From extrinsic to intrinsic motivation: A case study of Chinese character teaching

Jane Woo & Sophia Lam
What are they?

Extrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation
A teacher’s question (S) ...
Self-determination Theory

(Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000)

- Two prominent motivation constructs of self-determination theory - **Extrinsic and Intrinsic motivation**.
- Self-determination theory regarded extrinsic and intrinsic motivation lying along a **continuum** where through the process of self-regulation, extrinsic contingencies are progressively transformed into intrinsic motivation (Noels et al., 2003).
- Learners who are more intrinsically motivated, are likely to continue studying a foreign language (Ramage, 1990).
- It is also believed that **social environment** such as the language classroom can facilitate intrinsic motivation of learners (Ryan & Deci, 2000).
Research questions

• What happens during the transformation from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation?

• As a teacher, how can I help sustain motivation? In other words, how can I transform the extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation?

• Focus: the learning of Chinese characters.

• Students’ voice.
Context

- A boys state school in London
- Participants: 25 Year 7 MEP students
- Language proficiency: beginner
Research Timeline

Student questionnaire: Oct 2017
Teaching Journal: Oct 2017 to Feb 2018
Focus group interview: Feb & Mar 2018

Intervention:
12 weeks of character learning
Approximately 40 hours
Teaching activities
海
边

countryside
countryside

city
city

city

countryside
海边

城市

农村

hǎi biān

seaside

chēng shì
city

nóng cūn
countryside
海边

城市

农村

hai bian

seaside

city

countryside
How would you run the competition?

What skill do you want to test your students?
Recap...
海边  
hǎi biān = seaside

喜欢  
xǐ huan = like

不喜欢  
bù xǐ huan = dislike

海边  
chéng shì = city

农村  
nóng cūn = countryside

我  
wǒ = I

你  
nǐ = you

他  
tā = he

她  
tā = she
我
你
他
她

喜欢
不喜欢

海边
农村
城市

去看书
上网
听音乐

wǒ = I
nǐ = you
tā = he
tā = she

xǐ huàn = like
bù xǐ huàn = dislike
zài = at

kàn shū = to read
shàng wǎng = to surf internet
yǐn yín yuè = listen to music
Student questionnaire

1. How long have you been learning Chinese?
   - About 2 months

2. Why would you like to learn Mandarin?
   - I would like to learn it as I think it would be beneficial for finding a job.

3. Do you have Chinese related background?
   - No

4. What are three of the most interesting things you have learned?
   - I like writing Chinese characters, speaking Chinese, and a new thing I've learned - radicals.

5. To what extent do you agree with the statement? Please put a '√' in the boxes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I really enjoy learning Mandarin.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Learning Mandarin is a challenge which I enjoy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I find learning Mandarin really interesting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Learning Mandarin is one of the most important aspects of my school life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I like the challenges that learning Mandarin poses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I think knowing Mandarin will help me to become a more knowledgeable person.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>I think Mandarin will help in my future career.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Learning Mandarin will help me learn better in other subjects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Studying Mandarin is important to me because with a high level of proficiency in a foreign language I will be able to earn more money.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I can imagine myself speaking and writing Mandarin as if I were native speaker of Chinese.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I can imagine myself communicating in Mandarin with Chinese.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Whenever I think of my future career, I imagine myself using Mandarin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I can imagine myself writing Chinese Mandarin emails fluently.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I can imagine myself living abroad and using Mandarin effectively for communicating with the locals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I invest much time and effort on all Mandarin assignments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I am working hard at learning Mandarin.</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>I am confident at my Chinese characters abilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>When learning Chinese characters, I can always quickly understand the meaning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>When learning Chinese characters, I can always quickly recognise them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>When learning Chinese characters, I can always quickly memorise how to write them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I am always motivated to learn Chinese characters.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I developed different strategies to learn Chinese characters.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Learning Chinese characters is fun.</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>I am confident to learn new characters.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>I am always motivated to use the Chinese characters I have learned in writing.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6. Are you interested in participating a focus group interview (small group interview about your experience and perception of learning Mandarin)?
   - A. Yes
   - B. No
Teaching journal

A: 我家有五口人。

Q: 你家有几口人？

Enjoyment | Engagement | Difficulty
-----------|------------|-------------
H          | H          | M           
(guessing the meaning of 父亲 and finding out answer)
Focus group interview questions

1. Why would you like to learn Mandarin?
2. How did you feel when you start learning Mandarin?
3. How do you feel after you have been learning Mandarin for four months?
4. Why have you such changes in your learning attitudes towards Mandarin?
From extrinsic to intrinsic motivation: the before and after

1. Effort
   ○ I invest much time and effort on all Chinese character assignments.

2. Instrumental
   ○ I think learning Chinese character will help in my future career

3. Learning strategies
   ○ I develop different strategies to learn Chinese characters

4. Ideal L2 self
   ○ I can imagine myself speaking and writing mandarin as if I were native speaker of Chinese
# Results of questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation construct</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal L2 Self</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning strategies</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Changes of motivation

**BEFORE**

- Yes, it is difficult. You are used to English and what is that in Mandarin? Arh...it’s completely different.
- At first when I start learning Mandarin, I was thinking how I am going to learn this language, it’s so hard.
- I was kind of stressing as I don’t know any of the characters and I wasn’t really familiar with them.

**AFTER**

- At the beginning, we are just saying 你好, but we are now writing paragraph. So it’s really cool.
- I really proud of the results. It is because at the beginning I don’t really understand anything. But now, I can write like a short paragraph in Mandarin.
- We have learnt so many words and sentences, say structures of sentences. The only time that I am not confident is the test. Because I don’t know if I am going to get it right or not.
What sustain students’ intrinsic motivation?

- “Sometimes I think about myself older and I will learn Chinese and I will be able to speak it fluently to native speakers.”
- “When I look at any jobs in the future, it is better if you know more languages. Again, Mandarin is really useful and it spoken a lot.”
- “Sometimes when I really get bored in lessons, I just write characters in my hands.”
- “Watch the video about the Great Wall of China. We are doing quizzes about the Great Wall of China, that’s really cool!”
- “I found it very interesting, sometimes I go google and look at images and really like the culture, that’s kind of one of reasons that I like Mandarin as well.”
What sustain students’ intrinsic motivation?

Student A: How miss motivates us a lot, we play games sometimes that we love.

- White board games
- Beat the teacher
- MEP projects (e.g. watching cultural videos)
Discussion: Reflecting teaching

1. What is the most commonly activity you use in your classroom?

2. What new element would you add to this activity to sustain students’ motivation?
   - Ideal L2 self
   - Learning strategies
   - Culture
   - Others
Conclusion

1. Extrinsic motivation wears off

2. Ideal L2 self - the projection of students’ self image as a Mandarin user in the future. Help the students nurture this, which research tells us this is important to sustain the motivation.

3. Chinese culture, the students were fascinated by every aspect of Chinese culture.

4. Learning strategies – sharing of learning strategies with the students in different skills can promote the self-efficacy.

HOW WOULD YOU DO IT DIFFERENTLY?

DO IT!
Question and Answer
Thank you!

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