



The Correlational Study of Chinese Junior High School Students' Motivation and Attitudes Toward the Learning English as a Foreign Language Situation with Their Academic Achievement

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Abstract

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to determine whether there was a significant relationship between Grade 9 students' motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation for learning English as a foreign language with English academic achievement at a private school in China. A total of 110 Grade 9 students participated in this study. Students' motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation for learning English as a Foreign Language Questionnaire which was adapted from Gardner's (2004) international version of Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (Gardner, 2010) was used in this study consisting of 50 items (Gardner 2004, 2010) under five subscales. The researcher collected data from Grade 9 students studying in the 2021-2022 academic year at a private school in China. For the analysis of the collected data, descriptive statistics, and correlational analysis (using multiple correlation coefficient) was used. The findings of the research indicated that there was a weak correlation among the students' motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation for learning EFL with English academic achievement. Based on the findings, the researcher provides recommendations for students, teachers, school administrators, future researchers.

Keywords: English Academic Achievement, English As A Foreign Language, Attitudes Toward the Learning Situation, Motivation, Socio-Educational Model, Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), A Private School, China.

JEL Classification Code: C12, I20

1. Introduction

Nowadays, English has become the international common language, and it is officially used as a very common foreign language in various sectors in many countries. English, as one of kind of international common language, has been played a crucial role in recent decades. It has become a dominant language globally. In most of fields, the Internet, newspapers, books, travel, business, products, English fluency is required.

With the high speed of China's economic development, many people are keen on learning English as their foreign language in China. According to the previous studies, the results showed that many scholars and users were learning English in China, such as doctors, people in business, investors, traders, engineers, educators, etc., which was one of the main reasons China became the biggest market in the world (Bolton, 2003; He & Zhang, 2010; Jiang, 2002).

Motivation is an inseparable part for learners to study English as a foreign language. If the learners lack motivation in learning a second/foreign language, even

though they have enough abilities, they cannot achieve the goal they made.

Gardner (1980) stated that attitude is a psychological phenomenon that refers to people's inner experiences and behaviors, such as thinking or feeling about someone or something. It was mainly reflected by people's words, expressions, and behaviors. Choy (2006) also stated that attitudes could help people to know their own emotions. The inside feelings of students have a significant influence on students' academic performance and achievement motivation.

For this research, the researcher focus on Grade 9 students at a private school in China and the study aims to find out if there is a significant relationship between motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation for learning EFL with their English academic achievement.

1.1. Research Objectives

The following research objectives will be conducted for this study.

1. To identify the level of motivation for learning English as a foreign language of Grade 9 students at a Private School, China.

2. To identify the level of attitude toward the learning situation for learning English as a foreign language of Grade 9 students at Private School, China.

3. To determine the level of English academic achievement of Grade 9 students at a Private School, China.

4. To determine if there is a significant relationship between motivation and attitude toward the learning situation for learning English as a foreign language with English academic achievement of Grade 9 students at a Private School, China.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

In this study the researcher used one theory to examine the variables of this research study. The socio-educational model of second language acquisition theory by Gardner (2010) to explain, measure, and analyze the motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation for learning EFL.

1.2.1 Gardner's (2010) Socio-Educational Model of Second Language Acquisition

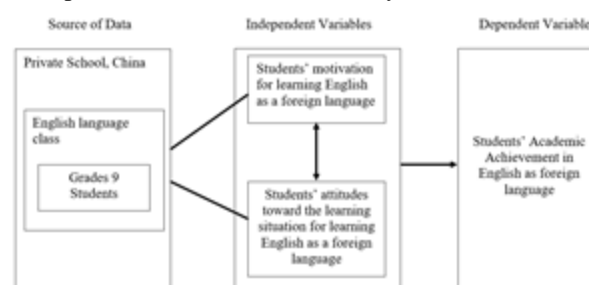
Gardner (2010) claimed that language learning motivation consists of learners' efforts, expectations, and attitudes that contribute to achieving language learning goal. The socio-educational model pointed that the language learning situation is an indispensable component in learning English as a foreign language and that learning motivation is affected by the nature and quality of the learning context, curriculum, the quality of instruction, the teachers, school activities, lesson plan, and the materials among other variables. Second/Foreign language learning motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation are the major focus of this theory. In the socio-educational model of second/foreign language acquisition, there are three components to assess motivation; motivational intensity, the desire to learn English, attitudes toward learning English, and there are two components to assess attitudes toward the learning situation; English teacher evaluation, English course evaluation (Gardner, 2010).

