

Motivation in foreign language learning: A case study of Adult learners of Chinese in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: All learners learn best when they are motivated; so do adults. Hence, the way to ensure success of students in higher education is to first understand what motivates them during the learning process. The growing relations and growing Chinese community in Zimbabwe has led to a rapid increase in the number of students learning Chinese as a foreign language. The growth of learners has not only been in the primary, secondary and higher tertiary education sectors but also the adult community of the country. This has led to a growing curiosity of the motives behind the adult students learning the language. Motivated by different aims, goals and ambitions, the success of these adult students can be hindered by various factors. This study aims to unveil what motivates the adult learners to learn Chinese, what factors are affecting the learning of Chinese as a foreign language and how best can the factors which affect motivation be resolved in Zimbabwe with special focus on the adult community. The role of motivation in the learning process will also be discussed with regards to the African, Zimbabwean context. This study will be mutually beneficial to both the teacher and the student, as the study can be used as a guideline for teachers in designing curricula, improving quality of instruction; instruction; and create a conducive learning environment for adult students which will facilitate and enable adult students to study more effectively. Using questionnaires this study shows what motivates adult students to learn Chinese, what role motivation plays in the learning process and the impact of motivation in the acquisition of Chinese.

Keywords: Chinese as a foreign language, motivation, adult education, Zimbabwe

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I. BACKGROUND

The teaching and learning of Chinese as a foreign language (henceforth CFL) in Zimbabwe has experienced growth in the number of students enrolling for Chinese studies. Amongst these students are a number of adult students who have taken interest in learning the language for various reasons. The adult students being referred to in this research are those who are viewed by the educational system of the country to have passed the age of schooling or attending school. The European Commission (2006:2) describes adult students as those who are taking up any form of learning after the initial education and training process. The adult students learning Chinese in Zimbabwe can be described in two categories; the first category includes those who had not managed to complete their primary, secondary, high school and tertiary education. The second category includes those who have completed their basic education. These adults learn Chinese for various reasons and it is the aim of this research to find out what these reasons are and what role they play in the learning process.

The teaching and learning of Chinese in Zimbabwe has opened the door to further promote adult education as it does not have basic educational requirements to learn the language. Chinese language lessons are offered in quite a number of cities within the country which include Harare, Chinhoyi, Gweru, and Bulawayo etc. and the language lessons are offered at various stages of different institutions and these include primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. Zimbabwe is host to one Confucius institute (henceforth CI) which was established in 2006 at the University of Zimbabwe (henceforth UZ). Due to the increased number of people applying to study Chinese a number of Confucius classes were opened in various cities within the country. This research was conducted at the University of Zimbabwe, Confucius institute because it has the highest number of adult learners learning Chinese. Chinese adult students at UZ can be divided into two groups.

The first group consists of students who are enrolled by the university and Chinese language is one of their undergraduate courses. From 2007 Chinese language became part of the university's foreign languages department under the Faculty of Arts becoming one of the four foreign languages taught at university. It is studied under the Bachelor of Arts degree and has recently been introduced at honors level. Students who major in Tourism and hospitality also study Chinese as part of their course requirements. The second group consists of those who are not enrolled by the university. They are part of the weekend classes (also known as the social

classes as they are open to anyone in the society) held by the university. They are no special requirements and are open to everyone. The students enrolled by the university and those in the social class are taught separately but use the same teaching methods, materials and guidelines. The CI at the university is also a registered HSK (Chinese language proficiency test) test center. The test center is open to anyone who wants to write HSK1-HSK 6 and HSKK (Chinese speaking test) regardless of where they learn the language. The adult students from both social class and those enrolled by the university are studying for various reasons and these reasons/ motives are influenced by a number of factors during the learning process.

A number of researches have been conducted on the influence of motivation in relations to adult education and the role played by motivation. Gonzalez-Peileado & Rodriguez-Lopez (2017) looked at the factors that motivate adults to learn a foreign language and what variables can influence their choices in learning the language. Wijnia, Loynes & Derdis (2011) conducted an investigation of the effects problem-based versus lecture based learning environments have on the students' motivation. Liu & Huang (2011) focused on the anxiety students have when learning a foreign language and their motivation to learn English language. These researches show that it is important to look at motivation and what can influence a student's choice in the learning process. Knowledge such as this will assist the teacher in planning and they focus on how to positively motivate their students. This research focuses on adult students' motives to learn Chinese in Zimbabwe and how best they can be assisted to accomplish their intended language proficiency. This is because no research has yet been found that has focused on the adults learning Chinese in Zimbabwe and it is the aim of this research to add such knowledge to the body of researches conducted.

