

## MOTIVATION AND ETHNICITY IN EFL LEARNING OF INDONESIAN CHINESE

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### Abstract

Being born Chinese in the country where the majority of the people is not certainly provides challenges to assimilate. The history of Chinese ethnicity assimilation in Indonesia has witnessed several contexts highly politically and socially sensitive areas for research mainly due to ethical and empathetical reasons. Moving toward more successful assimilation of Chinese to being Indonesians, the reality is undeniably clear that success seems to be identical with Chinese achievements almost in all walks of life, including the success of Chinese learners in school. This study concerns with English as Foreign Language learning process. The aims of this study are to determine the types of motivation and to know whether being Chinese descendant gives advantage to the students in their EFL learning process. The limitation of the study only allows five students to be interviewed. They represent the most successful learners of English in this focus group. The questionnaire for the interview adopts the AMTB (Gardner, 1985; Clements, Dornyei & Noels, 1994) accompanied by a semi-structured and open-ended interviews. The data triangulation serves to measure the learners' tendency to be more integratively or instrumentally motivated in their EFL learning process. Furthermore, the information from teachers at AnakPintar English course will be used to clarify the initial interview. It is expected that this research provides more insight to see in a more objective ways why being Chinese is synonymous to wealth and success, more specifically in EFL learning.

**Keywords:** EFL, ethnicity, Chinese, Motivation.

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Socio-cultural Contextual Background

Jember is one of the regencies in East Java province, Indonesia. It is approximately 3.293,34 km<sup>2</sup> wide bordered to the north with Probolinggo and Bondowoso regencies, the East Banyuwangi regency, Hindian Ocean in the South, and Lumajang regency in the West. With 31 districts, the majority of Jember populations are speakers of Javanese and Madurase uniquely blends into Pendhalungan culture living side by side with Chinese, Osing (Banyuwangi people), Batak, Sunda and other ethnic groups. It is famous for its agro industry with fine tobacco on top of other products. It is because Jember has a large of field and plantation areas. Jember also hosts an annual world famous Jember Fashion Carnival (JFC).

In Jember, English has been studied since kindergarten level, though it still covers the basic such as numbers, words, name of fruits, animals, etc. However, the English language used in schools is not used as the tool of daily conversations. Therefore, teachers sometimes still have to translate English language in the classroom and mix it with Indonesian, so that the students can understand. To master English as second language, students should be able to learn macro skills like reading, listening, writing and speaking.

This study takes the subject of five Indonesian Chinese youths of senior high school in Santo Paulus Catholic Senior High School Jember who joined AnakPintar English course. This study concerns with motivation influencing Chinese participants (compare Li, 2006; Sugeha, 2015). The research questions are:

1. What instrumental motivation does play within these Chinese youth in learning English?
2. What integrative motivation does play within these Chinese youth in learning English?
3. How does being Chinese affect their learning English as their Foreign Language?

## **2. Theoretical Frameworks**

### **2.1 Types of Motivation**

There are stages for children to acquire second language (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). They are preproduction, early-production, speech emergence, and intermediate fluency level. Children who want to learn a second language need a booster to encourage them to do their acquisition quicker and more successful. This booster is called motivation. Gardner, Tremblay and Masgoret (1997) said that motivation is individual's attitudes, desire, and effort. Motivation will make people feel encouraged to achieve their goal which is acquiring and learning second language.

There are two kinds of motivation based on Gardner (1985). They are instrumental and integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation refers to motivation to acquire language as a means for attaining instrumental goals like furthering career, reading technical material and translation. Instrumental motivation is more concerned with one's motivation to earn achievements or getting some certain benefits of some activities. Instrumental motivation is related with individual goal and it does not require specific interaction with a certain group or society. It is relevant to what Gardner (1985, p. 54) said that students can be identified as instrumentally oriented if they are capable to emphasize that their learning in English because it could become a useful factor in obtaining jobs or turn them into better educated students. Gardner uses inquiries that ask whether being knowledgeable, finding your dream job and many more become the reason why a learner learns English from the very first place.