1.3. Conceptual Framework

This study aims to find out if there is a significant relationship between motivation and attitude toward the learning situation for learning English as a foreign language

with English academic achievement of Grade 9 students at a Private School in China, the motivation theory applied in this research is based on Gardner's socio-educational model (Gardner, 2010). Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of this research study.

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework of This Study



2. Literature Review

In this section, some previous studies related to the research variables addressed in this study are reviewed and summarized.

2.1. Previous Studies on Students' Motivation with English as a Foreign Language Academic Achievement

Oranpattanachai (2013) adopted a study on students' motivation and their English language achievement in Thailand. Four hundred twenty students participated, and results stated that the students' motivation correlates with their academic achievement.

Genc and Aydin (2017) developed a study on students' motivation and attitudes toward learning English in Turkey. Four hundred sixty-two participants in the research and data collected used a quantitative research paradigm and used a questionnaire. The findings clearly stated that students had favorable attitudes toward learning English.

Alkaabi (2016) completed a study on Saudi students' motivation and attitudes toward learning English in U.S. 181 students enrolling at diverse schools and universities participated, and Alkaabi interviewed seven students. The findings stated that students had favorable attitudes toward learning English and a high wish to study the English language well.

Wiriyanusorn and Lynch (2019) developed a study on students' motivation and orientation of motivation

toward learning Thai in Thai. The sample composed of 29 non-Thai students in Years 4 to 6 and 44 non-Thai students in Years 7 to 9 non-Thai students at the target school had slightly low levels of motivation toward learning Thai and both Years 4 to 6 and Years 7 to 9 non-Thai students' orientation of motivation was instrumental.

Abi (2019) administered a study on students' motivation to learn English. Two hundred students participated, and the findings showed that student's motivation and attitude toward the learning situation in learning English were high. In addition, students were eager to learn English because they desired to interact with other communities in a different cultural environment, broadening their knowledge and experience in English.

Bobkina and Fernandez (2012) developed a study on motivation and attitudes toward learning English in major industrial and technical engineering. A total of 72 engineering students were from 2 different engineering schools, and the results of the study showed that the students had an excellent pleasant attitude toward learning English.

Asmali (2017) completed a study on Turkish students' motivation and attitudes toward learning English, with 192 participants in this study. The results revealed that students' motivation and attitudes toward learning English had a high level of pleasant attitude toward learning English.

Chalak and Kassaian (2010) developed a study on the motivation and attitudes toward learning English. One hundred eight Iranian students enrolled in English translation. One of the findings indicated that the students had excellent pleasant attitudes toward learning English in motivation and attitudes toward learning English.

Lungley and Lynch (2017) conducted a study on students' motivation for self-selected reading in English and their academic achievement at Thai International School. The study sample was composed of 83 grade 8 to grade 12 students participated. The findings showed that the students' motivation for self-selected reading in English correlated with their reading achievement.

2.2. Previous Studies on Students' Attitudes Toward the Learning Situation with English as a Foreign Language Academic Achievement

Rukh (2014) developed a study on students' attitudes toward learning English and their academic achievement. The study used a quantitative approach and questionnaire to collect data from the participants. Two hundred business students participated, and the findings

showed that the students' attitudes toward learning English had a relationship with academic achievement.

Htun and Lynch (2019) conducted a study on students' attitudes toward learning EFL according to their preference for instructional strategies in Myanmar. A total of 203 learners participated. The study used descriptive statistics and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for statistical hypothesis testing. The findings stated that the learners had positive attitudes toward learning English as a foreign language.

Fakeye (2010) developed a study on students' attitudes toward learning English and their academic achievement from five middle schools in Nigeria. A total of 400 senior secondary students participated, and the results indicated that students' attitudes toward learning English had a relationship with and their achievements in the study.

İnal, Evin, and Saracoğlu (2005) studied attitudes toward foreign language and academic achievement. A total of 421 students participated, and the report indicated that students' attitudes toward foreign languages had a relationship with their academic achievement.

In 2009, Momani conducted a study on attitudes toward learning English and academic achievement from Jordanian secondary. The results showed that the students had pleasant attitudes toward learning English in their academic achievement in reading comprehension and attitudes toward learning English.

3. Research Methods and Materials

3.1. Methodology/Procedure

The researcher will use a convenience sample of 110 students from the total population of 596 for Grade 9 students will be used at the target school. Since Grade 9 has 11 classrooms in the target school, one EFL teacher teaches two classrooms each. Therefore, the researcher tried to contact all the EFL teachers from the target classrooms by emailing them. However, only one teacher replied to an email and agreed to help the researcher. For this reason, out of 11 classrooms for Grade 9, the researcher will conduct this study in 2 classrooms of Grade 9 from the target school.

