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Motivation to Study a Second Foreign Language: A Case of Chinese University Learners of German

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ABSTRACT

Not much research has been done on motivation to study a second, third or even fourth foreign language though learners of such languages have been increasing. To contribute to this, the present study examined German learning motivation of Chinese university students at different proficiency levels. A total of 297 German learners at three different proficiency levels at a university in Beijing filled in the questionnaires, of whom 191 answered the open-ended question and 50 were informally interviewed. Analyses of the data revealed the following major findings: (1) most respondents at each proficiency level had limited access to and little chance to use German, liked the language, studied it (very) hard and did not think the language was difficult, (2) students at different proficiency levels studied German for similar reasons such as major study/research, further education, future career, interest in foreign language learning and German, and (3) students at higher proficiency levels perceived German to be more difficult and worked harder on it. Students at higher proficiency levels were both integratively and instrumentally more motivated to study German and had greater motivation intensity as well. It is clear that students at different proficiency levels were motivated to study German and that students at the advanced level tended to be more integratively motivated than those at the beginning level. Based on these findings, some suggestions are discussed.

1. Introduction

The recent decades have witnessed the development of theories related to motivation in second/foreign language (SL/FL) learning, such as the Socio-Psychological Theory (Gardner, 1985),^[12] the Expectancy-Value Theory (Heckhausen, 1991),^[15] the Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1986),^[33] and the L2 Motivational System (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009).^{[6][7]} Though motivation has been linked to various factors such as the context, goals and self-perceptions, the fundamental concepts of motivation theories

are still attitudes, integrative and instrumental motivation and motivation intensity proposed in Gardner (1985).^[12] As showcased in a plethora of empirical studies that pinpoint the importance of motivation in SL/FL learning (e.g., Csizér & Dörnyei 2005,^[4] Dörnyei & Csizér 2006,^[9] Gardner 1985,^[12] Hernández 2010,^[16] Liu 2012,^[18] Wesely 2009),^[34] motivation can be attributed to various factors and often fluctuates from time to time. The current literature also shows that motivation varies as the context changes and the SL/FL that students are learning changes

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(Hernández, 2010;^[16] Liu, 2012, 2019;^{[18][19]} Winke, 2013).^[38] For example, the motivation to learn the target language for at-home students is different from that for study-abroad students (Liu, 2019).^[19] Students' motivation also differs when learning a first, second, or third SL/FL (Csizér & Dörnyei 2005;^[4] Dörnyei & Csizér 2006).^[9] Both theoretical and empirical studies have evidenced that motivation plays an important role in second/foreign language (SL/FL) learning. Nevertheless, most research on motivation focuses on first SL/FL, especially English as a SL/FL. Not much research has been done on motivation to study a second, third or even fourth foreign language though learners of such languages have been increasing, which needs to be researched to better understand how it interacts with students' learning outcomes related to different SLs/FLs in various contexts.

English has always been the major and most important foreign language and dominated FL classroom teaching and learning in China. Nevertheless, because of globalization and the rapid development of China, other foreign languages like German, Russian, Korean, French, Japanese and Spanish have come into university classrooms and are learned by more Chinese students, often as a second or even third foreign language (Liu & Li, 2018).^[20] It is necessary to explore students' motivation to learn these foreign languages, which was the aim of the present paper targeting German.

2. Literature Review

Since the 1950s, the world has witnessed the widespread development of research on SL/FL motivation done within varying frameworks (Deci & Ryan, 1985;^[5] Dörnyei, 2005, 2009;^{[6][7]} Gardner, 1985;^[12] Heckhausen, 1991;^[15] Weiner, 1986).^[33] The Socio-Psychological Model, later expanded to be the Socio-Educational Model (Gardner & Lambert, 1972;^[13] Gardner, 1985;^[12] Tremblay & Gardner, 1995),^[31] claims that SL/FL motivation taps three dimensions: attitudes towards the target language (TL), desire to learn, and efforts expended on learning the TL. This model categorizes the desire to learn the TL into integrative motivation (e.g., internal reasons to learn the language like the desire to be like the target community member and interest in the language) and instrumental motivation (e.g., external/pragmatic reasons to learn the language like getting a certificate and travelling). Integrative motivation plays a more important role in learning the TL. The Expectancy-Value Theory claims that it is the significance of a certain result that determines the level of incentive value (Heckhausen, 1991).^[15] Thus, higher expectancy of learners and higher value will induce greater motivation to perform corresponding behaviors. Therefore, it is assumed that students may dedicate more time and energy to