The second is integrative motivation. It refers to motivation to integrate oneself within the culture of the L2 group, to identify oneself with and become a part of society. It is intended that a person will be motivated when they want to blend in society. In integrative motivation, students prefer the social interaction that will make them closer to their second language such as English as the target language. An integratively motivated student is one who is motivated to learn the second language and has openness to identification with the other community and has favourable attitudes toward the learning situation (Gardner, in Mori, 2002). There are several reasons that motivate students integratively. In order to simplify and determine whether someone has integrative motivation or not, the writers use some items arranged by Vaezi (2008). It can be summarized that to gather with a group of L2 speaker stands out as the main motive.

### **2.2 Chinese Ethnicity in Indonesia**

Ethnicity is a seemingly straightforward concept, but in fact it is subject to different interpretations (Yang, 2000). Some people consider it as legacy, others rely on physical attributes. Ethnic group is a social group based on ancestry, culture, or national origin, ethnicity refers to affiliation or identification with an ethnic group. Ethnicity is static, i.e. if someone was born Chinese, he/she will be forever Chinese and they can't change their membership to other group.

The story of Chinese in Indonesia started with the migration, in 1811 - 1816, of around 100 Chinese immigrants to Indonesia driven partially by the China's century of Humiliation. Early migrants were dominated by the Peranakan Chinese (Pure Chinese) and Totok Chinese (mixed Chinese) with Hokkien, Teochiu, Cantonese, Hakka, and Hainanese the dialects mostly spoken here (Birckenbech & Eibel, 2012). This marked Chinese Diaspora in Indonesia. At that time, some parts of Indonesia had been under Dutch colonization and some of these migrants have been favoring the ruler's interest which made the indigenous people of Indonesia developed certain attitudes to Chinese. Moreover, there are four predominant groups who migrated to Indonesia. They are Hokkien, Hakka, Teochiu, and Cantonese. The Hokkien migrated to Java and Sumatra, the Hakka migrated to West Kalimantan, the Teochiu migrated to Java, Sumatra,

and the Riau Island. The last the Cantonese migrated to the archipelago (Turner, in Urban 2013). The spread of Chinese migrant once made the sentiments became national issue.

During Soeharto's administration (New Order regime), Soekarno's position considering Chinese as a source of inspiration and support and relying increasingly on the communist party while turning against the military and Islamists led to a huge backlash (Walujono, 2014). Anti-Chinese sentiment grew and he categorized citizens into pribumi (native) and non-pribumi (non-native) based on the citizenship law of 1945 (Ethnicity as right of citizenship). Therefore, the identity of Chinese was changed. It was divided into two groups based on racial and ethnic stereotypes. That policy was called as "MasalahCina" or China Problem. For overcoming this problem, Soeharto created assimilation program that included changing Chinese names into Indonesians, banning public practice of Chinese customs and eliminating form or visible symbols that represent Chinese culture (Hoon, 2006).

Later, Chinese identity was admitted. What modern Indonesian Chinese have is to continue doing their best in trading and industry inherited by their forefathers to ensure that "Wherever there is water, there are Chinese." (Seng, 2005, p. 91). They fear no risks and are ambitious. For instance, if he/she is a peanut seller, their future children should have a bean factory. They also love to have total changes. Their desire to change and evolve is the key to success. The most remarkable of them is the attitude of those who want to learn from failures and want to try to maintain success. The failure will not fade like most quitters at the time of failure. They use failures as references to evaluate and introspect themselves so that they are always excited to start business.

### 3. Method

#### Participants

AnakPintar English Course has about 60 students with different grade levels from kindergarten to high school. 30 of them are Chinese ethnic with different grade levels. However, five students are chosen as the subject. All of them, aged 16 years, are classmates and study in Santo Paulus Catholic Senior High School, Jember. There are five Chinese youths who show great enthusiasm when they are taught about English. They are also more active in class than their friends. They even often try to finish tasks and exercises given by their English teacher precisely. They tend to have a critical debate with their English teacher when their answers in some tasks or exercises are wrong, along with logical reasons behind the teacher's correction. They like it if they are asked to have a debate on something related to English and they are able to memorize more English vocabulary for weekly tasks in AnakPintar English Course rather than other Chinese youths. However, two of them are not as great as the other three. Those two students are lazier and less motivated than the other three students.

