Chinese Language Learner Motivation: Vision, Socialization and Progression

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Abstract

Echoing Dörnyei and his colleagues' conceptual discussion of the "L2 Motivational Self System" (Dörnyei 2005, 2009; Muir & Dörnyei, 2013), this paper introduces case studies that examine how vision relates to the long-term motivation of learners of Chinese. The findings indicate: first, the social roles learners expect to play and visualize could affect their learning behaviors and what they consider as motivating learning experiences. Second, it is through meaningful socialization that learners construct and reinforce their motivation to learn. Last, learners' vision is closely connected with socialization and sense of progression. With a well-established learning mechanism (*vision, socialization and progression*), learners constantly adjust their expectations, visualize the successful second culture (C2) selves, monitor their own progress, and evaluate their assumptions by interacting with native speakers of the target culture.

Keywords: motivation, learners of Chinese, vision, socialization, progression

James Carse in his work *Finite and Infinite Games* (1986) determines two types of games and game players which can be categorized by different motivations: a finite game is played for the purpose of winning, and an infinite game is played for the purpose of continuing the play (p. 3). What learning experiences can be pedagogically designed to motivate learners of Chinese and make them the infinite players who continuously engage with learning and using Chinese language outside the classroom is the fundamental concern of this paper.

Sustainable Motivation to Perform Beyond Language Proficiency

This paper identifies and expands learning experiences that increase Chinese language learners' long-term interactions with the language and culture which requires a sustainable willingness to learn the language and perform in the target culture.

L2 motivation and sustainable motivators

In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), students' learning motivation has been a favored research topic. Studies along the social-psychological perspectives tend to distinguish L2 motivation from other types of human motives, and consider motivation as a

significant cause of variability in SLA. Gardner points out that the cultural component of language learning motivation and classroom learning motivation operate on the individual at any given time (Gardner, 2010, p. 10), but it remains unclear how these two types of motivation affect learner behaviors and how best to enrich learning experiences by bridging these factors in the classroom and beyond. Although I agree with Gardner (2010)'s distinction between static reasons, directional orientation, and multi-dimensional motivation to a certain degree, there are two aspects of his theories I would like to refine when discussing pedagogy of less commonly taught foreign languages, such as Chinese. First, positive responses to the learning activities are suggested as an indicator of one's motivation to learn in his work. However, as instructors of less commonly taught foreign languages, we often witness our most driven and well-prepared language students struggle at certain points. A positive language student who enjoys the classes is not necessarily a motivated language learner, and vice versa. Students at different stages encounter all types of challenges that could hinder or even end their learning of the language. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) suggest that "language learning is a sustained and often tedious process with lots of temporary ups and downs, and I felt that the secret of successful learners was their possession of a superordinate vision that kept them on track" (p. 25). Motivated language learners do not necessarily appreciate or enjoy each learning activity, instead, they are willing to endure the discomfort, adjust learning strategies and expectations, and rebound to the available track. Another issue is that some key factors in Gardner's work such as nationally recognized bilingualism, commonly shared cultural belief towards the target community or frequent social interaction with native speakers do not apply to students who learn Chinese or Japanese in the United States. Most American students of East Asian languages do not have much direct exposure to the target culture before they learn the language. Instead of an integrative attitude towards the target culture, these students usually have some reasons to study the language, such as interest in Japanese *manga* or teaching English in an Asian country. However, these static reasons are not motivation. Once students begin to learn the language and encounter excitement and difficulties, they gradually develop a dynamic learning mechanism which includes motivation construction.

During the 1990s, there was a shift in research of language learning from the social-psychological tradition to a cognitive-situated one which brings L2 motivation research in line with cognitive theories in mainstream motivational psychology. Among these studies, Dörnyei and his colleagues (Dörnyei 2005, 2009) developed a "L2 Motivational Self System" based on the possible-selves theory of Markus and Nurius (1986). Muir and Dörnyei (2013) define