3.2. Research Instruments

For this study, Students' Motivation and Attitude Toward the Learning Situation for Learning English as a Foreign Language Questionnaire and the monthly test of

English as a foreign language subject were used to collect the research data.

Students' Motivation and Attitudes Toward the Learning Situation for Learning English as a Foreign Language Questionnaire. The survey questionnaire consisted of two parts, comprised of 50 items, to measure and analyze the variables of this research. Part I is the students' demographic information asking students the name and the class. Part II of question consists of the items which measured the students' motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation in learning EFL adapted from three subscales of Gardner's (2004) International Attitude/Motivational Test Battery (Gardner, 2010).

The AMTB is aimed to analyze and measure students' motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation in learning EFL and is comprises of 12 subscales (104 items). In the current study, only five subscales from AMTB will be used in this study. To calculate the attitude toward the learning situation, two subscales from AMTB, English teacher evaluation (10 items) and English course evaluation (10 items), will be used. To measure the motivation for learning EFL, three subscales of AMTB; Motivational intensity (10 items), Desire to learn English (10 items), and Attitudes toward learning English (10 items), will be used (see Appendix A).

To investigate the students' level of motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation for learning EFL, in this study a 7-point Likert scale was utilized. The students have to select one out of six choices (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = moderately disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 5= slightly agree, 6 = moderately agree, 7 = strongly agree). Table 3 presents the score and interpretation for both positively and negatively worded items of the motivation subscales.

Questionnaire for Student's Motivation and Attitudes Toward the Learning Situation was composed of 25 positively worded items which are used to measure and analyze the students' motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation for learning EFL. To investigate the students' level of motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation for learning EFL, in this study, 7-point Likert scales will be utilized. The students have to select one out of six choices (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Moderately disagree, 3 = Slightly disagree, 4= Slightly agree, 5= Moderately agree, 6 = Strongly agree).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Research Findings

From the analysis of the collected data, the following findings were obtained.

4.1.1. Findings from Research Objective 1

Grade 9 students' motivation in learning EFL can be interpreted as slightly low since the mean scores were $M=3.87$, $SD=1.60$. For motivational intensity, the mean was $M=3.81$, $SD=1.61$. which can be interpreted as slightly low. As for the desire to learn English, the mean was $M=3.89$, $SD=1.58$ which can also interpret as slightly low. As for attitudes toward learning English, the mean was $M=3.91$, $SD=1.60$ which can also be interpreted as slightly low.

Table 1

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations and Interpretations of the Grade 9 Students' Motivation for Learning English as a Foreign Language

Variable	Grade 9		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation
Motivation for learning English as a foreign language	3.87	1.60	Slightly low
Motivational intensity	3.81	1.61	Slightly low
Desire to learn English	3.89	1.58	Slightly low
Attitudes toward learning English	3.91	1.60	Slightly low

4.1.2. Findings from Research Objective 2

The overall mean score for Grade 9 students' attitudes toward the learning situation was $M=3.93$, $SD=1.63$ and according to interpretation, the mean score can be interpreted as slightly low since the score was between 3.01-4.00.

Table 2

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations and Interpretations of the Grade 9 Students' Attitudes toward the learning situation for Learning English as a Foreign Language.

Variable Grade 9

Variable	Grade 9		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation
Attitudes toward the learning situation	3.93	1.63	Slightly low
English teacher evaluation	4.04	1.62	Slightly high
English course evaluation	3.82	1.64	Slightly low

4.1.3. Findings from Research Objective 3

The overall mean score for Grade 9 students' English academic achievement for learning English as a foreign language was $M=72.16$, $SD=16.65$ which can interpret as moderate.

Table 3

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations and Interpretations of the Grade 9 Students' English Academic Achievement for Learning English as a Foreign Language.

N	Grade 9		
	M	SD	Interpretation
110	72.16	16.65	Moderate
	5.72	.88	Moderately

4.1.4. Findings from Research Objective 4

Table 4 displays the multiple correlation analysis (using multiple correlational coefficients) in this study.

Table 4

Multiple Correlation Coefficient Analysis Between Students' Motivation and Attitudes toward the learning situation and their English Academic Achievement for Learning English as a Foreign Language

Independent variables	R	R ²	df	F	p
Students' motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation for learning English as a foreign language with English academic achievement	.23	.052	2,107	2.96	<.05

Regarding to this research objective, the following findings were obtained. there was a weak correlation among the students' motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation for learning English as a foreign language with English academic achievement ($R = .23$, $p < .05$) at the significant level of .05. In the Table 19 also presented that students' motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation for learning English as a foreign language explained 5.2 % of the variances with English academic achievement ($R^2 = .052$, $F(2,107)$, $p < .05$). The rest 94.8% of the variance of English academic achievement is explained by other factors such as, language anxiety, parental encouragement, the teachers' encouragement or self-efficacy for learning language.

