Therefore, this study was examined the relationship between the level of motivation for learning CFL and student achievement among students in both basic and advanced levels of Chinese in years 3 to 6 classes in Ascot International School, Bangkok. Ascot International School is a private, British style school in Bangkok.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### *Motivation for Language Learning*

Much research has been done focusing on motivation for learning. Many researchers consider that motivation is the principle element in learning. Pintrich and Schunk (1996) deemed that new learning and previous learned behaviors, strategies and skills could be influenced by motivation. Motivation can lead the learner choose what to learn, when to learn and how to learn (Schunk, 1991).

Motivation is a very broad concept. It is difficult to give a specific definition. Motivation is a complex system and includes many domains such as behavior, cognition, and environmental influences. Some psychologists give a definition of motivation that focuses on specific cognitive drives and needs. Ausubel (1968) mentioned that there are six needs involved in motivation to learn: exploration needs: searching for things unknown; manipulation needs: influencing change; activity needs: acting in both physical and mental areas; stimulation needs: being stimulated by surroundings; knowledge needs: dealing with learning and finding results; ego enhancement needs: improving oneself to be more agreeable to others.

Dornyei (1994) claimed that motivation in second or foreign language learning was related to social factors and learners' attitudes. Bandura (1991) referred to goal setting, self-efficacy and outcome expectations as important motivational processes in education. Learners first set learning goals and then try to attain those goals through learning activities. When a learner successfully attains a learning goal, then her sense of self-efficacy for learning will be enhanced as well as her expectations of success in learning. Thus, the learner will become more motivated to tackle future, challenging learning goals (Bandura, 1991).

A classic paper by White (1959), based on various studies of motivation types, considered that motivation makes learning efficient by helping a learner select what to study and then helping to maintain the learning behavior. During this process, the learner derives satisfaction from an intrinsic need to adapt to the learning environment. This is the early work on the types of motivation. After that, Deci and Ryan, in their self-determination theory, identified motivation as consisting of two main dimensions: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

### *Intrinsic motivation*

Deci and Ryan (1985) mentioned that intrinsically motivated people are motivated by the activity itself, not by external rewards. Intrinsic motivation, therefore, is the desire to engage in an activity for its own sake and not for external reward (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). This type of motivation is driven by internal factors, such as interest, curiosity, attitude or enjoyment. Genuine intrinsic motivation it is not easily affected by external rewards or pressures. Learners who are motivated intrinsically are more likely to engage willingly and enjoyably in learning activities to consciously learn and improve their skills, abilities, and capabilities. Most of them have good autonomy of behavior, self-efficacy, and have more interest in learning as well. While researching intrinsic motivation, Ur (1996) discovered that it is common with children, a typical motivation of young children, but that it decreases with age.

### *Extrinsic Motivation*

Extrinsic motivation comes from outside rather than inside the individual. Factors that could motivate people are external in the environment and may consist of rewards, like money or grades. Learners may be motivated by rewards or grades, because those things give them satisfaction or pleasure, but the task itself may not give that satisfaction or pleasure.

Printrich & Schunk (1996) pointed out that extrinsic motivation is the opposite of intrinsic motivation in that it is the motivation to engage in an activity which proceeds from the ends of an activity rather than the means to its attainment. Extrinsically motivated people tend to be greatly affected by the external environment. In other words, extrinsic motivation is to motivate the learner by the result. It comes from the influence of external factors (Ur, 1996). The extrinsically motivated learner may not have interest in the task, but it does not mean the learner will not expend effort to do the task. The learner will be motivated by the result. Extrinsic motivation can be an extremely strong and effective spur to action. The difference with intrinsic motivation is that once the result is attained and the reward received, the motivation is gone.

Whether it is intrinsic motivation or extrinsic motivation, they both motivate the process of learning. However, it is vital to understand the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, i.e., to understand which of the two is most consistently effective for foreign language learning.

Bany and Johnson (1975, cited in Detaramani & Chan, 1999) argued that intrinsic motivation is self-motivation and it occurs when the task of learning is in itself satisfying. Extrinsic motivation involves the learner having a purpose for learning that comes from outside the learner and the tasks themselves. Learning is a complex process drawing on both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The intrinsic and extrinsic motivation could be considered as two sides of a continuum. They are not separate factors, but rather are dimensions of motivation along a continuum. Extrinsic motivation may be conceptualized as being at the lower end of the motivation scale and intrinsic motivation at the higher end. When a learner has a given learning task, her motivation may be high (intrinsic) sometimes or perhaps low (extrinsic) sometimes or medium at still other times (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Brown (1994) also pointed out that the intrinsic-extrinsic motivation continuum can be applied to

foreign language learning and classrooms around the world. Also, Daskalovska, Gudeva & Ivanovska (2012) noted that learners' motivation to learn a language is the most important element which influences the success of language learning. However, whether internal or external, whether because of integrative factors or instrumental factors, learners have to set long-term goals by themselves and try to reach those goals in their own way. Learners first perform language learning tasks in order to obtain a grade or for some other rewards. Hence, they are motivated extrinsically. However, when learners develop greater knowledge and realize they can be successful at learning the language, they develop self-confidence and want to learn even better than before. Now, learning is not centrally about grades or rewards but rather about intrinsic interest and the desire to gain more knowledge. Thus, the learner has become motivated intrinsically.