vision as "the mental representation of the sensory experience of a future goal state" (p. 357), which should be used for pedagogical design to create effective motivational pathways to directly energize long-term, sustained learning behaviors. According to them, a "*process-oriented imagery*" is as significant as using outcome simulation. Furthermore, the more detailed, personal and vivid the visions of one's future selves are, the more motivating these visionary interventions could be. Csizer and Dörnyei (2005) also proposed a redefinition of language learning integrativeness relating it with L2 possible-selves: what students might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming. In Gardner (2010)'s socio-educational model, integrativeness is an affective concept constructed mostly through interaction with the learning community, while L2-specific selves lead to a cognitive milieu where the learning outcome is associated with how learners perceive their future and use that imaginary self as a driving force. As Gardner (2010) challenged, Dörnyei's studies did not further explore the correlations between this perception of the self and the effectiveness of language learning. However, Dörnyei's conceptual discussion of visioning L2 selves contributes greatly to understand how learning motivation could be sustained when students do not have direct access to the target culture.

Some recent studies on classroom motivation claim to work beyond the cognitive-situative epistemological divide and combine individual and social processes. Jarvela, Volet, & Jarvenoja (2010) discuss two characterizations of the role the social plays in conceptualization of motivation: social influence and social construction. Studies along this line examine classroom interaction and pay adequate attention to individual cognitive perspectives and social processes (Turner & Patrick, 2004; Vauras, Iiskala, Kajamies, Kinnunen, & Lehtinen, 2003). They consider learning motivation as the psychological processes that drive student engagement, and the processes that emerge through human interaction.

Echoing Dörnyei and his colleagues' discussion of visioning L2 and the attempt to bridge the individual and social processes, this paper examines how vision relates with Chinese language learners' long-term motivation from beginning to advanced levels. As Pink (2009) suggests, the mastery asymptote is a source of frustration but the joy is in the pursuit more than the ever-receding realization of the goal (p. 125). While the asymptotic nature of mastery could be a source of frustration (i.e. the inability to achieve nativeness), the sense of approaching mastery is what constantly keeps people motivated.

Language learning motivation, socialization and cultural expertise

My understanding of constructing language learner's motivation also builds on theories in the sociolinguistic tradition (Voloshinov, Metejka, & Titunik, 1973; Gumperz, 1982), interactional sociolinguistics applied to educational research (Green & Wallat, 1981; Bloome 2005) and cognitive discussions of change in behavior as a consequence of interaction of motivation (J.Heckhausen & H.Heckhausen, 2008; Csizer & Dörnyei, 2005). One implication of associating Dörnyei (2009)'s L2 motivational self system with these behavior changing theories is that understanding students' motivation beyond the classroom setting requires a description of what they visualize and do in general, with special attention given to how they interact with the target community.

Considering language learning as an extended journey to achieve linguistic and cultural expertise, we should also realize that different agents of socialization are involved in constructing learner motivation at various stages. For beginning-level foreign language students, teacher feedback, grades, and peers' performances are key elements when assessing their own efforts. On the contrary, a long-term motivated language learner must be someone who derives self-satisfaction and constantly seeks opportunities to repeat the mental pleasure of learning a foreign language outside the classroom. Therefore, this paper suggests that there are different levels of communication and negotiation between people from the first (C1) and second (C2) cultures, and a "third space" is the ideal result of participants from C1 and C2 negotiating a mutually recognized purpose. Furthermore, negotiating a third space is a cultural competence that motivated language learners and users must develop. According to Kramsch (2009), "the concept of third culture was meant to capture the experience of the boundary between NS (native speaker) and NNS (non-native speaker)" (p. 239). Kramsch positions a third culture as a popular, critical and ecological language and cultural mode that L2 learners created for themselves. This paper, on the other hand, suggests that a third space is co-constructed by people from C1 and C2, and more importantly, functions to the benefit of both groups. A third space is also where people with diverse cultural background could perform different roles and gain a sense of achievement through interacting with each other. It takes proper training for one to learn to create and function in a third space. In the context of Chinese language pedagogy, the driving force to learn Chinese to a high level of proficiency and cultural expertise involves vision, sustained sense of progression, and socialization between language learners and their Chinese counterparts.

