Motivation and Communicative Competence: increase learning achievement through CLT

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Abstract
It has been largely, if not always agreed that integrative motivation is more likely to lead to success in second language learning than instrumental motivation. This survey of 71 Chinese language learners at a north American university shows that the achievement of heritage participants is higher than that of non-heritage in reading, writing, speaking and listening proficiency during the investigated semester. However it is found that the heritage and non-heritage participants are little distinguishable in their motivation given that most of them apply both integrative and instrumental motivation to their learning of Chinese language. Therefore, the paper demonstrates that it is inappropriate to legitimate or delegitimate either motivation in terms of its association with learning achievements. Since most heritage students have claimed their previous experience of using Chinese language to communicate with their families and their extensive exposure to Chinese culture, the paper demonstrates that cross-lingual and cross-cultural communication activities are contributive to the heritage participants’ achievements. The paper further discusses that the need to develop cross-lingual and cross-cultural communicative ability is documented by not only integrative, but also instrumental motivation, so the inputs of communicative language and cultural contents will enable the learners’ motivations to play a leading role in their learning. It is concluded that motivations, in spite of difference, can significantly contribute to learning achievement through communicative language teaching to motivate learners and address learners’ learning needs.

Introduction
In the literature on second language acquisition, motivation has been considered an element relating to learning achievement. Instrumental and integrative motivation, basically summing up the goals of learning another language, definitely document the learning needs to develop communicative competence and understanding of target language culture. In order to increase learning achievement, teachers will have to address these needs through communicative language teaching and also use this pedagogy to motivate students.

Theoretical Concepts
Integrative vs. instrumental motivation
The classification of motivation has been far from uniform in the standards. Gardner and Lambert have established the theory of integrative and instrumental motivation (1972). Integrative motivation comes out of the interest in the target language and culture, and links to the purpose to identify with the target language society to be accepted as a member of it. In contrast, instrumental motivation originates from the motives relative to utilitarian purposes, for instance, occupational promotion and career development (Gardner and Lambert, 1972, Brown, 2000, Lightbown & Spada, 2000). Through studies, it is more confirmed rather than questioned that integrative motivation is more likely to lead to learning success (Gadener & Lambert, 1972).

However, the dilemma is witnessed in the vagueness of judging a motivation as integrative or instrumental (Clement & Kruidniner, 1983). Added to it is the divergence to define integrative motivation. Graham (1984) believes that the intention to gain a membership in the target language society is assimilative rather than integrative. In his explanation of integrative motivation, he does not consider “to the point of eventually being accepted as member of that other group” (Gardner and Lambert, 1972:3). It is also noteworthy that motivation of learners are typically multifaceted rather than purely integrative or instrumental given that learners, as cultural beings, must respond to a variety of socio-cultural influences, which, reflected in
the learning of another language, is their incorporation of different layers of impacts into their learning motivation (Xie, 2004). In spite of the above evidences of limitation, the coding of integrative and instrumental, for general purposes, is still a helpful tool for educators to explore learners’ motivation.

**Communicative language teaching (CLT)**

Communicative language teaching focuses on communicative competence (performance) rather than grammatical knowledge (competence); in other words, it is use- rather than usage-orientated. Given language as social behavior as it has been discussed (Savignon, 2002), language learning is directed to the communication with the target language group, which features the negotiation of meaning and the conveying of information by implementing social rules of that language. Communicative language teaching creates naturalistic learning environment to develop learners’ communicative competence. Conale and Swain (1980) have illustrated that grammatical knowledge is an integral part to communicative competence. But to deal with the teaching of grammatical knowledge, communicative language teaching anchors language forms in the communicative activities by using, rather than remembering, them.