SL/FL study if they believe that their goal is bound to be fulfilled and that they will achieve a lot from this process. The Expectancy-Value Theory relates SL/FL motivation to such factors as ability beliefs, expectancies for success, and the components of subjective task values (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).^[37] The L2 Motivational System (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009)^{[6][7]} links SL/FL motivation to the learner self and the learning context and specifies three main components of the L2 motivational self system: Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, and L2 Learning Experience. Ideal L2 Self, similar to traditional integrative and internalized instrumental motives, refers to the L2-specific facet of one's ideal self; Ought-to L2 Self, corresponding to the more extrinsic types of instrumental motives, concerns the attributes that one believes one ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes; L2 Learning Experience involves situated, executive motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g., the impacts of teachers, curricula, peer groups, and experience of success).

Though different theories have been proposed to explain motivation, the core of motivation is still integrative and instrumental motivation, as discussed above. Propelled by the results of empirical studies, the development of theories on SL/FL motivation in return stimulates more empirical research. Consequently, a plethora of empirical studies can be found in the current literature that showcase the importance of motivation in SL/FL learning and interaction of motivation with various other linguistic, cultural, psychological and affective variables (e.g., Cai & Zhu, 2012;^[11] Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015;^[8] Flemens, 2019;^[11] Grant, Huang & Pasfield-Neofitou, 2018;^[14] Hernández, 2010;^[16] Liu, 2012;^[18] Matsumoto, 2017;^[22] Muftah & Rafik-Galea, 2013;^[24] Morreale, 2011;^[23] O'Reilly, 2014;^[25] Polat, Balog & Mahalingappa, 2013;^[26] Qin & Dai, 2013;^[27] Thompson & Erdil-Moody, 2016;^[30] Ushioda, 2011;^[32] Wesely, 2009;^[35] Winke, 2013;^[38] Xiao, 2011).^[39] For example, Muftah and Rafik-Galea's (2013)^[24] study of 182 Malaysian pre-university students' English learning motivation revealed that the participants had very high motivation and positive attitudes towards learning English and that they were more instrumentally motivated. The study also showed that such orientations as future career development, going abroad for further study, meeting more diverse people from different cultural backgrounds and learning English in order to use the internet properly were very important for the students. To examine motivation in different Chinese EFL (English as a FL) contexts, Liu (2012)^[18] collected 1203 questionnaires and 430 reflective journals from three different Chinese university EFL contexts. She found that

the students in each context were moderately integratively motivated and moderately or even strongly instrumentally motivated, and that the students enjoying the richest English learning resources were the least motivated while those enjoying the poorest learning environment were the most instrumentally motivated. She also discovered that the respondents studied English for such common reasons as finding a good/better job, going abroad, and pursuing further study, but those from the best English-learning context studied the language more for integrative reasons. Liu (2019) also examined Chinese university learners' German learning motivation in at-home and study-abroad contexts. Analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data revealed that learners from both contexts were moderately motivated to learn German and that study-abroad students were significantly more motivated for instrumental and other purposes such as having fun and peer pressure. The study also showed that motivation was significantly correlated with students' test performance in both contexts and affected their learning of German, as found in Hernández (2010),^[16] Liu (2012)^[18] and Winke (2013).^[38]

Believing that motivation is dynamic, Waninge, Dörnyei, and de Bot (2014)^[36] collected 709 questionnaires which measured the participants' attitudes toward language courses, linguistic self-confidence, classroom anxiety and attitudes toward the language teachers who taught them. Coupled with classroom observations of 4 language learners, the researchers demonstrated that motivation changed over time on an individual level characterized by predictable and stable phases, and that student motivation could be successfully explored using a dynamic systems framework. Cruz and Al Shabibi (2019)^[3] examined the L2 motivational self system of four Omani college students. Analyses of interview data showed that the students associated ideal L2 self with obtaining a (satisfactory) job, and that their complacency with their way of life in Oman and convenience in speaking their L1 hindered their motivation to learn English. Meanwhile, the study showed that learning experience did not affect their motivation to learn English and that people around them did not affect their English learning much either. Using Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) framework, Thompson and Erdil-Moody (2016)^[30] examined the relationship between motivation and two operationalizations of multilingualism: (a) any experience with a third language and (b) perceived positive language interaction (PPLI) in the Turkish English as a foreign language (EFL) context. Analyses of 159 questionnaires indicated a significant group effect for multilingual status for both operationalizations of multilingualism with the

ideal L2 self.