#### Instrument and Procedures

The data was collected using a questionnaire (adapted from Clement, Dornyei & Noels, 1994 and Gardner's AMTB, 1985), semi-structured interviews and open-ended interview. The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) comprises of scales assessing the individual's affective reactions toward various groups, individuals and concepts associated with second language acquisition and consequently discretion is required of the user. The semi-structured interview is used to find out types of motivation, whether instrumental or integrative which influenced them. In the open-ended interview, the researchers use various questions related to the personality of the participants as the Chinese youths to find out the factors affecting them in accelerating their English acquisition and learning. This open-ended interview questions them about the existence of relationship between cultures and mindsets as the Chinese youths which underlie their capability of seizing their target language, whether from their daily habits, parents, or even their ancestors.

Data obtained were transcribed, pre-coded, interpreted and analyzed using data triangulation to determine the types of motivation, which are influencing Chinese youth students in AnakPintar English course in learning English as a second language individually in different time and place. Teachers of AnakPintar English course participated to complete the verification of some information.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### Instrumental Motivation items

From the data analyzing process, it can be found that there are some items which are included into instrumental motivation (see Zanghar, 2012) of the participants.

Table 1: Instrumental Motivation Items of the Participants

| Instrumental Items                                               | Participants |    |    |    |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----|----|----|----|
|                                                                  | P1           | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 |
| Getting a good job                                               | +            | +  | +  | -  | -  |
| Future career                                                    | -            | +  | +  | -  | -  |
| Future study in University                                       | +            | +  | +  | -  | -  |
| English educational environment (school).                        | +            | +  | +  | +  | -  |
| English exams, learning progress and achievement (school).       | +            | +  | +  | +  | +  |
| English development tools (internet, e-magazines and newspaper). | +            | +  | +  | -  | -  |
| Holiday to travel abroad.                                        | +            | +  | -  | +  | +  |
| Parental support for English studies.                            | +            | +  | +  | +  | -  |

These are primarily relevant to P1, P2, and P3. They try to graduate from with good national exam scores so that they can find jobs in the future easily. They believe that office workers who can speak English are more suited to communicate with others like having business with other companies. It is also proved by the teacher 1 (T1) of AnakPintar English course who said that besides having the skills, their efforts during learning are obvious in achieving high English score to pass the National exam. Besides, P2 assumes that one of the requirements to be accepted by his dream companies is by having good TOEFL scores. With that, he believes that many jobs will consider his English ability and turn him into a potential candidate. They consider English as important key to get a job because English is international language. Interestingly, P2 also compared English to Mandarin that:

“English is easier than Mandarin. It is because Mandarin was more complicated than other languages. Mandarin occasionally has different written forms and meanings in sentences.”

P2 agrees and adds that the difficulty of Mandarin is the use of symbols rather than alphabets. Further, the participants who consider Mandarin to be much more difficult in almost all aspects are challenged to keep perseverance and unyielding attitude.

The fact that many Indonesian Chinese own shops and industries which benefit them and their descendants seems authoritative in being successful. Therefore, P4 and P5 want to be businessmen just like their parents. It is somehow unconvincingly clear that they relate English skill with their future business. P2 and P3, however, have special reasons to learn English related to their dreams. P2 says that he wants to be a doctor someday and to be a doctor, there are some special requirements that must be fulfilled such as passing an OSCE examination (Objective Structured Clinical Examination) and pass another written test (Education Coordinating Body, 2013). Therefore, English is very useful to help them pass the mentioned test above. According to teacher 2 (T2), students who learn English macro skills: speaking, reading, listening, and writing can reach their dream because they have high motivation exactly. Another dream is also explained also by P3 who also learns English as a means to become a programmer. Programmers are people who work to create or design systems to help facilitate the work of people who use computers. P3 understands that English is the basic language used in computer.