The Study

Rationale of the study

When we extend our discussion into language learners' expertise in living and working successfully in Chinese culture, the definition and construction of learning motivation should likewise be revised. Students as infinite cultural players should be prepared to monitor their progress and master new skills. Even though there is no full mastery in any aspect, the possibility of breaking through to higher levels or surpassing one's own best performance brings enjoyment to learners. Two main concerns that initiate this empirical study[1] are: 1) What motivates finite learners to grow into infinite learners of Chinese, and 2) How does their journey extend into advanced-levels and beyond.

Research questions

Breaking the divide between social-psychology and cognitive approach, I propose that motivation construction involves three interrelated components: socialization, vision and progression (see Figure 1). Along with Dörnyei and his colleagues, this model argues that a detailed and process-oriented vision of oneself plays a significant role in motivating language learners. Students should be guided to visualize themselves using the foreign language to interact with the target community at a relatively early stage. Thus, *socialization*, in this model, should be considered as both the content and outcome of a successful vision system. *Progression*, in this model, represents a learning mechanism that realizes continual improvement and generates the willingness to further participate in meaningful vision and socialization activities.

Figure 1: Cyclic Nature of Motivation Construction

As discussed, human beings act and react to each other in a multitude of social contexts on a daily basis. It is through meaningful *socialization* that we construct and

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[1] IRB protocol # 2016E0438.

reinforce the motivation to learn. For beginning-level Chinese students, those interactions with native speakers mostly take place in a classroom setting. One could argue that a high level of proficiency could be achieved through limited social interaction, namely through practicing in the classroom setting or even individually. However, when we examine and focus on language learners' working capacity in the target culture, it is reasonable to agree that socialization with native speakers is a critical component in the process of learning.

Furthermore, agreeing with Pink (2009) who positions autonomy, mastery and purpose as the three nutrients to a sustainable and self-directed motivation (p. 78), this model suggests that infinite players of the language learning game are those who can generate, monitor and sense their own *progression*. The motivation to learn a foreign language is usually spontaneously influenced by these three components. While one single aspect of learning could demotivate a language student, a motivated language learner must be stimulated by multiple factors. For example, a poorly designed feedback system could directly affect one's willingness to practice. However, successful language learners are unlikely to be motivated only by the grades they receive.

The two subjects selected in this study joined the Midwest Chinese Flagship Program (MCFP) in the United States with a clear goal of linking their language skills with their areas of interest. This study is designed to understand various learning experiences from these two successful Chinese learners' perspectives, and understand the cyclic nature of motivation construction. By investigating the individual learning journey and discussing motivating experiences at different stages of Chinese learning, the following questions are addressed: First, which experiences were considered as crucial and motivational by the subjects? Second, how does their vision of using Chinese relate to long-term willingness to learn and perform in a specific domain? Lastly, how does their interaction with Chinese associates affect their willingness to engage, perform and practice?

Subjects: Learn in Chinese and work in China

Both subjects of the study successfully graduated from the MCFP. Over the past decade, the program has trained more than one hundred Chinese language learners who not only achieved advanced to superior level proficiency as indicated by Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) testing, but also developed demonstrable working capacities in Chinese culture. In addition to writing a master's thesis in Chinese, both of them worked in a Chinese institution as an intern during year two of the program. Living and working in China as a foreigner is markedly different than being a foreign student in China. When examining some

of the basic skills one needs to work in Chinese culture, we quickly realize that none of these "basic" skills can be developed without a willingness to negotiate and co-construct a third space with the target community. In this regard, both subjects should be considered as potential infinite players of the Sino-US game.

However, the two subjects were also selected because of their distinguishable but representative learning backgrounds. Alex Walker (pseudonym) followed the Combined Bachelor's/ Master's degree path to complete his Bachelor's degree in a non-language major and a Master's Degree in advanced Chinese language and culture. He started learning Chinese during high school in Chicago and joined the MCFP with a clear intention of improving his Chinese and extending it into his future career. He was introduced to the combined undergraduate-graduate Chinese track during his first year in college and then worked toward that goal. Alex developed an interest in researching China's influences on Hollywood films during his first year in the master's program, and eventually attended the prestigious Beijing Film Academy. He now works in a film production company in Beijing and frequently interacts with young and well-known Chinese movie directors.

