◯ THE CHANGING FACE OF MOTIVATION
A STUDY OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS' MOTIVATION OVER TIME

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Motivation to learn a second language (L2) is considered a crucial individual factor in explaining success or lack thereof in second language learning. This study examined learners' motivation to learn Chinese as a second language (L2). The study was longitudinal and cross-sectional. Interviews were conducted with learners at different year levels over the course of a university semester to analyse motivation to choose a particular L2, how motivation changes over time, and factors contributing to that change. The study found that motivation is diverse, complex, and undergoes many fluctuations. Motivation to begin language study was related to both past L2 learning experiences and personal goals. Once language study began, factors related to the learning environment were the most important factors to impact on motivation, and were also most likely to demotivate learners. However, when learners had a clear future image of themselves as speakers of the L2, they were able to continue motivating themselves, regardless of the demotivation stemming from their learning environment. These findings lend some support for Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self-System theory, which highlights the importance of the ideal L2 self as a powerful motivator to learn an L2.

KEY WORDS: L2 motivation, demotivation, L2 motivational self system

INTRODUCTION

Motivation is considered a crucial individual difference variable in determining long term second language (L2) learning success, but one particularly challenging to theorize and research. Theories of L2 learning motivation and approaches to research have evolved over time, influenced by work in psychology and education (e.g. Deci & Ryan, 1985; Eccles & Wigfield, 1995), as well as criticisms from L2 researchers (e.g. Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). The early predominant socio-psychological model of Gardner and Lambert (1959) was static, focusing on integrative versus instrumental orientations as the driving forces of motivation. Integrative orientation is 'a genuine interest in learning the second language in order to come closer to the other language community' (Gardner, 2001, p. 5). An instrumental orientation is perceived as learning the L2 in order to gain external rewards, such as better career prospects or financial gains. Later models of motivation became more dynamic and ultimately more complex, questioning the definitions of integrativeness and instrumentality. The evolution of

thinking about L2 motivation is perhaps best reflected in Dörnyei's successive models of L2 motivation.

In 1994, Dörnyei proposed a tri-partite motivation model that viewed motivation as a complex process with three levels: the language level, the learner level, and the learning situation level. Subsequently, Dörnyei and Otto (1998) proposed a Process model, which was the first to include an element of temporality, to better explore motivation changes. In the Process model motivation is conceptualized as a cyclical process, with a pre-actional, actional, and post-actional phase. Language learning is perceived as undergoing constant reappraisal, and the original - typically long term - motivations for beginning language study (in the pre-actional phase) are regularly evaluated and supplemented with shorter term motivations. This distinction between short and long term motivations is described in the model as a duality between "choice" and "executive" motivation.

The most recent theory of L2 motivation is Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self-System. The central concept in this theory is the notion of the L2 self, distinguishing between an *ideal* and an *ought-to* L2 self. The ideal L2 Self contains the attributes one desires to posses. Thus, if the person we would like to become speaks an L2, this is a powerful motivator to learn the L2. The ought-to L2 Self, encompasses the attributes one believes one should possess to meet expectations (of significant others) and to avoid possible negative outcomes. The L2 selves have a future dimension: they embody an image of oneself in a future state. This future image guides present actions. The other component in this theory is L2 Learning Experience. This component concerns factors related to the immediate learning environment and experience and is thus more situation specific.

The L2 self model, apart from incorporating notions of identity, presents a rethinking of the notions of integrative and instrumental motivations. Integrativeness is no longer seen as a desire to assimilate with an identifiable L2 speaking community. Rather, it is conceived of more broadly as an openness and respect for the L2 speaking community (Dörnyei, 2005), or as in the case of English, as an interest in becoming a member of a global English speaking community (Lamb, 2004, 2009; Yashima, 2009). Furthermore, instrumental motivation can be divided into two types, depending on the extent to which instrumental motives have been internalised. Internalised instrumental motives form part of an ideal L2 self; non-internalised instrumental motives form part of an ought-to L2 self. For example, in the case of aspirations to become a successful bilingual professional, if such aspirations are driven by familial expectations, they form part of the ought-to L2 self; if such aspirations have become internalised, representing one's desires, they form part of the ideal L2 self. Dörnyei suggests that internalised motives are more likely to have a long term impact on L2 learning.

Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System parallels Ushioda's (2001) motivational construct. Ushioda proposed a complex motivational construct containing eight motivational elements that could be grouped into three broad clusters. The first cluster includes elements related to the actual learning process (e.g. personal satisfaction, language learning history, language related enjoyment). This cluster aligns with Dörnyei's component of L2 Learning Experience. Ushioda's second cluster includes external pressures and incentives, and aligns with Dörnyei's ought-to L2 self. The third cluster is integrative disposition. It subsumes personal goals, desired levels of L2 competence, and positive feelings about the L2 speaking community. This cluster aligns with Dörnyei's ideal L2 Self.

Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self-System was tested by Kormos and Csizer (2008) in a large-scale research project, conducted with high-school students, university students and working adults in Hungary. Employing a carefully constructed questionnaire, the researchers found support for the ideal L2 self, but the existence of the ought-to self could not be verified. These results, as Lamb (2009) argues, could be attributable to the quantitative research design being unable to capture the complex constructs. Indeed, one of the criticisms levelled at recent studies which have utilized the Motivational L2 System (e.g. Ryan, 2009; Taguchi, Magid & Papi, 2009), is that they continue to be quantitative, trying to prove causality rather than exploring and illuminating the complexity of human beings with multiple roles and identities, beyond that of just a language learner (Ushioda, 2009).

Over time it has been increasingly recognized that traditional, quantitative approaches to research on L2 motivation may not effectively capture this dynamic and complex construct. Thus a number of researchers (e.g. Lamb, 2009; Spolsky, 2000; Ushioda, 2001, 2009) advocate the use of qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis. The advantages of qualitative approaches (e.g. open-ended interviews) are that they allow learners to self-identify important aspects of their motivation and to articulate the subtle differences lost in a quantitative study.

Qualitative approaches to motivation research have been used in a small number of recent studies (e.g. Lamb, 2009; Shedivy, 2004; Syed, 2001; Ushioda, 1996a, b, 2001). For example, Ushioda's (1996a, b, 2001) cross-sectional study of university learners of French explored qualitative changes and development in learners' thoughts and beliefs and how they shaped learners' engagement in their language learning activity. Ushioda concluded that motivation changes can be the result of both internal and external factors to the individual, and as such language learning should be considered alongside other elements of the language learner's reality.

As the above brief overview of the literature shows, research on second language learning motivation has had a transformative history, culminating in theories viewing motivation as a complex, dynamic construct, requiring qualitative, longitudinal, and learner-centred approaches to research.

The current study sought to add to this body of research in two ways. Firstly this study investigated motivation to learn Chinese (Mandarin) as a foreign language. Studies on L2 motivation have tended, by and large, to investigate motivation to learn English as a foreign language, focusing in particular on how the spread of English in the globalized world, and a desire to become a member of this global community, affect motivation (e.g. Lamb, 2004, 2009; Ryan, 2009; Yashima, 2009). Despite China's rapidly growing political and economic importance in the world, there has been very little research on motivation to learn Chinese as a foreign language. Secondly, the study sought to further explore the temporal dimension of motivation, using a longitudinal and cross-sectional design. Employing a longitudinal design enabled us to explore the susceptibility to change across various factors. The cross-sectional aspect enabled us to investigate differences in motivation between learners at different levels of learning, based on the possibility that learners further ahead in the learning process will experience different motivations to those in the early learning stages.

Thus the three research questions guiding this study were:

1.   What factors shape choice and ongoing (executive) motivation to learn Chinese as a second language?
2.   How does ongoing motivation change over time and which factors are associated with this change?
3.   How do these factors interact with each other over time and in relation to developing L2 proficiency?

THE STUDY

CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

This study was conducted at a large Australian university. Language study is not a requirement at the university, and thus students enrol in a second language class of their own volition. A number of different European and Asian languages are offered. The study focused on learners of Mandarin as a second (foreign) language.

The study was conducted in the second semester of the year. One of the researchers[1] (author 1) presented brief information about the project in several Mandarin classes and invited volunteers. Nine students (five females, four males) volunteered to participate. Three

different language-learning levels were represented, with four participants from the beginner stream in their first year, four participants in their second year, and one participant in her third year of language study at the university. However, after the first interview, the third year participant discontinued Mandarin language study due to a timetable clash, and so her data has been omitted from this study. All participants identified English as their first language. The other languages spoken by the participants were: Hebrew, Indonesian, Japanese, and Macedonian.