Motivation is a critical factor of learning, especially in language study. Apart from intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, there are some other concepts and theories of motivation which aim to explain second and foreign language learning. Gardner and Lambert, from a social psychological perspective, posited two types of L2 learner motivation: integrative and instrumental motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, 1972).

Gardner & Lambert suggested that motivation in second language (L2) learning resides within the individual and is comprised of attitudes, objectives and orientations that support the L2 learning process. Gardner and Lambert proposed two types of motivation in their theory: instrumental motivation and integrative motivation.

#### *Goal orientation*

According to both self-determination theory and social cognitive learning theory, goal orientation is a vital factor in learner success. Cleary and Zimmerman (2004) argued that students will engage in positive learning behavior or strategies when they try to achieve their previously set self-goals (also, Bandura, 1991; Deci & Ryan, 1985). In this process, students' goal orientations affect their learning motivation. The two types of motivational goal orientation employed in this study are intrinsic and extrinsic.

#### *Intrinsic goal orientation*

Intrinsic goal orientation derives from mainly internal reasons, such as curiosity and challenge. In addition, intrinsic goal orientation refers to the levels of student participation in a task because of internal reasons (Pintrich et al., 1991).

#### *Extrinsic goal orientation*

Extrinsic goal orientation derives from mainly external reasons, such as grades, rewards or punishment. In addition, extrinsic goal orientation refers to the levels of student participation in a task because of external reasons (Pintrich et al., 1991).

## **Method**

#### *Population and sample*

The population/sample of this study was comprised of 139 students who studied

Chinese as a foreign in years 3 to 6 in Ascot International School in the first semester (January) of 2014.

### *Instrument*

The research instrument consisted of 3 sections:

A cover letter which was explained the purpose of the research and note that the research outcomes will not be used for any other purposes than this research.

A demographic section which was collected respondents' data as to name, nickname, gender, nationality (Thai or Other) and year level.

A two sub-scales – intrinsic and extrinsic goal orientation - from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia & McKeachie, 1993).

### *Validity and Reliability of MSLQ*

As mentioned, this study was use two the goal orientation components of the MSLQ. Table 1 shows the number of items for each dimension, the specific item numbers on the research questionnaire and the alpha coefficients reported by the scale developers (Pintrich, et al. 1991).

**Table 1: Reliability Statistics for Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation (N=127)**

| Value Component               | Number of items for each component | Items      | Cronbach's Alpha of MSLQ | Cronbach's Alpha of this study |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Intrinsic Goal Orientation    | 4                                  | 1, 3, 5, 7 | .74                      | .76                            |
| Extrinsic Goal Orientation    | 4                                  | 2, 4, 6, 8 | .62                      | .72                            |
| Total Items of Question Items |                                    | 8          |                          |                                |

Additionally, Pintrich et al. (1993) noted that the predictive validity of the scales was “reasonable.” Feiz, Hooman, and Kooshki (2013), in a validation study of the MSLQ, found the instrument to be a “useful” measuring instrument. Further studies indicating the validity of the MSLQ were conducted by Cook, Thompson and Thomas (2011) and Rotgans (2010).

The MSLQ was developed by Pintrich et al. in 1991. It is a self-report instrument designed to assess college students' motivational orientations and their use of different learning strategies for a college course. The MSLQ is based on a general cognitive view of motivation and learning strategies.

There are two sections of the MSLQ, a motivation section (with a total of 31 items) and a learning strategies section (with a total of 50 items). This study employed 2 sub-scales from the motivation section: intrinsic goal orientation (4 items) and extrinsic goal orientation (4 items).