Though guided by different motivation theories, these empirical studies, while prompting to expand the motivation construct to subsume various SL/FL learning orientations, further affirm the following core beliefs: (a) integrative and instrumental motivations are key components of SL/FL motivation, and (b) motivation is dynamic and interacts with various factors such as anxiety and language proficiency. Consequently, motivation has always been a topic of research in SL/FL teaching and learning. Moreover, though English has become a lingua franca of the contemporary world and thus often is the focus of research, increasingly more learners become interested in various foreign languages as globalization accelerates. Yet research on the learning motivation of these languages is far from adequate although motivation exerts an important effect of the learning of these languages (Lasagabaster, 2017;^[17] Winke, 2013).^[38] Lasagabaster (2017)^[17] suggested that attitudes played an important role in affecting learners' motivation to study minority languages. Winke's (2013)^[38] research indicated that motivation impacted English speakers' learning of Chinese and predicted their skills of listening, reading, and speaking to varying degrees. As a minority foreign language, German has come into university classrooms in recent years and is studied by more and more students, though often as an optional second or even third foreign language. Thus, it is necessary to explore students' motivation to learn German and the results will not only contribute to the current literature but also help to better understand learners' motivation to study other foreign languages. Guided by Gardner's integrative and instrumental motivation (1985),^[12] the present study aimed to examine German learning motivation of Chinese university students at different proficiency levels and answer the following research questions: (1) How do the students perceive German? (2) What are the students' motivations to study German? (3) What are the statistically significant differences in German-learning motivation among students at different proficiency levels?

3. Research Design

Context. Since the 1960s, English has become increasingly more important in China and the No.1 foreign language for Chinese students at all educational levels. Because of globalization and China's own development, other foreign languages like Japanese, French, Russian, Korean and German have come into university classrooms (they are seldom learned in pre-university school settings) and are learned by students as selective courses in recent years. It was the same in the university where the present research was conducted. In this university, English language

courses were compulsory while those of French, Russian, German and other minor languages were optional to all students. At the time of this study, German was learned by the largest number of students as a second FL: 354 undergraduate and graduate students of the university registered in German language courses for learners at three different German proficiency levels according to their completion of previous courses: 185 level 1 (beginning to learn German), 101 level 2 (having finished level 1 German language courses), and 68 level 3 (having finished level 2 German language courses) learners.

Participants. A total of 297 learners of German at three different proficiency levels (154 level 1, 86 level 2, and 57 level 3 learners) responded to the questionnaires in the present study. With an average age of 20.51 (SD = 2.33) and age range of 16-27, the participants came from various disciplines such as Architecture, Mathematics, International Relationship, Economics and Management, and Philosophy. With an average of .73 years for learning German (SD = 1.05), all these participants had learned English as their first foreign language and were learning German as their second foreign language. Meanwhile, of these survey respondents, 25 level 1, 15 level 2 and 10 level 3 learners were randomly invited to participate in informal semi-structured interviews. In addition, analyses indicated that a total of 121 level 1, 44 level 2, and 26 level 3 learners responded to the open-ended question on the questionnaire.

Instruments. Data were collected via questionnaires and informal semi-structured interviews, as detailed below.

Background Information Questionnaire. This Background Information Questionnaire intended to gather such information about the respondents as gender, age, discipline, year of study, learning German as a first or second FL, and German proficiency level.

The German Learning Motivation Questionnaire. This 15-item German Learning Motivation questionnaire (GLMQ) (see items 9-23 in the Appendix) (the overall Cronbach alpha $\alpha = .849$) was adapted from that used in Hernández (2010).^[16] It had two dimensions: (a) an 11-item integrative motivation scale ($\alpha = .816$), and (b) a 4-item instrumental motivation scale ($\alpha = .876$). This questionnaire was selected mainly for three reasons: (a) the original survey focused on a foreign language other than English, (b) integrative and instrumental motivation proves to be the core of SL/FL motivation, and (c) it still remains unsure what motivates Chinese university students to study German. The complete the survey data, one open-ended question was added to elicit more ideas for learning German: I learn German because _____.

The German Learning Motivation Intensity Scale.

This 7-item German Learning Motivation Intensity Scale (GLMIS) (see items 23-30 in the Appendix) (the overall Cronbach alpha $\alpha = .823$) was adapted from the 9-item Spanish Learning Motivation Intensity Scale designed by Martinsen (2008).^[21] To better suit the present study, two items were excluded due to the overlap with GLMQ items. Then, the word “Spanish” in all items was changed to be “German.”