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

The main data collection tool was individual interviews. The interviews were semi-structured. In addition, short questionnaires were administered to participants at the beginning of the first interview, designed to elicit basic biographical data.

Three semi-structured interviews were conducted over the semester (12 weeks in length) in weeks 3, 7 and 10. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed. The first interview lasted between twenty-five and fifty minutes, and each subsequent interview lasted around twenty minutes. Interview length was determined largely by the participants.

FIRST ROUND INTERVIEW

The first interview (see Appendix A) was designed to elicit from participants a comprehensive picture of the elements that comprised their motivation to learn Mandarin. In particular, it sought to tease out the participants' initial motivations to begin Mandarin language study and motivations that sustained their L2 study.

SECOND AND THIRD ROUND INTERVIEWS

The second and third round interviews examined development of participants' motivation over time, and the cause of these developments (see Appendix B and C). During these interviews, leads that seemed pertinent from the first round interviews were also followed up on.

DATA ANALYSIS

CODING AND ANALYSIS OF FIRST ROUND INTERVIEWS

In coding data from the first round interviews, Ritchie and Spencer's (2002) five-step framework guided the coding process. These steps included transcribing the data, identifying a thematic framework, analysing the data using this framework, checking for inter-coder reliability, and conducting a member check.

A thematic framework was developed based on participants' data, and informed by Ushioda's (2001) framework. Our thematic framework is presented below, along with examples from the interview transcripts (all names used are pseudonyms).

Table 1 Thematic framework used to code Interview 1

Thematic Category	Example
Language Learning History	"I saw my results at the end, and they were ok, so. It made me feel like I would be good at this" (Nicole)
Language Related Enjoyment	"The classes are so much fun, they're my favourite subject…I've made really good friends and I get along really well with everyone" (Sarah)
Personal Satisfaction	"I'm someone who enjoys a challenge, so when something's different or difficult, it gives me extra motivation to try and practice that" (Michel)
External Pressure/Influences/Incentives	"There's so many jobs coming out of China, and so many people are coming over here as well, so there will be a need for people who speak Mandarin" (Alice)
	"In Mandarin, the work load's not just higher, it's also more necessary" (Michel)
Positive Feelings Regarding China/Chinese People	"In a cultural sense, in a political sense, I find China to be a really interesting country" (Michel)
Personal Goals	"It would be really awesome to go over there [China] and teach English" (Alice)
Desired Level of L2 Competence	"A proficiency where I can be employed, and I can put it on my resume and be able to travel and interpret for people" (Nicole)
Identity Factors	"My parents are Chinese and my grandparents are Chinese... so I sort of just feel that sense of having to do it" (Jo)

To check for inter-rater reliability, three transcripts, one from a participant at each year level, with items requiring coding in bold, were given to an independent researcher together with the above thematic framework. The resultant inter-rater reliability of 85% (based on the percentage of agreements of all items requiring coding) suggested that the thematic

categories constructed were adequately reliable and were therefore used to code all remaining first interview transcripts.

Based on the analysis of the first interview transcripts, a descriptive paragraph summarising each participant's motivational profile was drawn (see example of a profile in Appendix D). These profiles were emailed to the participants for member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This step ensured that the researchers had adequately represented the participants' reality during data interpretation, by providing participants with an opportunity to comment about any aspects that may have been misinterpreted or given the wrong emphasis. All participants replied, with only two suggesting slight changes.

CODING AND ANALYSIS OF SECOND AND THIRD ROUND INTERVIEWS.

Both follow-up interviews were coded for the eight thematic categories generated from Interview 1, as well as for motivation changes over time. In the second and third interview, three other themes became apparent: affective factors from beyond the L2-context, participants' attributions of success and failure, and demotivating experiences (see Table 2). Global summaries for each participant were again generated following Interview 2 and 3, noting the direction of change in their overall motivation (increase or decrease) and main reasons for the change.

