

# Influence of Instrumental Motivation on EFL Learners in China and Its Implication on TEFL Instructional Design

China, a nation in the Expanding Circle<sup>1</sup> (Hu, 2007; Zhao & Champbell, 1995), has the largest number of English language learners and users in the world – a fair estimate of its “English-knowing population”, as defined by Yang (2006, p. 3), has reached 250 million to 300 million people, almost a quarter of its total 1.3 billion population. Cui (2006), Li (2007), and McArthur (2003) have similar reports when they discuss teaching and learning English in China. It is estimated that in the near future, Chinese learners of English as a foreign language (EFL learners) will outnumber the native English-speaking population around the world (Liu & Teng, 2006). It is self-evident that such a large learner population deserves the attention of educators and researchers, as findings about them and their learning environment may shed light on our understanding of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) and contribute to theoretical advancement and practical progress.

In addition to the overwhelmingly large number, what has distinguished the Chinese EFL learners as a special group lies mainly in two aspects: the learning environment where a craze for English arises, and the dominant motivation type resulting from this environment. At all levels of school education, from elementary schools to universities, English is a compulsory curriculum requirement; an English exam is part of the unified standardized testing system to enroll students and grant degrees. This drive for English learning has extended widely to the in-service people who are required to pass various English exams for well-paid employment, promotion, or professional development, leading to what Hua (as cited in Gao, Zhao, Cheng, and Zhou, 2004) defined as certificate motivation, a unique instrumental motivation among the EFL learners in China.

Given the aforementioned English learning situation in China, an exploration into it from both academic and commercial perspectives is justified. Based on a brief review of the theories on motivation and second language acquisition studied in the western context, and an analysis of their special characteristics in the Chinese environment, this paper describes the power of instrumental motivation among Chinese EFL learners and discusses its implications for TEFL in China. Further, as educational technology enables rethinking of pedagogy, the paper also recommends approaches on how to design instruction that moves beyond instrumental motivation and makes instruction intrinsically appealing.

## Function of Different Types of Motivation

Apart from the role that intellectual capacity and language aptitude play in a second or foreign language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), motivation is a major factor in the successful study of language acquisition. It is considered goal directed and defined as “the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the

language plus favourable attitudes toward learning the language” (Gardner, 1985, p. 10). Motivation is also an important contributor to language achievement in terms of linguistic outcomes, which traditionally embrace the knowledge structure of the language, i.e. vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation and the four basic skills of the language, including listening, understanding, reading and writing (Gardner, 1985).

To explain why individuals set certain goals in learning a language, Gardner and his associate proposed the Orientation Index, an instrument to measure the motivational orientations of language learners (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Generally speaking, individuals learn a second language mainly to achieve two goals, which are represented by the integrative and instrumental motivation dichotomy (Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Gardner, 1985; 2002). According to their explanation, integratively oriented learners learn the language in order to use it to communicate with the other group of people and know more about their life (Gardner, 1985). Instrumentally orientated learners, on the other hand, are learning the language for more “utilitarian value of linguistic achievement” (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, p. 267), or for some “pragmatic reasons”, such as education or employment opportunities (Gardner, 1985, p. 11). Of the two types of motivation, the literature indicates that an integrative motive is higher correlated to achievement than an instrumental one (Gardner & Lambert, 1959).

Most of the studies on motivation and second language acquisition were conducted in a western context and “motivation processes and constructs are implicitly assumed to be invariant across cultural and linguistic groups” (Rueda & Chen, 2005, p. 210). However, because of the differences in cultural traditions, historical backgrounds, values of education and education systems, some of the observations or existing findings do not apply to the EFL learners in a Chinese context; or to put it another way, due to the differences in English learning environment, Chinese EFL learners tend to have different perspectives and motivational orientations with respect to English learning. A case in point has to do with findings concerning external factors that motivate the learners.

Gardner (1985) maintained that external demand or reward might not motivate learning. He stated:

Many attributes of the individual, such as compulsiveness, desire to please a teacher or a parent, a high need to achieve, might produce effort as would social pressures, such as a demanding teaching, impending examinations, or the promise of a new bicycle. None of these, however, necessarily signify motivation to learn the language (p. 10).

However, this is not always true in China. Like most other courses, English is compulsory. Most students do not choose to learn English; as a result, many lack the internal drive for learning it in the first place and have to rely on external driving forces. Secondly, it is one of the commonly accepted social standards that people with a higher education status, with higher academic degree to be exact, is more respected, better recognized and more likely to obtain better jobs. Being a compulsory course, English is

thus seen as a means for upward social mobility. Furthermore, the Chinese people believe that almost everything can be achieved through efforts and hard work even if they take no personal interest in it. Thus, it is not uncommon that Chinese EFL learners learn English to pass exams, to get further education, and to be prepared for future job markets, all of which are external factors aligned with some collectively social expectations.

