

## **Relationships among Motivation, Cross-cultural Adaptation and Chinese Language Achievement: An Investigation of International Students Studying Chinese in the Universities of PRC**

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### **Introduction**

Individual differences (such as learning strategy, learning style, language aptitude, language attitudes, motivation and language anxiety) on the achievement in the language have been the focus of much research in second language acquisition (Henceforth, SLA). Many researchers proposed socio-cultural adaptation plays a critical role in sojourners' academic study. Numerous studies have supported the influences of academic adaptation on academic persistence. However, there is a lack of investigations examining the relationships of all above variables.

Based on a tentative model and a sample of 215 university students of year two studying Chinese in the People's Republic of China, this research studied the relationships among individual differences in SLA, socio-cultural adaptation, academic adaptation, language achievement and institutional persistence, and evaluated their contributions in a causal model of adaptation. The results of the study indicated that the theoretical model provides perfect fit to the data, and generally supports Gardner's (2005) socio-educational model except that 'Language Anxiety' was not found to have a cause and effect relationship with 'language Achievement'. Instrumentality seemed to significantly predict the variation of Persistence together with Academic Adaptation. Moreover, Saving Other's Face Scale seemed to be important to predict motivation, socio-cultural adaptation and especially academic adaptation.

### **Contextual Background**

Chinese language is on a tendency of globalization for its deep cultural value and great commercial potential. In Asia, governments in Korea, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia and Vietnam encourage their citizens to learn Chinese, which is quite different from the situation 30 years ago when Chinese language was forbidden in Indonesia and Cambodia. In the West, Chinese ranks as the second important foreign language in USA; it is also the most frequently used second language in Canada and Australia; in England the government sponsors their people to learn Chinese; and in France there are more than 300 primary and secondary schools offering Chinese courses to students (available from Xinhua Net on July 22, 2006 retrieved from <http://view.QQ.com>).

Having won the bid for the Olympic Games in 2008 and successfully entered into the WTO, China has become more integrated with and also more attractive to the outside world. China's rapid economic growth and great international influence has attracted a large and continuous influx of international students to study Chinese language and culture, and to explore her long history and possibilities of cooperation in businesses and trades. The number of international students enrolled in Chinese Universities and Academy is on the rise in an amazing speed (See Table 1).

Although some attention has been paid to the needs and services of international students in the PRC, this attention is limited in scope and content, not to mention a lack of research on this issue. Therefore, in order for universities and colleges to understand the problems that international students will face in Chinese culture and assist them in their academic pursuit, more research need to be conducted to solve adjustment issues and its relation to SLA.

According to the statistics from 'Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China' available in 1999 and 2004, and 'China Scholarship Council' in 2002, the following shows the rising trend in the number of international students studying in China (See Table 1). Meanwhile, the latest statistics of international students in PRC in 2003 is described in this table (<http://www.chinanews.com.cn/news/2004/2004-12-09/26/514827.shtml> ). The table provides a general picture to analyze the current situation of international students in China.

Table 1: *Continental Distribution of International Students in China in 2003*

Year	Quantity and Percentage					Total Number
	Asia	America	Europe	Africa	Oceania	
1999	31,914	4,938	5,621	1,384	854	44,711
	71.38%	11.04%	12.57%	3.1%	1.91%	
2002	66,040	8,892	8,127	1,646	1,124	85,829
	76.94%	10.36%	9.47%	1.92%	1.31%	
2003	-	-	-	-	-	78,000
2004	-	-	-	-	-	110,844

Note: - unavailable

More detailed description will be provided as the following.

As reported in China News Net, the Beijing Morning Post released the information that there are 500 tertiary schools distributed across 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, which are entitled to be qualified to recruit international students, on "the First New Year Reception for China First Graduates of International Students "and on" the 2005

New Year Recreation Party for Foreign Students in Capital”. The following summarized the main features of international students:

(1) With regard to their majors, most of the international students are majoring in Chinese language (about 80%) and traditional medicine.

(2) As we notice, the number of international students coming to China is increasing tremendously with an average annual growth of 30% or even more. In 2003, China has accepted 78,000 international students from 175 countries, 6,153 out of whom are sponsored by scholarships from the Chinese government. The Ministry of Education of People’s Republic of China predict that there will be over 120,000 international students coming to China to study in 2007. However, the number has already amounted to 110,844 in 2004, which increased by 42% than the number in 2003.

(3) Another feature of international students is that their academic level is much higher than before. Among those who come for degree or diploma study in 2003, there are 1,637 doctors with a growth rate of 17.9% compared with year 2002; 3,397 masters with a growth rate of 18.9%.

(4) According to their original continental distribution, students from Asia rank the first. As to their mother countries, international students from South Korea, Japan, the United States of America, Vietnam and Indonesia rank the top five in number in order. Other international students are Indonesia, Thailand, Germany, Russia, Nepal, France, Australia and Malaysia.

### **Major Terms and Related Theories**

*Motivation(MOT).* Motivation is a multifaceted and broad construct(Gardner, 2005). Different researchers in psychology or other discipline define it differently. As Keller (1983) defines, “Motivation refers to the choices people make as to what experience or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in this respect” (p.389). It has cognitive, affective and conative characteristics. Therefore, Motivation to learn a SLA should be measured by multi-dimension scale. A motivated individual would be expected to exert effort in achieving the goal and show persistence in language learning.

Research on motivation in second language learning has been heavily influenced by the work of social psychologists Robert Gardner, Richard Clément and their colleagues in Canada where French and English are the two official languages. These researchers have intensively studied the role of motivation in SLA and generally adopted a social

psychological approach and regard second language learning motivation as socially grounded. Gardner's Socio-Educational Model is widely investigated and in that model Gardner (2005) posits the following relationships among correlates of Language achievement (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: *The Socio-educational Model (Gardner, 2005)*

The model proposes that Attitudes toward Learning Situation and Integrativeness are two correlated variables, so are Integrativeness and Instrumentality. It is reasonable to expect that the individuals high in Integrativeness would also be high in Instrumentality. Integrativeness's effect on Language Achievement is moderated by Motivation. So are as the case with Attitude towards Learning Situation and Instrumentality. Another important psychological construct in the model is Language Anxiety, which might well facilitate or debilitate Language Achievement. Clément, Dörnyei & Noels (1994) suggested that language anxiety, a multifaceted construct, was important because it might be a determinant of second language achievement. Educational psychologists have been working on the relationship between anxiety and second language learning and they consistently have found that they were negatively correlated (e.g. MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). In Gardner and MacIntyre's