**Language learning achievement**

Achievement has once been a contrastive term to proficiency since achievement test has been viewed as to measure competence while proficiency test to measure performance (Clark, 1972, Savignon, 1983). But the distinction has seemingly disappeared with the communicative competence rising up to the paramount consideration (Savignon, 1983). As the result of the convergence of the two terms, achievement in proficiency rather than achievement and proficiency separately becomes the issue to be discussed. The harmony of language proficiency with communicative competence is agreed-upon in considerable number of studies (e.g. Savignon, 1983, Greenleaf, 1992, Brown, 2000). “Language proficiency is communicative competence and should be defined and evaluated as such” (Savignon, 1983:246). Therefore, achievement, in holistic sense of this word, should reflect progress in communicative competence at four component levels: linguistic, socio-linguistic, discourse and strategic (Canale and Swain, 1980).

**Method**

To weigh the effects on learning achievement of motivation and the experience of language using and cultural exposure, the study seeks data from three areas: motivation, language and cultural experience, and learning achievement. The seventy-one participants learning Chinese at elementary level are chosen from a university in North America.

**Data of motivation**

A survey is performed anonymously in motivation, and communication experience (at both language and cultural level). The motivation survey adopts the definition of Gardner and Lambert on instrumental motivation and the definition of Graham on integrative motivation for the students to assess their own motivation. As discussed above, Graham does not consider integrative motivation in absolute term. Instead, he embraces into integrative motivation the general cultural and language interest even without the evidence to integrate within the other group.

“Instrumental” and “integrative” are provided as benchmarks for the participants to evaluate their motivation because of two reasons. First of all, the analysis will not be interrupted by the dilemma to measure whether to integrative or to instrumental the specific motives belong. Leaving this job to been done by the participants themselves can secure higher objectivity of the data and thus accuracy of research results. Secondly, while it is controversial to label a specific motive as one hundred percent instrumental or integrative, it is largely acknowledged that a motive can fit into both orientations because integrative motivation can be instrumentally relative and vice versa. This method to collect motivation data can draw out an inclusive motivation picture. Thus, the solid analytical ground is laid down for comparing the clouts of motivation and communication experience on learning achievement.
Data of language and cultural experience

The method on language and cultural experience takes the form of open-ended answer. The participants put their pen down on the blank space to list their previous experiences of using Chinese and being exposed to the culture. The data is analyzed qualitatively.

Data of learning achievement

The sources of learning achievement data come from the results of ten similar short-term quizzes, two long-term written and two long-term oral tests. These assessments bring under evaluation the four functional skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. They vary in assessed foci from metalinguistic knowledge (awareness of grammaticality) to the ability to negotiate meaning, and diversify in formats from multiple choices, sentence making, question answering to cloze, insertion, translation and task-based writing; the skills assessed range from reading, writing to speaking (monologic and dialogic) and listening. The participants’ level and progress in linguistic, socio-linguistic, discourse and strategic competence are justifiably, if not thoroughly, reflected through the assessments.

Results

Motivation

Out of the 40 heritage students, 55% has answered that both integrative and instrumental motivation are applicable to their learning motivation while 35% claims only integrative and 10% only instrumental. In the case of 31 non-heritage students, the dual motivation students comprise 74% while purely integrative or instrumental takes up only 19% and 7% respectively. This result shows that majority of the participants, regardless of heritage and non-heritage, are interested in Chinese language and culture, and also integrate this interest to their future career development.

Learning achievement

1. The heritage students in the 10 quizzes average higher in score than the non-heritage by 5.0.
2. The heritage students in the 2 oral evaluations exceed their non-heritage peers by 3.0.
3. The heritage students in the 2 written assessments outperform the non-heritage by 5.0.

This result substantiates that the heritage students achieve higher in the learning.

Language and cultural background

1. 65% of the heritage students indicate that they have had extensive exposure to Chinese culture in various aspects in China or in America, such as food, festival celebration, movies, readings, etc. while just 11% non-heritage students have experience of watching Chinese movies in America and only 5% has once paid a short visit in Hong Kong.
2. 70% of heritage students have once spoken Chinese in earliest childhood years. 20% of the heritage students still speak Cantonese or Mandarin at home.