The MSLQ utilizes a 7-point Likert scale as follows:

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Not at all true of me | 1 |
| Untrue of me          | 2 |
| Somewhat untrue of me | 3 |
| Neutral               | 4 |

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Somewhat true of me | 5 |
| True of me          | 6 |
| Very true of me     | 7 |

The researcher transformed the 7-Likert scale into a 5-point scale to evaluate the level of students' motivational goal orientation (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Interpretation Scale of Questionnaire Results**

| Score      | Meaning   |
|------------|-----------|
| 5.81- 7.00 | Very High |
| 4.61- 5.80 | High      |
| 3.41- 4.60 | Moderate  |
| 2.21- 3.40 | Low       |
| 1.00- 2.20 | Very Low  |

This research used the unit quizzes from the IGCSE curriculum to measure the achievement of learning Chinese as a foreign language. But this research only focused on reading and writing skills achievement. There was a test for each unit taken from the book for CFL as a subject of IGCSE named Easy step to Chinese. The reliability of the book that used already proved by the IGCSE, because this book was recommended for the material of Chinese as a foreign language subject of IGCSE, e.g., this book covered all of topics of IGCSE Chinese as a foreign language subject, so the unit quizzes from that book can considered reliable as well. The test is based on the different topics of IGCSE, and the authors designed the content to fit with those topics based on the feedback and helpful advice from the teachers who are teaching those series. It is also based on the guide line of Chinese as a subject of IGCSE. The structure of each unit test was including 10% PinYin, 10% tones, 10% basic strokes, 10% radicals, 10% numbers, 10% basic vocabulary, 10% greetings, 10% sentences arrangement, and 10% essay writing parts. But the quizzes only focus on the reading and writing skill, it was not test the listening and speaking skill in these quizzes. All of the unit quizzes are the same structure as the Chinese examination of IGCSE.

The unit quizzes were given after every unit was finished. In Ascot International School, students usually did the Chinese unit quizzes once a month. Each unit quiz was worth 100 points. So the result was a percentage. This research was not a long term study, so the researcher used the grades of the two unit quizzes for each class already completed in 2013 from year 3 to year 6. In order to ensure equitable and accurate treatment, the researcher was collect at least 2 unit quizzes, and calculated the average grade for each student to measure their achievement in learning Chinese as a foreign language at Ascot International School.

#### *Procedure*

The researcher conducted this research from January 6th to 10th 2014 at Ascot International School. On January 6th the questionnaire was given, and on January 10th the unit quizzes were collected from the students. There were 139 questionnaires distributed and 127 completed, useable questionnaires were returned. This gave a return rate of 91%.

## Findings

This research used both descriptive and correlation statistics.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the respondents' demographics and motivation. In terms of demographics, the researcher collected the respondents' data as to name, nickname, gender, nationality (Thai or Other) and year level.

Table 3 shows the gender of 127 respondents by year level.

**Table 3: The Gender of Students by Year Level**

|        | Year 3 |      | Year 4 |      | Year 5 |      | Year 6 |      | Total |
|--------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|-------|
|        | N      | %    | N      | %    | N      | %    | N      | %    | N     |
| Female | 9      | 15.8 | 15     | 26.3 | 12     | 21.1 | 21     | 36.8 | 57    |
| Male   | 17     | 24.3 | 18     | 25.7 | 20     | 28.6 | 15     | 21.4 | 70    |
| Total  | 26     | 20.5 | 33     | 26.0 | 32     | 25.2 | 36     | 28.3 | 127   |

In the section of motivation, it was the two sub-scales – intrinsic and extrinsic goal orientation - from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Pintrich et al., 1991). There were 8 statements in this part of the questionnaire. Four statements were related to intrinsic motivation, and the other four statements were related to extrinsic motivation. A 7-point likert scale was used to find out the level of students' motivational goal orientation. The maximum score for each motivational goal orientation was 28, and the lowest possible score was 4.

Table 4 presents the mean scores for students' intrinsic and extrinsic goal orientation of the basic and advanced level students learning Chinese as a foreign language in year 3 to year 6 at Ascot International School.

**Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations for Students' Motivational Orientation of the Basic and Advanced Level in Year 3 to Year 6 at Ascot International School**

| Motivational Orientation   | Class    | N  | M    | S.D. | Interpretation |
|----------------------------|----------|----|------|------|----------------|
| Intrinsic goal orientation | Basic    | 61 | 5.13 | 1.40 | High           |
| Intrinsic goal orientation | Advanced | 66 | 5.40 | 1.00 | High           |
| Extrinsic goal orientation | Basic    | 61 | 5.74 | 1.00 | High           |
| Extrinsic goal orientation | Advanced | 66 | 5.90 | .90  | Very high      |

Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations for students' motivational orientation of the basic and advanced level in year 3 to year 6 at Ascot International School, these data claimed that the level of intrinsic goal orientation of both basic and advanced class students was high for learning Chinese as a foreign language in year 3 to year 6; the level of extrinsic goal orientation of basic class students was high, but the level of extrinsic goal orientation of advanced class students was very high for learning Chinese as a foreign language in year 3 to year 6 at Ascot International School.