Table 2 Additional thematic categories and examples (Interview 2 & 3)

Thematic Category	Example
Affective factors from beyond the L2 context	"My family stuff hasn't been going awesome, and that probably hasn't really motivated me to do much, and mainly that has made it drop" (Alice, Interview 2)
Attributions of failure/success	"I've moved twice in the last eight or nine months, and that's been really disturbing…now I've had to change everything, so I think that's really had a part why I haven't been so successful at it" (Nicole, Interview 3)
	"Diligence. I'm diligent in my studies. And I've gone the extra mile too" (Matt, Interview 2)
Demotivation	"I'm finding that it's kind of really hard to get through, because it's so textbook, the stuff that we're doing. I think it's kind of gone downhill" (Alice, Interview 3)

FINDINGS

As temporality was one of the organizing principles of this study, the results are presented for each of the interviews. Quotes from participants are offered throughout to illustrate the responses given.

FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEW 1

Responses to the first interview were separated during the analysis into initial/choice motivation (Table 3) and ongoing motivation (Table 4) in order to distinguish between factors motivating participants to choose to learn Mandarin (choice motivation), and factors motivating them to continue with Mandarin study (ongoing motivation). A mark (X) within the table indicates that the element was found in the participant's interview transcript.

Table 3 Choice motivation: Motivations identified for beginning language study

Participant	Language learning history	Language related enjoyment	Personal satisfaction	External pressure, influences, incentives	Positive Feelings re China	Personal goals	Desired L2 competence	Identity
1st year								
Jo				X				X
Nicole	X			X	X	X		X
Michel	X		X	X		X		
Nathan	X			X				
2nd year								
Alice	X			X	X			
Sarah	X			X		X		
Matt	X			X		X		
Tom	X	X			X	X		X

Table 4 Ongoing/executive motivation: Motivations identified for continuing language study (1st interview)

Participant	Language learning history	Language related enjoyment	Personal satisfaction	External pressure, influences, incentives	Positive Feelings re China	Personal goals	Desired L2 competence	Identity
1st year								
Jo		X	X	X		X	X	X
Nicole	X		X			X	X	X
Michel	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Nathan	X		X	X		X	X	
2nd year								
Alice	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Sarah	X	X		X		X		
Matt	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Tom	X	X	X	X	X		X	X

Table 3 and Table 4 show no striking differences between participants at different levels of study, in either choice or ongoing motivation. However, these two tables do show differences between the two motivation stages. The majority of participants mentioned elements from three categories: Language learning history, External pressures/influences/ incentives, and Personal goals.

The choice to learn a second language at university was often related to positive experiences of learning a foreign language previously:

> I guess all the positive things I got from learning Japanese encouraged me to learn Chinese (Tom, Interview 1)

However, the choice to pick Chinese, rather than one of the other languages offered, related to beliefs about China's future as a world economic power and potential job opportunities:

> There's so many jobs coming out of China, and so many people are coming over here as well, so there will be a need for people who speak Mandarin (Alice, Interview 1)

These beliefs were ultimately related to personal goals:

> A primary reason as well for picking Chinese in particular, is that I'm massively business focused… So that's why I picked Chinese, because I want to do really well in business when I'm old*er* (Matt, Interview 1)

Sarah, too, explained that her original motivation centred on the usefulness of Chinese language ability as 'it might give me an advantage to get jobs and things' (Interview 1).

In Table 4, the identified motivations are more diverse, suggesting that ongoing language learning necessitates additional motivational elements that may add to, or replace, choice motivational elements. Table 4 also highlights the importance of Language related enjoyment for sustaining language study as this element was mentioned by all second year participants, compared to only two of the first year students. This enjoyment was usually linked to teachers and the lessons, as well as to interaction with peers:

> I like having a good friend who I can compare marks with, and who I can have a friendly competition with... that really adds to my overall motivation (Matt, Interview 1)

Throughout the course of Interview 1, it became clear that participants distinguished between two types of Personal goals, both of which were apparent at each motivation stage. Goals had either a mastery or performance orientation. Mastery goals expressed desires to be able to communicate in Chinese, and seemed to relate to notions of an ideal L2 self:

> I just want to be able to understand daily conversation, and speak, and listen. That's kind of my goal, to be able to express my thoughts and feelings, yeah to get to that kind of level, that conversational level (Tom, Interview 1)

Performance goals typically expressed desires to attain certain academic marks and conveyed nuances of instrumental motivation, related to an ought-to L2 self:

> I guess, because it's really important to me to do well, I really really wanted to do well last semester, and on last semester's exam, so I could tell my dad "oh, I got a H1 in Chinese", whatever (Jo, Interview 1).