II. INTRODUCTION

The need for competence in Chinese language is fast becoming popular in both developed and developing countries. The growing population of Chinese in Zimbabwe and the vast work opportunities in the business sector has led to a number of Zimbabweans enrolling for Chinese classes. Competence in the language is of great value in the country as this opens up the door to more job opportunities. Students from primary, secondary and tertiary levels have started learning; adult students have also emerged in the learning of Chinese. The reasons for learning the language vary from one student to the other and these reasons are what this present study seeks to uncover focusing on the adult students.

Motivation has been widely accepted by both teachers and researchers as one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of foreign language learning. Motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the foreign language and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process; indeed all the factors in foreign language learning presuppose motivation to some extent. Without sufficient motivation even individuals with the most remarkable abilities and exposure to appropriate teaching methods and learning strategies cannot accomplish long term goals. Gardner & Lambert, (1972) emphasize that, although language aptitude accounts for a considerable proportion of individual variability in foreign language learning achievement, motivational factors can override the aptitude effect.

The present study takes up the review of foreign language motivation research and focus on these issues:

- (1) What is motivation?
- (2) What are the current motivational factors for adult students learning Chinese?
- (3) What are the educational implications of these motivations?

Motivation is a term used frequently both in the education and research context, however the literature regarding its meaning indicates that researchers have not come up with a unified meaning of what motivation is. Researchers seem to agree that motivation is responsible for determining human behavior by energizing it and giving it direction. There's diversity on how this happens. Dorneyi (1996) points out that motivation theories in general seek to explain no less than the fundamental question of why humans behave as they do thereof it would be naive to assume any simple and exact meaning and process of motivation. Most psychologists concerned with learning and education use the word motivation to describe those processes that can "(a) arouse and instigate behavior, (b) give direction or purpose to behavior, (c) continue to allow behavior to persist, and (d) lead to choosing or preferring a particular behavior" (Wlodkowski, 1985, p. 2). Gardener (1985) defines the term motivation as a combination of both effort and the desire to achieve a certain goal. This definition views motivation as that which makes people do what they do in a particular way. The effort one puts into learning a foreign language shows the extent of their motivation or if they are motivated at all. Gonzalez-Peileado & Rodriguez-Lopez (2017) summarized motivation as that which encourages people to start learning a foreign language, influences the maintenance of learning and plays a major role when the learning process difficult. From this view motivation can be seen as a continuous process that not only occurs at the start of something but also plays a role in the continuation process of it and how one then deals with the challenges they face in the learning process. It is this view that the research will be looking at motivation from.

Motivation can be divided into two major categories; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is a type of motivation in which an individual is being motivated by internal desires. For example one has interest in the language itself hence they study and work hard to master the language. Extrinsic motivation on the other hand, is a type of motivation in which an individual is being motivated by external desires. For instance one is interested in the results they will get after studying the language. Most researchers in the field of motivation believe that intrinsic motivation tends to have positive results, whereas extrinsic motivation has negative outcomes (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Richer, Blanchard and Vallerand, 2002).

According to Deckers (2005), intrinsic motivation is inherent in the activity being performed and is freely chosen by the individual while extrinsic motivation comes from external sources and is mostly driven or forced by environmental contingencies such as money, good grades, or the approval of others. Deckers (2005) concludes that the “Difference in the strength of some of these motives may predict students’ persistence in university courses” and that “Behavior that began for extrinsic reasons later can be performed for its own sake—that is, for intrinsic reasons” (p. 277). There are also other types of motivation which fall into these two main categories such as, (i) Reward-Based Motivation or Incentive Motivation, which is a type of motivation that is utilized when you or others know that they will be a reward once a certain goal is achieved. (ii) Achievement-Based Motivation, those who need a boost in their professional life will find achievement-based motivation extremely helpful. (iii) Power-Based Motivation, is a type of motivation that energizes others to seek more control, typically through the use of positions in employment or organizations. (iv) Distant motivation means one studies the language for a goal which will come to fruition several years later. (v) Proximal motivation means one wants to reach their goal in short term. The last classification of motivation is lacking and developing motivation. By lacking motivation one studies the language because they feel the need to and in developing motivation one studies the language in order to become better and develop themselves. Motivation is absolutely vital if you want to achieve your dreams.