Placed on a 5-point Likert scale, each GLMQ/GLMIS item had five descriptors ranging from “Not at all important” to “Very important” with values 1-5 assigned to each descriptor respectively. Thus, the higher the GLMQ score, the more motivated a respondent was; the higher the GLMIS score, the greater the motivation intensity.

Informal semi-structured interviews. To elicit more inside views of their learning of German and complement the survey data, as discussed in Spolsky (2000),^[29] informal semi-structured interviews were held for 50 survey respondents during the break in the classroom. The interview questions covered such issues as perceptions of German, reasons for learning German, efforts to learn German and access to German. Examples were “Why do you study German?”, “Is German difficult?” and “Do you often use German?”.

Procedure. The questionnaires were translated into Chinese and German and double-checked by two professors with a doctor degree in German and English respectively, and then were distributed to students of German in class in both languages by their course teachers in week 5 when the students became accustomed to the classroom learning environment, along with a consent form. In the following week, the students were interviewed informally in Chinese, each of which lasted about 3-5 minutes and audio-taped. The questionnaires and the interviews were exercised concurrently to complement each other, as discussed in Creswell (2014).^[2]

Data analyses. The survey data were analyzed using SPSS 20. Descriptive statistics were computed to determine motivation and motivation intensity levels, then one-way ANOVA (Duncan’s) was run to examine any significant differences in motivation and motivation intensity levels among students at different proficiency levels. All the interview data were transcribed, double-checked, and then subjected to open coding of themes, together with the responses to the open-ended question, to identify their attitudes towards, access to, and reasons for learning German (Richards, 2009).^[28] Examples of the resulted themes were reasons for studying German, perceived difficulty of German, access and exposure to German. When coding the qualitative data, a pseudonym

was assigned to each interviewee, and a number was used for each open-ended question respondent.

4. Results

Perceptions and Use of German

To explore students' perceptions and use of German, the interview data were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Perceptions and Use of German (Source: interview)

		Level 1 (N=25)	Level 2 (N=15)	Level 3 (N= 10)
Difficulty of German	Not difficult	12(48%)	1(6.7%)	0
	Difficult	8(32%)	8(53.3%)	4(40%)
	Very difficult	5(20%)	6(40%)	5(50%)
	Neither difficult nor easy	0	0	1(10%)
Liking of German	Like it very much	25(100%)	8(53.3%)	10(100%)
	Neither like it nor hate it	0	7(46.7%)	0
Efforts to learn German	Study it (very) hard	13(52%)	8(53.3%)	6(60%)
	Study it not very hard	12(48%)	7(46.7%)	4(40%)
Access to German	Rather limited	25(100%)	15(100%)	8(80%)
	Very much	0	0	2(20%)

As shown in Table 1, one level 1 learner believed that German was neither difficult nor easy, twelve level 1 and one level 2 learners thought that German was not difficult, in that “German pronunciation is fairly easy, one cluster has only one pronunciation” (Dong, level 1). Meanwhile, mainly because of such reasons as (a) too many words, (b) difficult grammar, (c) difficult pronunciation, (d) rather limited access to German every day, and (e) little/no opportunities to speak or use German, eight level 1, eight level 2 and four level 3 learners commented that German was difficult. Moreover, five level 1, six level 2 and five level 3 learners confided that German was very difficult. For example, “... It is rather difficult to memorize the words” (Guo, level 1), “... I think there are no patterns in German. And German sentence structures are different from Chinese and English sentence structures. I don't know where to put the object and the predicate in German” (Lai, level 1), “... I have never learned any gender language before, so I didn't understand it at all at the beginning. In addition, there are many changes in case” (Liao level 3).

Table 1 also shows that seven level 2 learners neither liked or hated German because they “are not good at

learning languages (Bao, level 2) or were “not much interested in languages” (Yang, level 2), while the other 43 interviewees reported liking German (very much) and believed that German was interesting. Meanwhile, in order to (a) answer questions, (b) study German well, (c) read literature in German, (d) read books in German, (e) understand German, and (f) gain a sense of accomplishment, more than half of the interviewees at each proficiency level remarked that they worked (very) hard to study German well. The other interviewees felt satisfied if they could meet the course requirements because they “don't have time to learn German” (Shi, level 2) and “the workload of major study is too heavy” (Fei, level 3).^[10]