To examine correlation, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ) was utilized. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient determines the significance and direction of the relationship between two variables assuming that both variables are approximately normally distributed (Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner, &



Barrett, 2007). The skewness was less than plus or minus one for the level of motivational goal orientation and student achievement (the average grade of test), and it was indicated that both of these variables were approximately normally distributed. Therefore, the researcher proceeded with the analysis of the data and the result is shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Pearson Correlation between the Levels of Motivational Orientation and Achievement of Basic and Advanced Level Student in Year 3 to Year 6 at Ascot International School**

| Motivational Orientation   | Class    | Correlation                | Achievement (grade) | Conclusion                            |
|----------------------------|----------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Intrinsic goal orientation | Basic    | Pearson<br>Sig. (2-tailed) | .151<br>.241        | There was no significant relationship |
| Intrinsic goal orientation | Advanced | Pearson<br>Sig. (2-tailed) | .380**<br>.002      | There was a significant relationship  |
| Extrinsic goal orientation | Basic    | Pearson<br>Sig. (2-tailed) | .416**<br>.001      | There was a significant relationship  |
| Extrinsic goal orientation | Advanced | Pearson<br>Sig. (2-tailed) | .356**<br>.003      | There was a significant relationship  |

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As Table 5 indicates, there was no significant relationship found between the intrinsic goal orientation of basic class students and their academic achievement, but there was significant relationship found between the intrinsic goal orientation of advanced class students and their academic achievement; there was significant relationship found between the extrinsic goal orientation both of basic and advanced class students and their academic achievement in Ascot International School.

These main findings were summarized below in Table 6

**Table 6: The Summary of the Main Findings**

| Class level                | Level of motivational goal orientation |           | Correlation with Achievement |                          |
|----------------------------|--|-----------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
|                            | Basic                                  | Advanced  | Basic                        | Advanced                 |
| Intrinsic Goal Orientation | High                                   | High      | No significant relationship  | Significant relationship |
| Extrinsic Goal Orientation | High                                   | Very High | Significant relationship     | Significant relationship |

## Discussion

These findings agreed with the previous study by Ur (1996) which noted that intrinsic motivation was common with children. Ur considered that intrinsic motivation manifested as a typical motivation of young children, but it decreased with age. The current researcher assumes that when young children begin learning a foreign language, they are more interested in this new and relatively unknown language. They

will, therefore, feel interested and have fun when they are learning the new language in the early stages. In Ascot International School, the language curriculum in primary school (in year 3 to year 6) in 2014 has required teachers to differentiate their instruction by using different teaching strategies to make learning fun. The students enjoyed learning language while playing games, singing songs, watching videos and other activities. Though teachers differentiated instruction in all years, the interest of students was not as high after their initial introduction to the language. This indicated that the students were motivated by the activity itself, not by other external factors (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

For extrinsic goal orientation, the results of this study revealed that the students had a high level of extrinsic goal orientation in the advanced classes, but the level of extrinsic goal orientation was slightly higher in the basic classes. For the extrinsic motivation of language learning, Printrich & Schunk (1996) pointed out that extrinsic motivation is to motivate the learner by the results; it derives from the influence of external factors. This is a very interesting finding. The researcher, as a Chinese language teacher in Ascot International School, found that the students in the basic classes had no background of Chinese, or they were new students in Ascot International School, which means they were fresh to learning Chinese as a foreign language. In Ascot International School, if the students could learn well and get better test grades in basic class, they can move to the advanced class. These factors can be understood as external rewards because the students in basic class, unsurprisingly, want to move to advanced class. The previous study of Lyke & Kelaher Young (2006) discovered that students with extrinsic goal orientation can use learning strategies like memorization or guessing better than students with intrinsic goal orientation. This might explain why the students' levels of extrinsic goal orientation in basic class were slightly higher than the advanced class.

For the correlation part of this study, the researcher found that in the advanced class, both the intrinsic and extrinsic goal orientations had a moderately positive relationship with academic achievement; but in the basic class, the intrinsic goal orientation had no significant relationship with academic achievement, and the extrinsic goal orientation had a strong positive relationship with academic achievement. These results were very special and the researcher was surprised by them. They differed from the previous study by Lepper, Corpus & Iyengar (2005) which found a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and performance both in the class and the tests. Especially in the basic class, the intrinsic goal orientation had no significant correlation with academic achievement. After concluding the research findings, the researcher considered that students in basic class had scant background of Chinese and some of them were new students in this school, so it was difficult to motivate them intrinsically. On the other hand, they wanted to get a good grade so they could move to the advanced class, or they wanted to get a good grade in Chinese to show their teacher or parents that they could learn well. In this researcher's work experience in Ascot International School, it was clear that students studying in basic class wanted to move to advanced class. That is the reason that they used some strategies to get good grades in the tests. They were motivated by results, i.e., the grade of Chinese class.

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