Factors Affecting Motivation in Foreign Language Learning

Motivation plays a significant role in the process of learning a language. Language teachers cannot effectively teach a language if they do not understand the relationship between motivation and its effect on foreign language acquisition. The core of motivation is what might be called passion, which relates to a person’s intrinsic goals and desires. Successful learners know their preferences, their strengths and weaknesses, and effectively utilize strengths and compensate for weaknesses. Successful language learning is linked to the learner’s passion. And instructors should find ways to connect to this passion. Motivation is however affected by a number of factors and the factors that affect adults in foreign language learning are not always the same as those that affect the ones still of the age of schooling. These factors include age, teaching method, and educational background e.t.c.

The first factor is teaching approaches and methodologies use by the teacher in teaching a foreign language. Gardner (2000) notes that educational context in which the language is being taught can affect one’s motivation in learning a foreign language. It is therefore of importance that the teacher pays note to the quality of teaching and materials used when teaching adult students. Wijnia, Loynes and Deros (2011) point out that the classroom climate and teaching styles do affect the levels of intrinsic motivation hence the instructor should pay attention to the approaches they use whilst teaching a foreign language. The classroom activities, teaching material and methods play a major role in the maintenance, build up or lack of motivation. It is therefore the role of the teacher to ensure that he/she keeps the learners motivated to learn the language. Gonzalez-Peileado and Rodriguez-Lopez (2015) note that because learning a language involves being able to use the language to communicate they recommend that teachers use communicative approaches especially when considering the motivation effect. The teacher needs to understand the learners’ goal and aim as this knowledge can help them in ensuring that the learning environment enables both the teacher and the learners to achieve their goals. Their role is to create a positive learning environment that is suitable for adults and fun for them and also include an activity that gives the learners an active role in the classroom.

Age is another factor that affects motivation especially in adult learner’s motivation. Age plays a time factor in the learning process as some adults can be more motivated to learn a foreign language and master it as fast as they can in order for them to use it. The reasons for an adult learner to learn a foreign language differ from those of the schooling age. The schooling age learners reasons for study may cause them not to be in rush to learn the language whereas an adult learner might be studying the language in order to use it in their business hence rushing against time. They are however some adults who study a foreign language just to fulfill their desire to learn the language. These might not be as motivated as the ones who want to use it and attain a better life. It is the sense of urgency that will positively affect these students to continue learning and try to master the language.

The third factor is ones educational qualifications and background. As this study focuses on the adult students some of them would have already gone through school and attained different academic qualification. Those adults who have been exposed to the higher tertiary education system have a more cognitive interest in

learning to improve their qualifications. Adults with lower academic qualification, which are those that have not been, exposed to higher tertiary education, lack some knowledge regarding strategies they can use in the learning process. It is believe that the adults learn better because of their already acquired analytical skills which can aid them in the use of learning strategies. Many strategies used by learners have been identified; these can be incorporated into language training programs to provide a full range of possibilities for the adult learner (Oxford-Carpenter, 1985).

The fourth factor is the individual's characteristics and their ability to learn. Although motivated to learn an individual's personality can be a hindrance to their learning process and eventually affect their motivation. If the adult once in the classroom feels they are too old, slow to learn or lack the ability to learn, this can affect their motivation as they can easily give up learning the language. A learner's ability to learn can change according to their area of study. An adult learner could have been so good and were able to study and learn medicine. The way they performed whilst studying medicine cannot be the way they should expect to perform whilst learning Chinese. Most learners come to learn a foreign language with a preconceived belief that since they were able to study and master a certain field of study they can easily do the same with learning a foreign language without taking into account the difference in the learning methods. Their focus is only their ability; this can have positive and negative effect to their learning process and their motivation. Researchers have different views regarding to learners ability and these views determine how one views adult motivation. The first view is that ability can change and the second view is that ability is stable and cannot be controlled or changed. Researchers who note that ability can be improved tend to use learning strategies that motivate the learners to learn and improve their language skills. While the researchers who are of the view that ability is stable and cannot be changed and tend to focus on the positives and avoid giving learners negative evaluations.

The adult's attitude towards the learning process can also be a factor that affects their motivation in the learning process. Researchers such as Gardner, Lambert, and Clement agree that the attitude towards a foreign language is important in the learning of a foreign language, therefore is the learner has a negative attitude towards the language it is the teachers' role to try and create a positive attitude in them. The learners' goal and aim of learning a language can also play a role in the motivation purposes as some learn for various reasons like employment, lifestyle, being sophisticated or being well educated.