Next, all participants are influenced by future study in university. All participants explained that their most prominent motivation of learning English all this time is about being accepted in universities. P2 and P3 revealed that TOEFL is primarily useful as a key to go to university. Meanwhile, the other three participants assume that English could make their future better, both in terms of education and career. The participants also claim that they excel during their

English learning. However, in personal level all participants agree that vocabulary or speaking skill are the most difficult and they tend to seek formulaic solution to the problems.

Fourth, five participants are also motivated by their educational environment. Teachers, friends and school rules could be the factors that motivate them to learn English. P1 concentrates on the role of teachers in motivating himself in the process of learning English. He said that teachers will provide questions which will increase his score if he can answer it. This surely makes P1 feel challenged to increasingly explore and hone his English. As for P2, P3 and P4, they are more motivated to learn English because of the fear of being laughed at by friends when speaking English in front of the class. They feel that they are less reliable in speaking English. P1 and P5 are the only participants who do not feel afraid of being laughed at by their friends. P1 feels happy to show his ability in English which he claims to be pretty good. Meanwhile, P5 feels that he is not afraid to be laughed at because all of his classmates are not fluent in English. Besides the factor of teachers and friends, school rules also affect all of the participants except P4 considers English a compulsory subject that requires him to continue learning, either at school or outside of school.

Fifth, getting good grades on English tests or assignments pushes all of the participants to exploit their own learning methods. P1, for example, studies English especially from watching Japanese cartoons called *anime* with subtitles to increase his English vocabulary. As for speaking, listening and reading, he frequently practices English not only at home, but also at school and English course by reading English articles then re-telling and re-writing them to practice pronunciation and writing. P1 seems to have developed the best understanding of the benefit of learning independently. As for the other four participants, P2, P3, P4 and P5, they admitted that their method of studying English all this time are classical (summarizing and memorizing method).

However, they have different duration of the study. Some of them need about 45 minutes a day, but others need six hours to study because they have different capacities of thinking. Even they also still add time to study by following courses or counseling outside their house. Their purpose is to get the best mark, but they also need a kind of refreshing when they are bored to study. P3 states that refreshing and playing games and also sight-seeing are the effective way to release stress.

The next item, motivation of those Chinese youths' success in English language acquisition is also caused by the influence of the internet, electronic and printed media. Not only vocabulary, those three tools also add their insights of the outside world. P1 said that English helps him increase his knowledge about the outside world because most information on the internet uses English. He is indeed a Chinese youth who loves to browse wide range of knowledge through the internet. He uses mobile phone or laptop to read English articles, especially biology, physics and astronomy because he likes many things about outer space and not only through the internet. He also read articles in printed media such as English newspapers and magazines. He also uses television and radio to assist him in developing his listening skill. Other participants agree with him. However, P4 and P5 prefer to learn English by watching movies or playing games as they find it more fun to do.

The seventh, the five Chinese youths are also motivated by the desire to vacate out of the country some day. English is an international language that "dominates the world stage in a number of language uses" (Culpeper, 2009), such as in business or education. According to the observation conducted in AnakPintar English Course, most Chinese youths there come from rich parents enabling them to have vacation abroad such as to Malaysia or Singapore. Still, among the five Chinese youths, only P3 has ever gone abroad, to Singapore. The others are highly eager to travel, especially to English speaking countries. Only P4 wants to go to abroad for sight-seeing. In order to make his dream come true, he tries to master English by taking English courses. As for P2, P3, and P5, they are motivated to continue learning English because it can be used later to ask around if they get lost on the streets or buy souvenirs when they eventually go to abroad. Meanwhile, P1 feels that going abroad is not very interesting because Indonesia also has many awesome tourist destinations. This relates to P1 hobby of cycling.