Because of certain reasons, only two level 3 learners reported that they had fairly much access to German and many opportunities to use German in that they formed language partners with exchange students from Germany. As Wang confided, “...There are quite many exchange students from Germany in some schools of the university. ... and they often go to the cafés on campus. Students can ask them whether they want language partners. I became a language partner with an exchange student since he came here from Germany in February. We often share ideas on various things and do many things together ...” The others reported that they had rather limited access to German and little chance to use German except for such resources as classroom materials, textbooks and some internet resources like sports reports and films in German. For example, “... [We have] very little [access to German]. This is mainly because we don't have any channels to access German. We can only rely on textbooks CDs or the materials on Internet to practice listening to German. As to speaking German, few students can speak German, and we don't practice speaking German among ourselves either ... People around us communicate in Chinese, and there is no chance to speak German” (Dong, level 1).

In addition, further examination of Table 1 shows that more students at higher proficiency levels tended to rate German to be difficult or very difficult. This might be because German became more and more complex as the students learned more about the language. Consequently, students at higher proficiency levels worked harder to “understand German” (Tai, level 2) and “communicate with German friends” (Mei, level 3).

Students' Motivation to Study German

To explore students' motivation to learn German, interview transcripts and responses to the open-ended question on the questionnaire were analyzed. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Motivation to Study German (Source: Interview and Question Responses)

	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3	
	Responses (N=121)	Interview (N=25)	Responses (N=44)	Interview (N=15)	Responses (N=26)	Interview (N=10)
To meet the need for major study or research	31(25.6%)	12(48%)	8(18.2%)	5(33.3%)	13(50%)	3(30%)
To study in Germany	29(24%)	5(20%)	12(27.3%)	6(40%)	11(42.3%)	4(40%)
To learn/master one more foreign language	24(19.8%)	3(12%)	4(9.1%)	3(20%)	8(30.8%)	1(10%)
Like the German culture	18(14.9%)	0	8(18.2%)	3(20%)	7(26.9%)	2(20%)
To increase job opportunities	16(13.2%)	0	4(9.1%)		3(11.5%)	0
Like German	14(11.6%)	4(16%)	8(18.2%)	4(26.7%)	4(15.4%)	2(20%)
Like Germany	11(9%)	4(16%)	3(6.8%)	0	0	1(10%)
To enhance personal skills	11(9%)	0	0	0	4(15.4%)	0
Like language learning	8(6.6%)	3(12%)	2(4.5%)	0	2(7.7%)	0
To travel in Germany or German-speaking places	5(4.1%)	0	6(13.6%)	0	0	0
To better understand and adapt to this world	8(6.6%)	0	0	0	0	0
To communicate with German friends	2(1.7%)	0	4(9.1%)	0	0	0
To understand sports news (football)	2(1.7%)	0	2(4.5%)	0	0	0
To meet course requirement	0	0	3(6.8%)	0	0	0
Boy-/girl-friend is German	0	0	2(4.5%)	0	0	0
To work in Germany	0	0	2(4.5%)	0	0	0
Like different languages and cultures	0	0	2(4.5%)	0	0	0
German is used sometimes in daily life	2(1.7%)	0	0	0	0	0
Classmates/roommates learn German together	2(1.7%)	3(12%)	0	0	0	2(20%)
It's useful to learn languages	1(0.83%)	2(8%)	1(2.3%)	2(13.3%)	1(3.8%)	0
Have the past experience of studying in Germany	1(0.83%)	0	1(2.3%)		0	0
To live in Europe and German is important there	1(0.83%)	2(8%)	0	0	0	0
Learning foreign languages is a part of education	1(0.83%)	0	0	0	2(7.7%)	0
It's interesting to learn a new language	0	2(8%)	0	0	1(3.8%)	0
Rather few students are studying German	0	0	0	2(13.3%)	0	0
To do business in Germany	0	0	1(2.3%)	0	0	0
To have fun	0	0	1(2.3%)	0	0	0
To kill time	0	1(4%)	0	0	0	0
Failed to register in other foreign language courses	0	1(4%)	0	0	0	0
Boy-/girl-friend is learning German	0	1(4%)	0	0	0	0
Recommended by senior students	0	1(4%)	0	0	0	0

As seen from Table 2, the students at different proficiency levels were motivated to learn German mainly for the following common reasons: (1) the need for major study or research, (2) the desire to study in Germany and learn/master one more foreign language, (3) liking the German culture, (4) the desire to increase opportunities in the future job market, (5) liking German and Germany, (6) the desire to enhance personal skills, (7) liking language learning, and (8) the desire to travel in Germany or German-speaking places.