The fifth factor includes external and internal influences. The sphere of influence can include their spouse, children, parents, friends, workplace and business. An adult can be motivated to learn in order to please their family, get a job, promotion, for ease of communication with their Chinese speaking counterparts, keep themselves occupied or for business or leisure trips to Chinese speaking countries. The lack of support from the learners' sphere of influence can demotivate the learner.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chinese is taught to not only those in school but also adults. This study was conducted at the University of Zimbabwe. 50 participants were invited to participate in the research study. Participants were all enrolled in Chinese language classes at the University of Zimbabwe. Of the 50 participants, 32 were female students, which accounted for 64%. 18 were male students, which accounted for 36%. Their age groups were divided into two groups, over 30 years and under 30 years old. Among the 50 students, 41 of them were under 30 years old (82%), 9 were over 30 years old (18%), 90% of them had official jobs. 72% of them have learnt Chinese while the others had not learnt the language. Amongst those that had official jobs 30% of them are working in Chinese foreign companies. 84% of the participants had never gone abroad. In relation to educational qualifications 72% of them had studied up to university level. 42% of the participants are married.

Questionnaires were used to gather information. The questionnaire looked at three aspects: motivation, influence and stimulation. It included 30 questions which were multiple choices. The questions focused on the participant's age, job, educational level, motive to study Chinese and what factors they thought affected them while learning the language. The questionnaires were completed by the adult students in 20 minutes without discussing their answers to each other.

IV. DISCUSSION

As mentioned in the literature review they are several factors that influence motivation in the learning process. The present study found that competition was a factor that highly influenced the adults' motivation to continue learning the language. This is because the university offers scholarships to students with the best results. Another area in which competition was a factor was due to the learners desire to maintain and improve their social status in the community. The unwillingness to lag behind caused the adult learners to become more competitive in the classroom and amongst their peers.

The research found that most adults were studying Chinese for self-development reasons. Most of these adults were learning the language in order to become more knowledgeable and attain proficiency in one of the most popular languages in the world. Some of the adults were learning in order to show that they are better than

others because they have the confidence to learn Chinese well or because they think Chinese is a challenge for them. They want to prove themselves as the ones who can master the language.

The third reasons for studying the language were because of social contact. Social contact includes firstly the love to communicate in Chinese speakers which makes them appear smarter than other people in the different communities they come from. Secondly to expand the scope of interpersonal communication, to communicate with others better, in order to make life more rich and colorful. The adults learning Chinese hope that by learning the language they are able to fully communicate in their various work fields and bridge the gap between them and their Chinese counterparts be it at home, business or workplaces.

The fourth motive to learning Chinese was for them to develop themselves in their field of interest, which we will term motivation for occupation development. Occupation development includes learning Chinese in order for them to find a better job, obtain a foreign language qualification, and be in a better position for a job promotion and becoming more competitive in the job market. As the world economy is developing, the gap between countries is becoming smaller and smaller and a lot of trade is going on. Zimbabwean business people have more opportunities to do business with Chinese, hence their interest in learning Chinese language to better understand the Chinese people. One can't separate language and culture so part of understanding peoples culture includes learning their language. Language is part of culture. A lot of companies and mines in the country are Chinese owned or being operated by Chinese companies so learning Chinese enhances the student's chances of getting employment. Those already in the working field are learning Chinese in order to become more competent in their job or be in a position to apply for promotion where Chinese language is required. The working class of adults needs Chinese in order to be more competent for their jobs or apply for promotions. The other reason of learning Chinese is because of cognitive interests, which includes the following factors:

- Interest in the Chinese language itself,
- fascinated and interested in the history of China and Chinese culture,
- They like the history of China and are interested in Chinese culture
- They like watching Chinese movies, listening to Chinese music and reading Chinese literature works.
- Learning is their habit hence they want to obtain the knowledge of Chinese language out of interest.

In conclusion, adult Chinese learners study Chinese for many different reasons and motivations. Teachers should teach them according to their different motivations. When deciding the teaching methods, one must be clear about their students' motivations so that they can make teaching more effective and easier. As observed by Galbraith and Fouch (2007), adult learners have more life experiences, time demands, and psychological and socio-emotional barriers compared to children, hence the instructional approach for teaching in higher education should be more andragogical in nature.