Jenny Liu (pseudonym), on the other hand, is an American-born Taiwanese. Mandarin Chinese is Jenny's native tongue as her parents, originally from Taiwan, taught her Chinese from an early age. Her parents, like many first-generation immigrants in the United States, use their native tongue at home and expect their children to learn both their mother language and English. Her father required Jenny and her siblings to use Chinese at home, and sent them to Chinese school on weekends. When Jenny was 10 years old, they also put her in a 4th grade classroom in Taiwan for a month to expose her to an immersive environment and improve her spoken Chinese. Jenny took some intermediate-level Chinese courses in college, and earned her bachelor degree in journalism. According to her, she was not studying Chinese intensively during those years in college. After graduation, Jenny worked as a crime and general-assignment reporter for two newspapers in Arizona and later went to graduate school for public administration. She recalled that she lost a lot of her Chinese during those years due to lack of use. In 2007, at the age of 27, she decided that she would attend the MCFP program and focus on her Chinese with hopes of turning her Chinese skills from a hobby into a career.

Methodology

One-on-one interviews were conducted with Alex and Jenny to provide a comparative view of two learners possessing differing training backgrounds, ethnicity, and career

development trajectory, and examines the role vision plays in their language learning. They were prompted to discuss their learning experiences, including examples of both successful and frustrating interactions (see Appendix for interview questions). One goal of the interview was to explore the most influential experiences that moved these learners along their journey from beginner to sophisticated language users. They were prompted to discuss their learning of Chinese at various stages, initial study abroad experiences, and early working experiences in China. As discussed, one important feature of motivated learners is how they establish resilience through failures and sustain the foreign language learning journey. In this regard, the interviews aimed at exploring how advanced-level Chinese learners' vision affects their learning motivation and resilience construction.

After agreeing to participate in the study, the subjects were asked to schedule a time to talk to the researcher on Skype or by phone due to their distant physical locations. They were informed that the interview revolved around the topic of motivating learning experiences, but were not provided interview questions in advance. Although they both speak fluent Chinese, the interviews were primarily conducted in English with only a few examples given by the subjects in Chinese. English was used during the interviews to better allow them to provide detailed information about learning experiences. Also, the researcher avoided translating subjects' words to a different language except as necessary. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes, and was audio recorded for the purposes of data analysis.

Data analysis

Alex, the filmmaker

The data suggest that Alex's sustainable motivation of learning Chinese and interacting with Chinese speakers has long been related with his vision of using Chinese to achieve professional goals (see Figure 2). The blue circles in the charts are the prompts mentioned by the researcher to guide the interview. The blue dots represent motivation-related experiences mentioned by the subjects. The greens dots are categorized as motivation enhancing experiences that are related to learners' long-term willingness to engage, perform and practice. The red dots represent learning experiences presented by the subject that were seen as challenging the learners' drive to engage (the same interpretations apply to Figure 3).
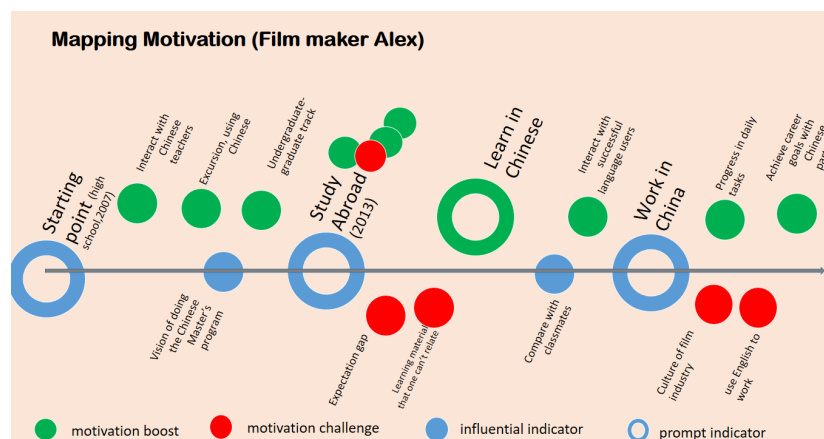
Figure 2: A Motivation Map of a Chinese Learner, Alex

Alex's journey helps us understand the following important questions relating to his long-term learning motivation. First, Alex started learning Chinese in high school, but what impact did his early Chinese learning experiences have? He recalled little field trips he took with his high school teacher and classmates to Chicago's Chinatown. Those experiences were particularly memorable and fun because it was the first time he could actually "use" his Chinese to order bubble tea and have basic interactions with Chinese speakers. It was not the tasty bubble tea that motivated Alex, but instead the sense of progression and growth that he gained through socializing in Chinese. Alex, now a superior-level Chinese language learner, recalled in the interview that he did not learn much Chinese in high school, but his early teachers made learning Chinese so enjoyable that he applied to a well-known Chinese program to continue his language learning.