As described by the students, Germany topped the world in many areas such as law, automobile engineering, architecture, philosophy, medicine and Marxism. If students wanted to improve themselves and gain expertise in these areas, it was necessary for them to read related literature in German. As reported by the respondents, “Germany is well developed in Law. I hope I can learn about it from first-hand resources and enhance my

professional skills” (No.6, level 1, question respondent), “Germany is famous for science of medicine. Many books on medicine are written in German, so [learning German] is helpful for my major study” (Song level 2, interview). Probably because Germany ranked top in many areas, many students studied German so that they could study in Germany in the future. For instance, “... Education in Germany is highly developed, and its education in humanities, history and philosophy is particularly advanced” (Tong, level 2, interview). In addition, because “Germany has a rich culture and is thus very charming” (No.140, level 2, question respondent) and “Germany has no rivals in classic music” (No.55, level 1, question respondent), quite many students chose to study German. Some students studied German because they enjoyed learning languages, in that “... Language itself is an interesting type of knowledge, I enjoy quite much the culture shock and completely new feeling learning a new language brings to me” (No.136, level 2, question respondent). “... I like learning languages and other countries’ cultures quite much. Learning German is an important window to understand and know its culture” (Yu, level 1, interview). Some students felt that “German pronunciation and word formation are cute” (No.152, level 2, question respondent) and considered it “wonderful to speak German” (No.160, level 2, question respondent) and thus were motivated to study German. Some students studied German because they “like and admire German industry and art” (No.99, level 1, question respondent) and “like Germany and the German people are often rigorous in thinking and lead the world in science and technology” (Sun, level 3, interview).

In addition, some students studied Germany in order to enhance personal skills (e.g., increasing knowledge, widening horizon, training way of thinking, accumulating experiences, improving learning ability, learning new knowledge, and changing personality, etc.). Typical remarks were “... Learning many foreign languages enriches and substantiates myself” (No.106, level 1, question respondent) and “... Learning languages can ... train my brain” (Shu, level 1, interview). Some students studied German in order to better understand the world, which helped “open a new window to observe the world” (No.76, level 1, question respondent).

Table 2, coupled with the means of survey items (see Appendix), also indicates that the students at different proficiency levels were generally motivated to study German for similar reasons, which might be because they shared the same big Chinese culture and the school culture.

German Learning Motivation at Different Proficiency

Levels

As reported in the Appendix, the respondents at each proficiency level were (highly) motivated both integratively and instrumentally to study German: they scored 2.98 to 4.21 (level 1), 2.73 to 4.24 (level 2), and 2.80 to 4.60 (level 3) on GLMQ items (items 9-23), respectively. Meanwhile, they had high motivation intensity to study German as well: they scored 2.61 to 4.18 (level 1), 2.70 to 4.18 (level 2), and 3.00 to 4.60 (level 3) on GLMIS items (items 24-30), respectively. In addition, the Appendix shows that students at higher proficiency levels tended to score higher on almost each GIMQ/GLMIS item, indicating that the more proficient a respondent was, the more motivated he/she was to study German, and the greater his/her motivation intensity.

In order to explore the differences in German learning motivation among students at different proficiency levels, one-way ANOVA (Duncan) was conducted on GLMQ and GLMIS. The results are reported in Table 3, which shows that the students at all proficiency levels scored above 3, the scale midpoint, on GLMS and GLMIS, meaning that students at each proficiency level were generally (highly) motivated to study German and made (great) efforts to do it. Meanwhile, Table 3 indicates that level 3 learners scored the highest while level 1 learners scored the lowest on all scales (mean = 3.72-4.13 for level 3 learners, mean = 3.43-3.61 for level 1 learners). And significant difference occurred in integrative motivation ($F = 2.17, p \leq .05$) and motivation intensity ($F = 3.243, p \leq .05$) between level 1 and level 3 learners, though with a small effect size, as evidenced by the ANOVA results presented in Table 3. This suggested that the learners at the highest proficiency level were significantly more integratively motivated to learn German and had significantly greater motivation intensity than their counterparts at the lowest proficiency level.