The difference in Chinese using and cultural exposure between the heritage and non-heritage participants is worth of consideration to understand the contributors to their learning achievement.

Discussion

According to the above results, it is inappropriate to legitimate or deligitimate the role of integrative or instrumental motivation in learners’ achievement. The results convince that learning achievement is relative to the learners’ experience of using Chinese language in real life and the amount of exposure to Chinese culture. This discovery lends support to Ellis’ assumption that natural settings lead to higher levels of L2 proficiency than educational settings (Ellis, 1994). Communicative language teaching and cultural understanding instruction are, therefore, important assets to increase learning achievement in spite of different motivations of learners.

Instrumental motivation necessitates the development of communicative competence and cultural understanding which help learners to survive cross-lingual and cross-cultural encounters, rising out of workplace or other contexts.
Integrative motivation also documents the need to develop communicative competence and understand target language culture. To the point of integrating within another language society, communicative competence and cultural understanding are indispensable for learners to communicate with native Chinese speakers and practice Chinese culture appropriately in real life.

Given that communicative competence and cultural understanding are desired with different motivations, communicative language teaching integrating cultural instruction can contribute to motivating students by addressing their learning needs. Through communicative language teaching, either motivation, instrumental or integrative, can elicit learning achievement.

Implication

Language has its social rules because it functions through communication in socio-cultural context for certain purposes. As discussed above, although motivations differentiate, learners will have to use the language in authentic communications through actualizing the social functions of language. Communicative language teaching and cultural understanding instruction appear to be important principles.

Linguistic competence embedded in the purpose of communication

Linguistic competence is an integral part of communicative competence. Formal teaching, therefore, cannot isolate from the social functions of language. The combination of form and function makes learning meaningful. Linguistic competence integrated in communication activities help students to internalize grammar by using the language to negotiate meaning.

Communicative activities need to be both knowledge- and function-oriented (Canale, 1983). Activities have to allow learners to use the language knowledge to handle relative communication situations. To choose topics relative to the language knowledge level, learners can expand formulaic speech at communicative level (Jin, 2004). Group work, role-play, problem-solving, one-on-one discussion, etc can produce the communicative milieus for learners to progress at both linguistic and communicative level.

Learning based on cultural understanding

Cultural understanding affects learners’ attitude toward learning another language. The positive attitude is acknowledged to be an important determinant for one’s learning success (Gardner and Lambert, 1972, Gardner, 1985, Ellis, 1994, Ogbu, 1992). “Learners who are close to the target-language culture are more likely to outperform those who are more distant” (Ellis 1994:210). That is because the intimacy with the target language culture helps to establish positive attitude.

Many classroom activities have been developed to open the conduit of teaching Chinese through culture. Authentic setting is more effectual, so stepping out into the real cultural environment by students themselves can compensate for the limitations of classroom-based activities. Studying abroad shall be encouraged given that learners learn culture and language in unity.

It is noteworthy that appropriate instruction from teachers in target culture is necessary to remove misconceptions and avoid biases for learners. The teaching, while to be learner-centered, shall not leave learners alone. Misconceptions and biases contradict the establishment of positive attitude.

Conclusion

The difference of learning achievement with respect to the heritage and non-heritage participants does not necessarily relate to the motivation elements given that the learners in this study apply both integrative and instrumental motivation to their learning of Chinese language. But the distinction inherent in their language and cultural background is obviously witnessed. The heritage students have earlier experience of using Chinese in real life and have had more or less extensive exposure to the culture while the non-heritage students lack the both. The higher achievement of the heritage students demonstrates that communicative language teaching incorporating cultural understanding instruction is significant to increase
learning achievement. This principle can apply to learners with different motivations since motivational factors, for all differences, document the learning needs to develop communicative competence and cultural understanding.

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