Lastly, it was found that parental support is also important in motivating a person in the learning process. Sometimes parents need to be stricter in overseeing their children education because education, nowadays is increasingly difficult, in line with the development of technology. Parents also realize that there are several factors affecting the scores of their

children at school like laziness or depression. However, the scores of the children also often increase because of the positive parental supports. There are several ways of how parents increase the learning spirit of their children. Some promise rewards if their children get the first rank in their class. Some also promise free-to-play holiday after the exams. But, there are also parents who impose their will on their children due to their position in society that they take their children to courses here and there to avoid decreasing scores and embarrassment. This is also clarified by one of the teachers in the AnakPintar English courses.

In supporting their children, the parents, in this case, the Chinese ethnic expect that their children can fulfill their responsibilities as children. Responsibilities, here, mean that they have to obey their parents' orders and behave well so that later, they could have a good career or continue their parents' businesses. Parents argue that they cannot arbitrarily choose any other careers because the direction of the parents had been considered as the best ones.

There are four dimensions of parenting. They are "authoritative", "authoritarian", "neglectful", and "indulgent" (Santrock, 2010, p. 78). P1' parents seem to give no support, but instead they allow him to be independent. He stated that his parents never limit his creativity in his English learning. So, it means that his parents use Authoritative dimension which is similar to P2' parents. This means that they show more support. They use authoritative dimension. It proves that his parents require him to learn English even if he has already graduated later for the sake of work. He explains that his parents foster independent learning that includes his ability to seek support himself.

"My parents often told me to ask to teacher if I have trouble so that I better understand the material well."

They also feel enthusiastic when P2 practices English at home. Parents of P3 also appear to be authoritative. His parents motivate him by convincing him that English will help him in the future. He is often asked by his parents to keep practicing English even when he is at home. Enthusiasm and interest of his parents when he is studying English at home is a way of parents to monitor how their children study. It obviously makes P3 feel happy and wants to be more active in studying that he even decides to go a bit further by concluding that "I must join English course to practice my English skills."

This kind of support is also seen when his parents tell him to enter an English competition. There is no difference with P4 parents. However, they prefer to motivate him by using authoritarian dimension. They tell him to take various types of English courses. This is because, according to P4 himself, his English score is still under average. P4 said he always asked to join an English course when he scores low. But, despite their anger, P4 parents never force him to join some English competitions. His parents fear that he will be frustrated. Next is P5. His parents tend to use indulgent dimension in supporting his English learning. His parent shows no interest in his English learning. P5 practices English at home without his parents' support. His parents show their concern by reminding him to always seek help to his teacher at school.

## Question 2

As students, all of the participants are bound by the rules conducted by teachers. The English teacher of the participants obliges the students to always use English during class sessions. If they do not follow the rule, they will lose points. One way or another they need to integrate themselves with the English classroom setting. In other words, English class becomes an artificial environment of L2 where they belong as speakers of EFL. This is visible in P4.

Table 2: Integrative Motivation Items of the Participants

| Integrative items                                          | Participants |    |    |    |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----|----|----|----|
|                                                            | P1           | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 |
| English language as required subject (school)              | -            | -  | -  | +  | -  |
| Social Networks as communication tool to integrate with L2 | +            | -  | +  | -  | -  |
| Games online to integrate with L2                          | -            | -  | -  | +  | -  |

The next item, they want to meet and make friends with native speakers of English. P1 and P3 are very keen to establish relationship with foreigners through social media such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram* and *Yahooo Messenger*. P1 and P3 confirm that by making friends with

English foreigners, he can speak like them and understand what they mean. In contrast, the other three Chinese youths, P2, P4 and P5, are not too fond of making friends with foreigners. They said that they do not want to make friends because they are afraid they cannot speak English fluently. Similarly, this obstacle is also evident in P4 who chooses to use text-based communication via online game so that he can avoid verbal communication which he finds the most disturbing.

To sum up, the communication in English during classroom activities fosters their attachment to L2 environment and online media facilitates their practice without having to risk their limited grammar mastery in the verbal performance which limits broader communicative orientation.