Second, how does his vision of using Chinese affect long-term willingness to learn and perform in a specific domain? Alex selected the university he attended based on the reputation of its Chinese program. He was also introduced to the undergraduate-graduate program track during his first year, and had been working towards that goal from early on. After establishing plans to attend the master's program and live in China for at least one year, Alex constantly pictured himself using Chinese in those contexts. Markus and Nurius (1986) suggested three types of possible selves that are associated with our motivational construction: what a person might become, what they would like to become and what they are afraid of becoming. Alex had clearly created images of those three types of himself along the journey of learning Chinese. Knowing that he would use Chinese everyday motivated him to learn more and concerns about looking bad or unattractive when applying for jobs made him work even harder. Alex recalled his interaction with a Chinese program alumnus who at the

time managed a game company in China. Alex said, "I remember just being blown away by his Chinese ability and we were all like 'man, if we could all get to be that good'." Knowing that someone who had gone through the same training and is now using Chinese to achieve his professional goals in China is particularly motivating.

Thirdly, how does Alex develop expertise in motivating himself to practice and perform on a higher level? When asked if he ever felt frustrated while learning Chinese, Alex answered, "all the time." Learning Chinese and reaching advanced level is a long and arduous journey. It requires time, resources, resiliency and a comprehensive learning mechanism, including self-motivation. Fortunately, Alex was determined to invest years into learning Chinese from early on in his journey. However, he described a frustrating moment when he joined Beijing Film Academy as an advanced level language learner. He had studied Chinese for nearly seven years at the time, and lived in several cities in China for short periods. But he was all of a sudden surrounded by "male classmates who like to swear, all want to make movies and are artists in their own right." Alex had a tough time understanding their conversations and described it as a particularly frustrating experience. Motivation challenges occur when there is a gap between one's understanding of the situation and reality. One big difference between Alex and other less resilient learners was his strong desire to achieve career goals alongside his Chinese counterparts.

Jenny Liu, a heritage learner and social worker

Although Jenny's parents made active efforts to introduce Chinese to her, she stated that learning Chinese as a means to understand her roots was not a very good motivator. When Jenny joined the MCFP, she finally had a chance to use Chinese to learn what interests her the most, public administration and NGOs in China. During the pre-program summer in Qingdao, China, she discovered the Spring Buds Program, a hope project created by the All-China Women's Federation in 1989 to aid young Chinese female drop-outs to return to elementary or middle school. Jenny very soon decided to focus her research on the group and later moved to an underprivileged area in Shandong Province. Jenny had always sought out opportunities to improve her skills in reading, writing and presenting professionally. Therefore, when she had the opportunity to actually apply these skills in a field that she was knowledgeable about, she was highly motivated to bring her Chinese to the next level and perform in formal contexts (see Figure 3).
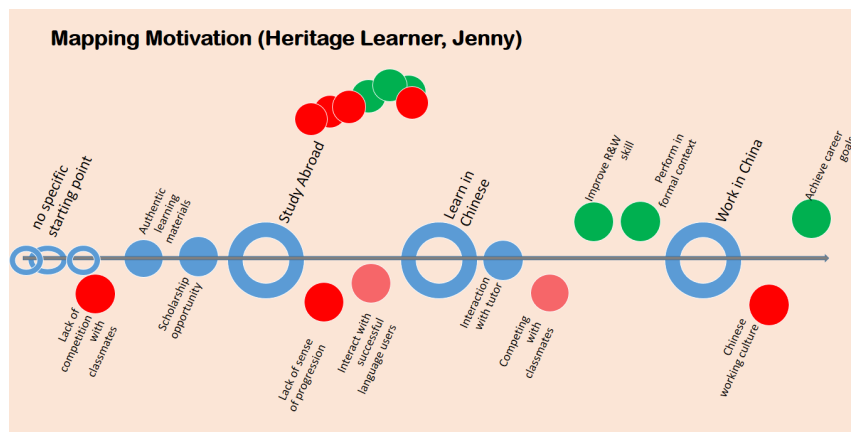
Figure 3: A Motivation Map of a Heritage Chinese Learner, Jenny