From the present study one can see that adult learning motivations are different, but nearly all the adult students will put competition on the first place. Most of the students study because of competition. This shows that social competition has penetrated into every stage of age. The next is occupation condition, personal development and social contact. Among these, social contact orientation is quite in front, this shows that people want to expand their social range by learning Chinese, the contact orientation refers to the social life. Students want to obtain information from interaction with other members of the Chinese community, to understand their behavior and culture and form a self-evaluation. When people are in a group or association, they establish emotional ties. They make more friends and this makes them rely on the group, so they keep learning, the motivation becomes stronger and stronger. Improving their social skills, improving their personal social relations and to knowing more friends from a different country and social networking is an important part of adult social motivation.

The motive to learn is much stronger in female students than in males. The study found that there were more female students learning Chinese than male students. This research also showed that female students are motivated by a lot of factors compared to their male counterparts. These factors include external expectations, cognitive interest and social contact. So in the process of Chinese learning, female students have more confidence, more interest, on the other hand, men take more responsibilities than women so they have less external entertainment. For women, they don't have to work as hard as men, so women can have more free time to study.

The role, influence and effect of age were evaluated and significant difference was seen between the two age groups amongst the participants. The cognitive interest for those under the age of 30 is much stronger than the students who are over 30 year old. When comparing the older and younger people, social responsibility and the family burden were considered. The older adult students noted that they did not have much time to spare because of work and family commitments, hence they had little to none time to study and practice the language

outside the classroom. Most of the younger adult students were studying Chinese because of occupational pressure and other factors. The older adults had lesser pressure for competence in the language than their younger counterparts as most of them were already working, unlike the younger ones who were working in order to find jobs or go and study in China. Taking advantage of their lack of other commitments like a job, the younger adults had more time to study Chinese, to meet their interests and achieve higher proficiency.

Learners need quality instruction, input, interaction, and opportunities for meaningful interactions, not only to make progress, but also to maintain their motivation for language learning. A good teacher must tap into the sources of intrinsic motivation and find ways to connect them with external motivational factors that can be brought to a classroom setting. This is especially useful when the learners' views of Chinese is not seen as important and are just learning in order to pass exams. Because learners have different purposes for studying a language, it is important for instructors to identify students' purposes and needs and to develop proper motivational strategies. Students should understand why they need to make an effort, how long they must sustain an activity, how hard they should pursue it, and how motivated they feel toward their pursuits.

V. CONCLUSION

Adult students are different from the students who are still of the schooling age. Their purposes of learning are different and so do their motives differ in learning a foreign language. Adults' students are motivated to learn Chinese in order to improve the quality of their individual life, a better job, interest in the Chinese language and culture and to make more friends. Therefore one cannot use the same methods and approaches they use to teach those in schools with the adult students. The teachers teaching plan should satisfy adult students' social needs and individual development, ensuring that the students are learning all aspects of the language which include listening, speaking, reading and writing the learners aims and goals should be considered by the teacher when they are preparing their teaching plan to ensure that they meet the needs of the learner. We should teach them according to their aims and goals, take the student as the center of our teaching.

From the above data, we can find that adult Chinese learning motivations are different. Because of the diversity of adult motivation types, the traditional classroom teaching methods have been unable to meet the requirements of different people. Adult students don't have fixed time to study; the teacher should advocate and use modern technology in the teaching process, classroom teaching and far distance teaching, network teaching to meet the different needs of the adult students. It is also very convenient for students as they have more control of their learning and can easily use technology to ensure they can learn outside the classroom.

Teachers should guide the students towards having positive attribution, adult learners in the learning process often lack confidence, they usually doubt their ability. adult students encounter difficulties if they don't have the right attribution, they always think their bad Chinese is due to some external factors or irresistible factors, for example the task is too difficult, bad luck, illness, travel and so on. Because of this wrong attribution, it often makes the students form the negative thoughts. To create a positive attitude on study, teachers should help students make a comprehensive analysis of the situations, to get a clear causal relationship efforts and success, to have a right sense of attribution, so that students believe that failure is only temporary, as long as they keep trying, they will surely succeed. Teachers should be good at using the method of induction, for example: affirmation. When students get achievements, teachers should give timely praise and encouragement, to enable them to establish confidence step by step and strengthen their learning motivations.

Teachers should train students to use appropriate learning strategies, improve their Chinese efficiency, when the students are not confident, sometimes because of the improper use of learning strategies, some students don't get good results although they spend a lot of time learning. At this juncture, students can easily have negative feelings towards studying and learning the language. The teacher should change the teaching methods and try to increase the students confident. For example, if a student is good at listening, but his spoken is not that good, at this time, the teacher should allow the student to speak more during in class activities such as role playing, they can have a role playing game.

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