Similarly, participants who mentioned Identity Factors in their overall motivation construct deemed them as important in both choice and ongoing motivation. These Identity factors were expressed in two distinctive ways: As a future ideal, "I've wanted... to be able to speak a second language. I've always wanted to be a person who could do that. " (Tom, Interview 1); and as a perceived obligation "I mean, I'm part Chinese, I should know about the language" (Jo, Interview 1). In this sense, Identity factors at times related to ideal or ought-to L2 selves.

FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEW 2

Table 5 below shows ongoing motivation elements identified in Interview 2, about half way through the semester (week 7).

Table 5 Motivations identified for continuing language study (2nd interview)

Participant	Language learning history	Language related enjoyment	Personal satisfaction	External pressure, influences, incentives	Positive Feelings re China	Personal goals	Desired L2 competence	Identity
1st year								
Jo		X	X	X		X		X
Nicole	X		X	X		X	X	
Michel	X	X	X	X	X			
Nathan	X	X		X		X		
2nd year								
Alice		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Sarah		X		X		X		
Matt		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tom	X	X	X			X	X	

Table 5 suggests that at Interview 2 participants considered a range of elements to be active in their L2-learning motivation, and for most of the participants, these elements were similar to those noted at Interview 1. The categories that were less frequently mentioned at Interview 2 were Identity, Language learning history, particularly by the second year students, and Desired L2 competence, particularly by the first year students.

By Interview 2, participants had also noted changes to their motivation level. Table 6 summarises the change of direction for each participant, and the dominant factor leading to this change.

Table 6 Global change to participants' motivation between 1st and 2nd interview

Participant	Global change in motivation level
1st Year	
Jo	Stronger motivation because of increasingly interesting material and increased personal use of Mandarin
Nicole	Weaker motivation because of increased difficulty of study and slower rate of progression
Michel	Stronger motivation because of successful results, more interesting coursework and strong enjoyment
Nathan	Stronger motivation following a test failure
2nd Year	
Alice	Stronger motivation because of increased difficulty of course work and increased language use
Sarah	Weaker motivation because of increased difficulty of course work and relative importance of other priorities
Matt	Stronger motivation to improve language for travel and business, as well as ongoing interest in class work
Tom	Weaker motivation because of dissatisfaction with easy coursework and general dissatisfaction with university

As shown in Table 6, at Interview 2, three participants believed their motivation was weaker than at the beginning of the semester; five participants believed that their motivation was stronger. For most of the participants, it was elements related to Language related experiences and specifically Language related enjoyment and personal satisfaction that affected motivation most. Participants claimed that it was the perceived ease or difficulty of the coursework or whether it was interesting which led to a weakening (e.g. Nicole, Sarah, Tom) or strengthening (e.g. Michel, Jo, Alice, Matt) of their L2 motivation. Nathan is an interesting case in that his motivation increased despite experiencing failure on the mid semester test. In the case of Jo, who mentioned identify factors at each of the interviews, we note that in the first interview, Jo's notions of identity were couched in terms of a perceived obligation to speak Chinese "I sort of just feel that sense of having to do it …. I should be able to speak". At interview 2, the obligations sound more internalised, expressing perhaps her desires as an ideal Chinese L2 speaker: "so I can be one of my family who speaks [Mandarin]" (Jo, Interview 2).

FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEW 3

The data collected in Interview 3 towards the end of the semester are summarised in Table 7. The table shows that some factors continued to lose importance (e.g. Language learning history), while others reappeared after disappearing at Interview 2 (e.g. Identity factors). Again, the table suggests no marked differences between participants at different year levels.

Table 7 Ongoing motivation: Motivation for continuing language study (3rd interviews)

Participant	Language learning history	Language related enjoyment	Personal satisfaction	External pressure, influences, incentives	Positive Feelings re China	Personal goals	Desired L2 competence	Identity
1ˢᵗ year								
Jo		X	X	X			X	X
Nicole			X			X	X	X
Michel	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Nathan	X					X		
2ⁿᵈ year								
Alice		X	X	X		X	X	
Sarah			X	X				
Matt	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tom		X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Table 8 provides a summary of changes to motivation levels between Interview 1 and Interview 3.