One hidden fact about Jenny's learning of Chinese is that although she was sitting in the advanced-level Chinese classroom, she may not have established a comprehensive learning mechanism as her non-heritage peers. Chinese learners, such as Alex, have fully experienced both success and failures along the journey of reaching advanced level. Over the years, they are able to identify the specific learning strategies that work best for them and understand how to motivate themselves. However, Jenny had never learned Chinese intensively before attending the MCFP. Regardless of her Chinese proficiency level, she was actually experiencing a critical transition period when joining the program. This became a motivational challenge for Jenny since she no longer was the most fluent Chinese speaker in the classroom (see Figure 3).

How does this cyclic structure (Figure 1) fit in Jenny's case? Different from Alex who made a lot of Chinese friends during his internship, Jenny did not establish a strong personal relationship with colleagues. As she recalled, "being a Chinese-American, people had different standards for me in terms of my Chinese level. If it was not perfect, there would be a problem. So sometimes that was frustrating…My boss and colleagues would say 'Your parents should have taught you Chinese!' And I would be like 'Yeah, they did.' She obviously had never been to the U.S. and had no idea what it was like." In most areas in China, people expect foreigners to know very little about Chinese and tend to generously praise a foreigner's Chinese. Unfortunately, American-born Chinese are placed in a different category by Chinese people and expectations for their Chinese skills tends to be unrealistically high. Thus, it is difficult for Jenny to connect with those who blame her parents for not teaching her Chinese.

Results and discussion

It is worth mentioning that every Chinese language learner who reaches an advanced-level of fluency and working capacity has experienced some type of frustration and challenges to their motivation. These challenges to motivation, represented by red dots in Figure 2 and 3, should not be viewed as purely negative factors. When combined with motivating experiences, these challenges produce well-rounded learners. As Alex and Jenny stated, they learned through the years how to deal with unexpected situations and adjust themselves accordingly. Their motivation for learning Chinese becomes stronger and more sophisticated when closely intertwined with career and life goals. After having reached an advanced level of language proficiency, being asked to use English with his colleagues and act as a "foreigner" in some social contexts becomes a motivational challenge for Alex. However, he had years of experiences interacting with Chinese people in and outside the classroom, which gave him a facility for understanding this culture and handling the frustration. Jenny and Alex were both motivated when they see they can use their Chinese to accomplish real life tasks. One of the biggest misunderstandings of learner motivation is the idea that it is merely a supplementary construct that can be simply tacked on to any language program. In fact, learning motivation is constructed through everything students do both in and outside the classroom. A successful Chinese program should design certain amounts of failure alongside pathways to establish learners' resilience. The ability to use Chinese combined with sustainable motivation construction should be considered as a gradual and evolving process.

The presentation of other successful learners from similar backgrounds is the best vision-evoking signal to help our students create their own visions of learning and using Chinese. Both Alex's and Jenny's language learning journey help us to understand that the more similarities one shares with the role model, the more effective and motivating the interaction will be. For example, when Alex meets a male non-heritage learner who has developed a fruitful business in China, he can create a meaningful and motivational vision much more easily than Jenny does. However, realizing that a foreign appearance sometimes contributes greatly to one's career in China could be disturbing to a heritage learner like Jenny. Furthermore, a powerful and detailed vision could sometimes influence learner's attitude towards different types of learning activities. For instance, when being required to learn Chinese through a story that describes the efforts of a young Chinese woman to escape a rural village, Alex found it difficult to relate it to his future self. However, when he was

given a chance to associate Chinese learning with his interest in the film industry, he greatly expanded his social milieu and visions of utilizing his Chinese skills.