### Question 3

The respondents agree that education is a top priority to guarantee their future success. The financial status of their parents somehow leads them to be youngsters with appropriated attributes. Joining various courses for school success, classical music instruments accompanied by their lifestyle by wearing fancy clothes and showing off things mark their social status. Wonohadidjojo (2001) reports that the perfection of Chinese youths goes beyond the wildest expectation of parents from scoring 1600 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, concert performer level of musical instrument skill, acceptance in 27 colleges, obedience to the tradition of learning to marrying an Chinese-American surgeon. Yet, the acknowledgement of their parents' childhood story especially the one about walking 7 miles to school without shoes emphasizes hard-work and perseverance as key to success.

The acknowledgement seems to extend to social context that it would embarrass their parents in the eyes of others if they cannot represent their success. Therefore, most of them suffer a lot of pressure from their parents both physically and mentally. Even, it was found that there is a second grade of elementary school Chinese youth who is required to answer questions of high school level to be able to eat once a day. Despite resulting higher skill, it will affect his psychology and learning patterns. Generally, parents' meeting at churches after sermons may be a context that suggests the normative replication of one family treatment to the others. Through sharing, this community may have compensated other family's defect in a structured attempt of making excellent generation of Chinese with uniform lifestyle and learning habits.

P1 clearly states that he has a motto of life handed down by his family. He said:

“Things always happen and none ever think about it until it really happens. Therefore, we will never know what will happen next before it really happens.”

The motto is very helpful in fostering P1's spirit of learning. He does not easily surrender and feel afraid to take risks because, for him, there would be no use if someone does not want to try first. To him, fear of failure is the main obstacle to success. Because of this motto, he begins to be ambitious and optimistic towards everything that he does. Meanwhile, P3 states that he was not also born to be clever just because he is a Chinese youth. In line with P1, the cleverness is created by mindset of business instilled by his parents. Learning must be done bit by bit from very early on. P3 also has a motto of life given by parents: “Never give before trying with all your might.”

Similar to other Chinese youths, he also has mental of steel that is not afraid of shame and failure because failure will turn into the key to future success. He also feels that the motto gives him a great impact on his learning patterns. Managing his stress well, he, eventually, could pass national exam with optimism and confident.

P4 admit that the greatest problem is facing against his own laziness. He frequently hesitates between studying and playing. However, his parents teach him that no one but himself can solve his problem. P4's life motto is “Diligent leads to clever, then be diligent so that you can be clever someday.” This motto actually has been believed by many that diligence and good deeds will bring good stead in the future. With the motto, he becomes more enthusiastic to take courses here and there so he could acquire English properly.

As for P2 and P5, they have no life motto. However, what makes them become clever, especially in English, is by doing hard work and continuous learning. However, both understand very well that being born into Chinese youth does not mean anything if they do not want to continue to

develop themselves, even though if they have got the facilities and advanced technology they need. In fact, there are also many children of the rich Chinese who should be treated for several disorders or commonly referred to children with special needs. They get good nutrition, advanced living facilities even given higher education, but they still have shortages. P5 also skips classes due to getting bad scores on certain subjects.

### **Conclusion**

The attachment of Chinese identity as a part of Indonesian social reality deserves its own space to elaborate. Besides having been stereotypical, it is factual that Chinese excel in the most practical terms, economic success. Hoping that we can generalize the driving factors onto the success of learning ESL/EFL will be an exaggeration. Yet, from a more open perspective, learning in formal settings, particularly in ESL/EFL, gives way to appreciation that the members of this ethnic group may be positioned equally as valuable as other members of different ethnic groups. However, the observation of individual attitudes toward learning process cannot dismiss the prominence of family as the earliest impetus nurturing characters building. It is family that becomes major factors introducing learners to hard work, discipline, perseverance, risk taking, and ambitions. However, the pressures that come together invite us to think of a much more encouraging ways that ESL/EFL learning is of great importance and life-changing without necessarily sacrificing the joy of learning.

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