Table 8 Overall changes to motivation between Interview 1 and Interview 3

Participant	Comparison between motivation at Interview 1 and Interview 3
1ˢᵗ Year	
Jo	Overall motivation the same or slightly higher
Nicole	Overall motivation lower
Michel	Overall motivation higher
Nathan	Overall motivation lower
2ⁿᵈ Year	
Alice	Overall motivation lower
Sarah	Overall motivation lower
Matt	Overall motivation slightly higher
Tom	Overall motivation the same or slightly higher

If we compare Table 6 and Table 8, we find variations between participants: for some (Nicole, Sarah) motivation continued to decrease over time, for others motivation continued to increase (Jo, Michel, Matt). Two participants (Nathan, Alice) reported higher motivation at Interview 2 but a drop at Interview 3, and vice versa for Tom.

The key difference between the two points in time was the stronger perception for Mandarin use currently or in the near future.

Participants reporting an overall drop in their motivation at Interview 3, used Mandarin less, because they had little practical use for the language, as noted by Nicole:

> And I think that's the hardest bit about learning Mandarin ... you really need people to people contact to get all that. And I think that's another problem that I don't really have

> anyone to speak it to, you know, so I don't really know what I'm doing with it. (Nicole,
> Interview 3).

Similarly, the three participants (Jo, Michel, Matt) reporting an overall increase in their motivation believed that they now had, or could visualize, greater practical use for their Mandarin study:

> I do like that it might get the opportunity to use it in everyday life (Michel, Interview 3).

There was also an element of reflection and evaluation apparent at Interview 3. Some participants reflected on how much they had gained over the semester, and on the grades they attained, to determine whether to continue with Mandarin study. Michel exemplifies this, saying he looks back on test results

> I still did pretty well, and I kind of I guess look at that as more of a chance to get better
> and not make those mistakes again (Michel, Interview 3).

In the final interview, it also became apparent that the personal goals of participants had changed. In particular short term goals connected to Mandarin, such as a planned exchange program or a planned visit, grew in importance to the participants, and provided them with ongoing motivation. Thus, for Tom, motivation was higher at Interview 3 than at Interview 2, rekindled by plans for the future:

> I'm planning to go to Taiwan next year, so that's a kind of mid-term goal, so it's kind
> of like, I have to start learning Chinese for that (Tom, Interview 3)

Three further themes became salient during Interview 2 and Interview 3. These themes highlight the importance of conceptualising motivation as dynamic, referencing factors from beyond the L2-learning context, changes to Mandarin ability over time, and perceptions of success and failure.

AFFECTIVE FACTORS FROM BEYOND THE L2-CONTEXT.

It became clear throughout the course of Interview 2 and 3 that priorities outside of the L2-context had the potential to detract from language learning motivation. Six of the eight participants mentioned that other priorities (e.g. demands from their other areas of study and other personal interests) weakened their Mandarin learning motivation. During Interview 2 and 3, five participants emphasized that influences from their personal life, such as the illness of a close family member or friend, affected their language learning motivation. In total, seven of the eight participants believed that over the course of the semester, factors from beyond the immediate L2-environment had an effect on their language learning motivation.

Exemplifying the strong influence of factors external to the L2-context is Alice, whose overall motivation had dropped by Interview 3. While still expressing strong mastery goals, the personal importance and stress of her mother's illness lowered her overall motivation.

ATTRIBUTIONS

The majority of the participants (6) believed themselves successful in their Mandarin studies. These participants attributed their success to personal factors, such as memory capacity and hard work. For example:

> Diligence. I'm diligent in my studies. And I've gone the extra mile too (Matt, Interview 3).

Nicole and Nathan, who believed they had been unsuccessful thus far, carefully did not attribute failure to personal ability, but to situational influences:

> I just couldn't be bothered. It came after two weeks of two massive essays for other
> subjects, so by the end of it I just couldn't be bothered (Nathan, Interview 2)

DEMOTIVATION

Between Interview 2 and Interview 3, all eight participants reported demotivation at some point over the course of the semester. Demotivation was caused by factors connected to the language learning environment, such as the nature of the course work (too challenging or not challenging enough), the teaching or institutional changes. However, despite feeling demotivated, all eight participants believed that they would continue studying Mandarin the following year.