4.2 Discussion

In this section, the findings obtained from this study are discussed, placing them in context with previous studies. The discussion is organized by variables.

4.2.1. Relationship between students' Motivation for Learning EFL and their English Academic Achievement

Motivation is one of the most important factors which defines second/foreign language learning's success or failure (Dörnyei, 1994), and it has a certain influence on students' performance, attitudes, achievement (Gardner, 2010). Meanwhile, motivation is one of the factors that can call forth one's interest to reach a goal of the task. Gardner and Lambert (1972) mentioned that integrative motivation and instrumental motivation is for the possibility utilitarian gain or needs of finding a good job.

The finding of the current study found that Grade 9 learners at target school had slightly low level of motivation in learning EFL. The findings also revealed that student's motivation was related to their English academic achievement. The result was in line with Wiriyanusorn and Lynch's research (2019) found that Years 4 to Years 6 and Years 7 to Years 9 non-Thai learners' overall motivation for learning Thai was slightly low. Wiriyanusorn and Lynch's research (2019) reasoned that due to the age of the learners, activities in class, teachers, learning Thai as a compulsory subject, and learning atmosphere. All these factors could affect students' level of motivation in learning Thai language. According to Wiriyanusorn and Lynch (2019), the low motivation of the students could also affect to their motivation to learn.

Learning English as a foreign language is one of the three required courses (the other two courses are Chinese literature and mathematic) from Grade 7 in China. There are some major factors of some students at target school are not interest in learning English due to Chinese is the main language in teaching in all subjects. First, some students would rather spend their time on subjects other than English, they had no desire to learn English and English is not really an important goal in their life. Second, English teachers use the grammar-translation method, they focus on the knowledge and exam, some students memorize the English sentence patterns in order to pass the English exam without a good learning method, and the purpose of some students for learning English are to meet the requirement for school, to enter their favorite school, or to get a reward. Third, class activities cannot stimulate students' participation, some teachers nearly focus on good students when joining the activities and other students have less chances to involve to practice their English speaking. Lastly, students learn English 5 classes a week and communicate in English only in class, most of them rarely practice speaking English with friends outside school.



4.2.2 Relationship between Students' Attitudes toward the Learning Situation for Learning EFL and their English Academic Achievement

Attitudes is viewed as a dominant factor affect individual language performance and it plays a crucial part in language learning as it has impact in students' learning outcome in their learning process. Gardner (2010) stated that learning situation is a substantial element in second language learning and considers the motivation to learn the language to be influenced by the learning context. Gardner (2010) also mentioned that in this case includes the objective nature of the curriculum, the teacher, the individual course, the views and regulations of the school authorities, the materials, the time and importance allotted to language instruction, and the quality of instruction. All these factors have a main impact in the individual but the importance is the students' reaction. For this reason, the researcher has focused on evaluative reactions to the teacher and the course.

The findings from this study presented that students' attitudes toward the English teacher was slightly high. The result was in line with Htun and Lynch's research (2019) which surveyed that student from elementary to intermediate level of EFL classes at Gateway Learning Center (GLC), Hpa-an Township, Karen State, Myanmar. The findings from this study founded that the students' attitudes toward English teacher were positive. Htun and Lynch (2019) reasoned that learner had a good feeling toward their English teachers, and it indicated that students were looking forward to going to class because their English teacher was so good. Most of EFL teachers from Gateway Learning Center (GLC) had a positive attitude toward teaching and they always inspire students in class.

The findings from this study presented that English teacher evaluation were slightly high, and the result was founded that students believed that their English teacher was better than any of their other teachers, and English teacher had an interesting style and was a great source of inspiration to the learners, the students were looking forward to going to the English class. However, students' attitudes toward the English course was slightly low, the result was founded that learners may be get bored in the English class, or they had little interest in English class and lessons of the class. According to researcher's discussion with English teacher from the target class, the class activities did not arouse the students' interests so that the students get bored in the class, the design of the assessment are test-based, and the lessons were using grammar-translation method. In conclusion, the

researcher stated that all these factors could affect the level of students' attitudes toward the English course.

4.3. Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are provided for students, school administrators, teachers, and future researchers.

4.3.1. Recommendations for Students

Based on the findings of the study, the results showed that the level of students' motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation were slightly low. This help them to develop their own goals and understand their motivation and attitudes toward the English teacher and English class. Furthermore, the important point is that the stronger motivation and attitudes learners hold, the more learning results students could get. From this research study, the students would become aware of some cogitations concerning their English academic achievement can be affected by their motivation and attitudes. The students may also get some helpful improvement from this study, students should establish a good habit of learning to develop interest for the purpose of meaningful learning.