Table 3. ANOVA Results

	Sum of squares	Mean			F	p	Places of sig. difference ($p \leq .05$)	Effect size ($\hat{\omega}^2$)
		level 1 (N = 154)	level 2 (N = 86)	level 3 (N = 57)				
Integrative motivation	2.018	3.61	3.71	4.13	2.17	.025	Levels 1& 3	0.02 (small)
Instrumental motivation	2.368	3.43	3.52	3.72	.856	.391	/	/
Motivation intensity	2.931	3.52	3.59	4.11	3.24	.041	Levels 1& 3	0.03 (small)

Notes: degree of freedom = 2; Magnitude of effect size of $\hat{\omega}^2$:

small = $\hat{\omega}^2 \leq .01$; medium = $\hat{\omega}^2 = .06$;
 large = $\hat{\omega}^2 \geq .14$ (Field, 2013)

5. Discussions and Conclusions

The present study revealed that most respondents at each proficiency level, although having limited access to and little chance to use German, liked the language, studied it (very) hard and did not think the language was difficult. This might be because although they were at different proficiency levels, they had not studied German for a long time and could easily gain a sense of accomplishment from learning the language.

Meanwhile, the participants at each proficiency level were motivated to learn German, as found in studies on motivation in other SL/FL contexts (Flemens, 2009;^[11] Grant et al., 2018;^[14] Liu, 2012, 2019;^{[18][19]} Liu & Li, 2018;^[20] O'Reilly, 2014;^[25] Qin & Dai, 2013;^[27] Wesely, 2009;^[35] Winke, 2013).^[38] Moreover, their motivation was generally similar: they studied German to do better in their major study or research, to study for further education in Germany, to learn/master one more foreign language, to increase opportunities in the future job market, to enhance personal skills, and to travel in Germany or German-speaking places. Other similar reasons were their liking for the German culture, German, Germany, and language learning. Like their peers who studied English (hard and well) for professional development, future career and further education (Liu, 2012;^[18] Ushioda, 2011;^[32] Wen, 2001),^[34] many of these participants studied German for the same purposes. Meanwhile, like their counterparts in Liu (2019)^[19] and Liu & Li (2018),^[20] these participants studied German more for their internal desires such as their liking and respect for the language, the country and its culture, as evidenced by their remarks and GLMQ item scores. This could be attributed to several reasons. First of all, because of the encompassing power of English as a lingua franca in most areas in the world, no specific requirement was set for non-German majors in study or work in China. Students chose to study German generally not for certificates, high scores, or intellectual competence. Even though some students reported studying German for major study, research and/or further education in Germany, they did it mainly out of their respect for the German culture and Germany's advanced science and technology. They seemed to associate their learning of German to their expectations and perceptions of their future selves, as discussed in Dörnyei (2005, 2009).^{[6][7]} Evidently, they studied German more for internal reasons rather than external reasons, unlike their counterparts when learning English in various contexts (Liu, 2012;^[18] Wen, 2001;^[34] Zhou, Gao & Zang, 2011).^[40] Moreover, as shown in Table 2, the present research revealed that a few students studied German for fun, peer influence, to travel and/or to kill time, as did those learning different

SLs/FLs (Cai & Zhu, 2012;^[1] Dörnyei, 2005;^[6] Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015;^[8] Wen, 2001;^[34] Wesely, 2009;^[35] Zhou et al., 2011),^[40] further affirming the claim that the motivation construct is complex and involves various factors such as the context, the learner and the language (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009).^{[6][7]} The results also indicated that the learners' attitudes seemed to play an important role in affecting their motivation to study German. Yet future research is needed to further examine this and explore the differences in this between the motivation to study English and that to study minority languages or/and between the motivation to study the first SL/FL and that to study the second/third/fourth and nth SL/FL.

In addition, the present research showed that the students at higher proficiency levels perceived German to be more difficult and worked harder on it. This might be because as they became more proficient in German, their learning grew to be more complex and challenging, which required more efforts and investment. Concurrently, the participants at higher proficiency levels were found to be both integratively and instrumentally more motivated to study German and had greater motivation intensity, opposite to the finding in Liu (2012)^[18] which focused on motivation of Chinese university EFL learners in various contexts. The most plausible explanation for this was that the participants chose to study German on their own will and that it is often easier for learners to achieve their goals at the initial stages of language learning. It might also be that as students became more proficient in German, they became more motivated to study the language, which then helped improve their German proficiency. Thus, a beneficial circle was formed. Similar to the findings in Liu's (2012) study,^[18] the participants at higher proficiency levels also tended to be more integratively motivated to learn German. This might be because as they learned more about German, they became more interested in the language or studied the language more for its own sake.