DISCUSSION

Our results show the motivation of second language learners is diverse and complex, and that L2 learning motivation changes and fluctuates over time, confirming that 'within the context of institutionalized learning ... the common experience would seem to be motivational flux rather than stability' (Ushioda, 1996b, p. 240). Factors that led learners to select Chinese as their foreign language were replaced or augmented with other factors during the semester, and often resurfaced at the end of the semester.

In our study we found that factors which related to previous language learning experiences often explained why students chose to study a second (foreign) language at the university where language study is optional. However, personal goals, perceptions about future job opportunities, and identity factors linked to ideal and ought-to L2 self explain why students chose Mandarin

over the other available foreign languages. Studies which have investigated motivation to study English as a foreign language, such as Lamb (2009) in Indonesia and Yashima (2009) in Japan, found that motivation to study English was linked to aspirations to become a member of the global English speaking community. Yashima (2009) labels such aspirations as 'international posture'. In our study, our participants were driven by desires to be able to work internationally, to become members of an international, multilingual workforce. In this sense, these aspirations, although instrumental, are linked to an ideal L2 self.

Deliberations about language choice were made at the pre-actional stage (Dörnyei & Otto, 1998). Once language study had started, however, participants received greater ongoing motivation from enjoyment and satisfaction derived from the L2-learning environment. This switch was reflected in thematic categories such as Personal satisfaction and Language related enjoyment, becoming prominent.

Changes to motivation occurred over the course of the semester. This was most notable in participants' motivation levels. Tables 6 and 8 show that during only one semester, each participant experienced changes in their overall motivation level, and five experienced a motivation drop. For both educators and learners it is motivation decreases that are most concerning and hence awareness of factors that are likely to lead to demotivation over time that are most pertinent to examine.

This study found that aspects of motivation most likely to change were those associated with the language learning environment. This was common across participants. Factors that contributed to Language related enjoyment were those that changed negatively during the semester and each factor (e.g. challenging teachers or enjoyment of coursework) was connected to the micro context of the learning environment. However, the findings of this study show that negative experiences did not always result in overall demotivation. Overall demotivation was most likely avoided when participants consciously distanced themselves from the demotivating experience. It may be that by attributing demotivating experiences to the learning environment, participants protected their self-confidence (Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994) and their overall motivation. Nathan, who believed his low motivation was a product of the university, highlights this:

> I know that if I worked I could do well, I just sort of don't worry about it, because in myself I'm 'better than this' or whatever (Nathan, Interview 2).

This process of attribution may explain why all the participants intended to continue with language study, including those whose motivation dropped.

Another reason why demotivating experiences stemming from the learning environment did not necessarily lead to decisions to discontinue language study is related to the learners' identity factors. Thus for some learners, even if their experience in the L2 learning-context discouraged them, their possible self images remained unchanged and steady, "I mean I still want to be an interpreter and stuff" (Nicole, Interview 3). This finding highlights the importance of learners' sense of L2 self which may counteract negative language learning experiences. These findings support Norton's (2000) claims that learners will continue to 'invest' in language learning, if they believe that such investment will yield returns in terms of symbolic and material resources.

In this study, we found no significant differences between learners in different years of study. It may have been that in this study the gap between the learning levels was not wide enough to produce a noticeable difference in the majority of motivational elements, or that our sample may not have been large enough to produce significant differences.

CONCLUSION

In our small-scale study, the qualitative approach adopted enabled us to examine a multitude of factors from within and beyond the immediate L2 environment that impact on second language learner motivation. The interviews adopted a learner-centred approach and showed clearly that language learners are aware of their motivation:

> I think I largely have control over my motivation ... and feel like I have some control
> over the circumstances (Michel, Interview 3).

Recognising participants as the locus of control means understanding that they are active members in the learning experience. Such findings have important implications, particularly when understanding and dealing with the reality of demotivation, something the majority of second language learners experience and language teachers witness. In the current study, it was found that of all factors contributing to the motivation of participants, those that were connected with the language learning environment were the most likely to change in a negative manner over the semester. These factors are important and certainly need attention. At the same time, it is clear that if we could employ strategies to bolster learners' sense of L2 selves, it may help learners to overcome negative experiences, and continue with the enterprise of L2 learning.