Additionally, the students could also gain some improvements from this study, and the students could also make progress and make a good chance to succeed in learning EFL.

4.3.2. Recommendations for Administrators

The findings of this study stated that the importance of students' motivation and their attitudes toward the learning situation in learning English as a foreign language. For this reason, it is suggested that the stakeholders are aware of the concepts of learning motivation, attitudes and its relation to success in learning English.

School administrators are viewed as the leadership role in the school. Administrators can approve and give support to the teachers' ideas in order to arouse students' motivation in learning English. As motivation is an important factor for successful English language learning. Administrators are highly advocated to take students' motivation into account when developing school curriculums and school policies. Administrators can consider planning teacher in-service sessions drawing attention to motivational strategies in teaching to help teachers stimulate students' motivation and improve their learning outcomes in learning English.

4.3.3. Recommendations for Teachers

For the teachers, to stimulate students' motivation, the

teachers are highly advocated that provide a positive teaching environment. It is very important that the teachers should integrate motivational strategies into their lessons to cultivate learners' creativity, enthusiasm, and ambition in learning English. Furthermore, the researcher suggested that the teachers can try different teaching methods and create more positive learning environment to motivate students in learning English.

4.3.4. Recommendations for Future Researchers

Future researchers could consider applying larger sample sizes to investigate the relationship between students' motivation, attitudes toward the learning situation and English academic achievement. With large samples, the results will be more reliable and will provide broader findings.

Future researchers could also consider conducting a longitudinal study that follows up with changes in students' motivation and attitudes for learning English throughout the school year and into subsequent years and explore the relationship between the changes of their motivation, attitudes with their language achievement.

Future researchers could also consider doing a mixed study both quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore deeper students' motivation and attitudes for learning English. Through the qualitative approach, a more insightful perspective can be taken to understand the factors that influence students' motivation and attitudes for learning English.

Future researchers should also investigate other variables such as imperativeness, language anxiety, parental encouragement, self-efficacy in learning language and so on. A thorough study will provide researchers with a more accurate understanding of the factors that affect students' English language learning, which will help the teachers and administrators in planning and enhancing the curriculum, and ultimately improve student's learning.

5. Conclusions

From the research findings, the following conclusions were drawn.

5.1. Research Objective 1

The first objective of this research indicated the level of Grade 9 students' motivation for learning EFL from a Private School, China, was slightly low. Students had a slightly low effort in the learning, showed slightly low desire to learn English, and slightly low attitudes in learning EFL. Regarding to the three subscales of the motivation for learning EFL, it can also conclude that Grade 9 students put little effort in the English lesson and classroom activities, the students no desire to learn English and do not want to learn language, and the students show a low attitude toward language learning at a Private School, China. This suggests that the students' motivation for learning EFL could still be increased by the join effort of teachers as well as the students themselves.

5.2. Research Objective 2

The second objective of this research indicated the level of Grade 9 students' attitudes toward the learning situation for learning EFL from a Private School, China, was slightly low and the students showed slightly low feedback to the English course, the students seem to are not interested in the learning materials, the lesson plan, and classroom activities. However, students had a slightly high reaction to the English teacher, the students have a good attitude to the English teachers' effective teaching, teacher feedback, teacher behaviors and teacher's expectations. The findings of study showed that attitudes toward the learning situation for learning EFL can be increased by the join effort of teachers' teaching methods, teachers' expectations as well as the students' effort, the students should be taking the challenge and make an effort to join their lessons and take an active part in the classroom activities, and the teacher should be improved their abilities in different aspects of teaching EFL.

5.3. Research Objective 3

The third objective of this research indicated the level of Grade 9 students' EFL academic achievement from a Private School, China, was moderate. The researcher employed mean and standard deviation to determine learners' EFL academic achievement. This suggests that the students' EFL academic achievement at a private school in China could still be increased with the combined effort of the update teachers' instructional strategies as well as the students' collaboration. The learners should be taking the



challenge and make an effort to learning something from their English classroom.

5.4. Research Objective 4

The fourth objective of this research revealed a weak correlation among the students' motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation for learning EFL with English academic achievement at a Private School, China at .05 level. It shows that students' motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation for learning EFL explained 5.2 % of the variances with English academic achievement. The rest 94.8% of the variance of English academic achievement is explained by other factors such as, language anxiety, parental encouragement, the teachers' encouragement or self-efficacy for learning language.

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