Though the participants in the present study were (highly) motivated to study German and made (great) efforts to learn it well, due to limited access and little chance to use it, it is necessary to maintain and enhance their motivation. It is the same with learners of other second or third foreign languages. To do this, it is useful to maximize the roles of instructors, who can help students set realistic and achievable short-term and long-term goals, explicitly emphasize the role of motivation in language learning, search for meaningful and interesting teaching and learning materials (e.g., good German movies, TV episodes and books, etc.), and frequently praise and encourage students to study harder (Cruz & Al Shabibi, 2019;^[3] Dörnyei, 2009).^[7] On the part of learners,

it is better to have clear perceptions of their present and future selves and then project them to their motivation to study the target language (Dörnyei, 2009;^[7] Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015;^[8] Waning et al., 2014).^[36]

As the world becomes increasingly globalized, learners of various languages like Japanese, Spanish, German, Chinese and Russian have been increasing. Nevertheless, research on the learning motivation of these languages remains inadequate. The present study contributes to the current literature by examining German learning motivation of Chinese university students at different proficiency levels. The findings attest that much work is still needed to examine SL/FL motivation in relation to various factors such as the learning context and the learner, as suggested in Cruz and Al Shabibi's (2019) study.^[3] Meanwhile, a longitudinal approach would help capture the dynamic picture of motivation in various contexts and explain what factors affect motivation (Cruz & Al Shabibi, 2019;^[3] Waning et al., 2014).^[36] In addition, formal interviews will help elicit more definite insider views of various aspects of language learning motivation such as frequency of using the language and reasons for little/much use of the language, which will be employed in future research. Moreover, since the participants were placed at different German proficiency levels according to the previous course they had completed, it would be more valid if they were differentiated according to a standard German proficiency test. This should be an endeavor in future research. Finally, as university students often need to study various subjects, it will be significant to examine and compare their motivation to learn foreign languages and other subjects such as math and psychology. The results will be conducive to the teaching and learning of different subjects as well as a better understanding of motivation.

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Appendix: GLMQ and GLMIS items

Survey items	Level 1 (N=154)		Level 2 (N= 86)		Level 3 (N= 57)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
9. I want to understand all the German I see and hear.	3.89	1.06	4.24	.85	4.50	.71
10. I want to use German when I travel to a German-speaking region.	4.18	1.01	4.10	.95	4.60	.70
11. I want to be able to converse with German speakers in my country.	3.22	1.24	3.20	1.34	4.10	1.20
12. I am interested in German culture, history, or literature.	3.38	1.20	3.73	1.08	3.50	1.51
13. I feel that German may be helpful in my future career.	3.70	1.23	3.65	1.15	4.20	1.03
14. I want to be able to use German with German-speaking friends/acquaintances.	2.84	1.28	2.73	1.29	2.80	1.48
15. I want to be able to speak more languages than just my mother tongue.	4.21	.97	4.20	.87	4.70	.48
16. I want to learn about another culture to understand the world better.	3.90	1.11	4.08	.84	4.60	.52
17. German may make me a more qualified job candidate.	3.18	1.21	3.35	1.16	3.50	1.51
18. I think foreign language study is part of a well-rounded education.	3.54	1.29	3.67	1.11	3.40	1.43
19. I feel that German is an important language in the world.	3.40	1.13	3.55	1.14	3.80	1.32
20. I feel that knowledge of German will give me an edge in competing with others.	3.16	1.30	3.22	1.09	3.40	1.58
21. I want to be able to communicate with native speakers of German.	3.80	1.09	3.88	1.15	4.20	1.14
22. I feel that German will enhance my resume or C.V.	2.98	1.31	3.12	1.17	3.80	1.40
23. Being a person who knows German is important to me.	3.19	1.29	3.53	1.21	3.90	1.45
24. I learn German by working on it almost every day.	2.61	1.08	2.70	1.23	3.00	1.25
25. When I have a problem understanding something we are learning in a German class, I always try to find the answer (Think back to your most recent class).	3.54	1.00	3.58	.91	4.00	.82
26. I really work hard to learn German.	3.14	.90	3.22	.97	3.80	.92
27. When I am learning German, I ignore distractions and stick to the job at hand.	3.38	.99	3.40	1.05	3.90	.99
28. I intend to improve my German as much as I can.	4.18	.77	4.18	.80	4.60	.70
29. I am willing to dedicate time and effort to learning German even if it is not convenient.	3.61	.89	3.76	.89	4.30	.67
30. I will not stop trying to learn until I reach the skill level in German that I seek.	3.89	.92	4.02	.98	4.50	.71