Finally, although we did not set out to validate Dörnyei's Motivational L2 Self System, we found it a useful framework with which to interpret our findings. At the same time, categories such as identity and positive attitudes towards China were not always easily

classified as belonging to an ideal or an ought-to self. For example, positive attitudes towards China, an integrative motivational element, were often couched by our participants in terms of job opportunities, and were thus more closely aligned with instrumentality

As we stated at the outset, our study did not set out to test hypotheses and find causal links between certain factors and motivation to learn an L2. Rather, our exploratory study sought to shed light on why learners choose to study a particular language, Chinese, and the constellation of factors that impact on that choice and their ongoing motivation. Given the changing status of China in the global world, there is clearly a need for further studies on motivation to learn Chinese as a second language.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW 1

Guiding questions:

1. Why did you choose to study Mandarin?

2. Compared to last semester, do you feel your motivation to learn Mandarin is higher or lower? (Example prompts: Why do you think this is so…. what lead to this…)

3. Do you have a different Mandarin teacher to last semester?

4. If yes, do you think this has affected your motivation and how? (Example prompts: how were they different from other teachers… what do you like/dislike about their teaching style…)

5. What do you do to develop your language skills in Mandarin? (Example prompts: do you find you spend a lot of time on it outside of class… explain to me how you might study for Mandarin…)

6. What do you do outside class to help improve your Mandarin skills? (Example prompts: do you find you are able to use Mandarin often… do you know other Mandarin speakers…)

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW 2

Guiding questions:

1. How would you describe your motivation at this point in time, and do you feel it's undergone any changes over the past month?

2. Do you enjoy studying Mandarin? Has your level of enjoyment changed over the past month?

3. Has your motivation for learning Mandarin been influenced by anything that has happened inside the classroom?

4. How well do you perceive yourself to be progressing in your study of Mandarin? How does this affect your motivation?

5. What type of criteria do you use to judge "success" in Mandarin?

6. To what factors do you attribute your success (or lack of success) in Mandarin?

7. Has your motivation for learning Mandarin been influenced by anything that has happened outside of the classroom?

8. Have you have any experiences in exercises or assignments for class in which your motivation to learning Mandarin was low, and why do you think this was so?

9. What strategies have you employed in order to maintain your motivation?

10. Do you feel that you have control over your motivational state, and if so when and how do you most use this control?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW 3

Guiding questions:

1. Have you have any experiences in learning tasks or requirements in which your motivation to learning Mandarin was low, and why do you think this was so?

2. Do you think your motivation has changed since the last time we spoke?

3. Overall, do you feel your motivation to learn Mandarin is higher or lower than at the beginning of the semester? What do you feel has contributed to this change?

4. How have you managed to maintain you motivation over the course of the semester?

5. Are you still enjoying studying Mandarin?

6. Do you feel you have been successful in your Mandarin studies?

7. What do you attribute this success or lack of success to?

8. Have there been any times in this semester when your motivation for learning Mandarin was particularly low, and why was this so?

9. Have there been any occurrences outside the classroom that have altered the way you feel about your studies?

10. Do you have any clearer idea about your future employment after one/two years of study?

11. Have you future plans altered at all since the beginning of the semester, and how has this affected your motivation to learn Mandarin?

12. Do you consider your decision to study Mandarin at Melbourne University the right or wrong decision? Why?

13. Do you think you will continue to study Mandarin next year, and why or why not?

APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE OF A MOTIVATIONAL PROFILE (JO)

The choice motivation for this participant to learn Mandarin came from her family background. The participant feels both parental pressures, and a self-generated desire, to learn the language, because of her cultural heritage. This belief that she should be able to speak the language leads to a slightly competitive attitude in the class- which she highly enjoys- as she does not like it if students of non-Chinese background out perform her, which serves as ongoing motivation to learn. While the learner does aim to outperform others, she is also aiming to reach a personally set level of competence that would allow her to travel in China, and as such she receives ongoing motivation from talking to others in Mandarin. The participant also enjoys the actual process of language learning, and desires to know another language, as people who do so are perceived by her to be more "worldly".

ENDNOTES

1.   The researches were not involved in teaching the students.