One convention of understanding heritage learner motivation is to focus on their cultural identity, considering their ethnicity as the most influential or even the only factor in the entire framework. It is true that most heritage students begin to learn the language because of their family background, but their journey of becoming an active language user must involve other personal and career goals. It was discussed previously that motivation challenge occurs when there is a gap between one's expectation and reality. Since Jenny's years-long efforts were not recognized by the people she worked with, it was difficult for her to sense progression through interacting with her colleagues. Jenny said she knew she was making progress because she was getting higher and higher scores in Chinese tests, and eventually wrote her thesis in Chinese. As it is proposed in this paper, learner motivation is considered as a co-creation of their vision, socialization experiences and sense of progression. Since obtaining a sense of progression through interacting with native speaking is hard for heritage learners, constructing a detailed domain-related vision becomes extremely important to help them to overcome some of the challenges. It was the eagerness to improve her reading and writing skills in hopes of accomplishing her research projects that sustained Jenny's journey of learning Chinese. To understand the learning motivation of this group of learners, we should no longer focus on "what they should know and learn as American Chinese." Instead, we need to recognize their motivation challenges, and emphasize their progression in the areas of interest to them.

Conclusions

The journey of mastering a foreign language is not always enjoyable. To motivate foreign language learners to overcome the inevitable temporary failure and frustration, researchers and educators should focus on helping them to establish the vision of a successful future self through autonomous goal setting and extended socialization. Indeed, motivating language learners with a goal of achieving cultural expertise must expand beyond simple fulfillment of curriculum requirements.

This study also suggests that a language user of Chinese needs to practice and gradually grow into different social roles or personae. Their accumulated memories of doing various tasks within the target community provide the drive for them to complete more complicated and challenging tasks. The motivating strategies and mindsets one establishes through the journey also make it possible to construct a self-sustaining motivation system that

operates on higher and higher levels of tasks. A successful language learner's vision should be simultaneously connected with socialization and sense of progression.

To conclude, language learners who gain a high level of language and cultural capacities must also have a plethora of motivating experiences in a variety of learning contexts, and be able to bridge language learning with their long-term career or life goals. Language learners of the 21st century no longer work in a monolingual or monocultural setting. Recognizing the dominant culture in the working environment and performing accordingly is an essential skill. Yet, to be able to establish and realize a domain-specific vision with people from different cultures is a higher-level sustainable strategy that overcomes the possible fatigue and conflicts along the journey.

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Appendix

Interview Questions with the Chinese Language Learners

As mentioned in the consent form, this interview will focus on your memorable Chinese learning and working experiences. You can pause the interview, and skip the question you do not feel comfortable to answer at any time.

1. A lot of students who study Chinese do not continue after one year or two. Few have reached the advanced-level as you did. In your opinion, what are the major reasons for you to continue with Chinese learning? Can you list three?

2. Now you look back, who was the most influential people in your journey of learning Chinese? Your family, teacher, classmate, Chinese friends?

3. Did you interact with native speakers of Chinese often when you were beginning or intermediate-level student? Did you always enjoy it?

4. Can you recall any learning material that you used in school setting was particularly motivating or demotivating?

5. When did you have your first study abroad experience? Now you look back, do you think it motivated you to improve your Chinese, or made you want to give up learning Chinese?

6. Was there a certain period or moment that you realized Chinese was going to be closely related to your career?

7. Do you think it would make a difference if you associate Chinese learning with your career at an early stage?

8. Who did you compare your Chinese with at different stages? Your classmates? Previous Flagship students? Or native speakers?

9. Was there a point that you felt frustrated about learning Chinese and wanted to give up? If so, what brought you back?

10. Did you set long-term or short-term goal of your Chinese learner? Can you give some examples?

11. What is your biggest take-away from the Chinese Flagship Program?

12. During your first year of the Flagship Program, you took course and prepared for conducting your research project in China. Was any learning experience during that first year particularly useful to your later professional life?

13. Was any learning experience during your second year particularly helpful to your later career?

14. What will motivate you to spend time on learning Chinese and bring it to an even higher level at this point?

15. Last question, do you mind providing the contacts of two Chinese people you have worked together with recently so I can interview them about your language learning capacity and motivation?