Another phenomenon different from the research findings obtained in the western context has to do with the learning experience. Gardner (1985) noted: “For many individuals second language learning is a relatively uncommon experience, engaged in for only a few years with little immediate pay-off” (p. 3). By contrast, as foreign language learners in a foreign language environment, more and more Chinese learners start their EFL learning experience from pre-school or elementary school years; and from then on it becomes an indispensable part in their life even after they are established as professors at a university, senior engineers in an enterprise, or high government officials. To them, English learning may last for over twenty years, for it is a prerequisite for professional development and personal advancement.

From a western perspective, integrative motivation outweighs instrumental motivation in the learning process, because once the external factors cease to function, the learner cannot remain motivated. However, it is not necessarily the case with cross-cultural circumstances. The external driving forces, especially those supported and nurtured by the curriculum and testing system in formal education, never cease to motivate the Chinese EFL learners. Many studies examined the motivation type in the Chinese context, and found that instrumental motivation is very popular among the Chinese EFL learners.

In his investigation of an intensive ESL program, Hamp-Lyons (1983) found that many students are motivated instrumentally rather than integratively, and they study English in order to “get some measurable extrinsic value of the learning outcomes” (p. 145). This sheds light on similar cases of the instrumentally motivated EFL learners in China. Pride and Liu (as cited in Zhao & Campbell, 1995) categorized four types of motivation among Chinese learners of English, namely integrative, instrumental, expressive and truly extrinsic. They argued that a very limited number of learners are integratively motivated. Most learners are instrument-oriented as they want to use English as a tool to communicate with foreigners. Learners with expressive motivation wish to establish a connection with the outside world through English. And for learners with purely extrinsic motivation, English is a compulsory course and they have to pass exams. Considering the limited proportion of Chinese EFL learners who will go abroad or use English as the working language in China, integratively motivated learners are not dominant. Instead, most learn English for the benefit of “social and economic mobility” (Zhao & Campbell, 1995, p. 384). And it is the learning environment described above that has determined this.

Gao et al. (2004) carried out another research study on the motivation types among 2,278 undergraduates at 30 universities across China. Using an inductive approach, they classified seven types of motivation; three of them are labeled “immediate

achievement, information medium and individual development”, which belong to instrumental motivation. For example, students are driven to learn English “by test scores or by parents (living up to my parents’ expectations)”; they learn English “in order to pass exams”, “get the degree” or “seek better education”; and they learn English because “English can help me find a good job”, “English is a symbol of education and cultivation”, or “Learning English gives me a sense of achievement”.

Many other studies are supporting the description of instrumentally orientated EFL learners in China from different perspectives. Hua (as cited in Gao et al., 2004) claimed that 80 percent of Chinese English learners are pure “certificate motivation”. Boyle (2000) pointed out “China’s motivation for learning English is very definitely pragmatic and job-oriented” (p. 151). Pang, Zhou, and Fu (2002) argued that “For most Chinese people, English is learned ... for patriotic and utilitarian reasons, and for national modernization[s] as well as personal advancement and material gain[s]” (p. 203). In addition, a survey of 1,000 students indicated that they are motivated to learn English with the belief that they will be paid off financially in the future (Niu & Wolff, 2003).

In summary, English is taught through formal instruction and/or special training programs aimed at helping the learners meet social expectations for mostly pragmatic goals. In fact, the external factors not only pose as powerful motivation, but also are persistently functioning to make the learners maintain their instrumental motivation with clearly defined objectives at different stages of English learning, like working for a higher degree or passing a particular exam for promotion. From a social psychological point of view, it can be concluded that instrumentally motivated EFL learners in China learn English to obtain employment opportunities, monetary rewards and social advancement. The instrument motivation, in the form of certificate or exam motivation<sup>2</sup>, is shaped under the special English learning environment. This unique type of motivation is seldom touched upon in the research studies conducted in the western context.

### Attribution Analysis of the Ever Increasing Certificate Motivation in China

As noted by Adamson, Bolton, Lam, and Tong (2002), “English as an academic enterprise in the China context has a wide range of applications and connotations, cultural, educational, historical, linguistic, and literacy” (p. 349). EFL learners regardless of age, education and occupation have the similar determination in obtaining English certificates and they share the common belief in the guaranteed rewarding benefit from those certificates later on. The English learning environment in China fosters the existence of such instrumental motivation and enhances its further persistence among the EFL learners.

### *Curriculum*

With a long history dating back to the late Qing Dynasty during 1759-1860 (Adamson, 2002), English education in China has experienced periodic ups and downs along with the political, social and economic changes. The 1980s witnessed its rapid development (Chang, 2006; Lam, 2002; Pang et al., 2002; Xu, 2006). During the past

three decades, the Reform and Open Policy, China's entry to WTO in 2001, the successful bid for hosting the 2008 Olympic Games, the expectations of World Expo in 2010, have all provided favorable conditions for widespread English learning in China. English has received more and more attention in the education sector as well as in the whole society; accordingly, English curriculums and syllabi have been adapted several times to meet the escalating social demands.

The first unified elementary and secondary curriculum was issued by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 1978. Since then, policies on basic English language education have been shaped by changing contexts of national development (Hu, 2005). It is worth mentioning that a document entitled *The MOE Guideline for Vigorously Promoting the Teaching of English in Primary Schools* was released by the MOE in January 2001, mandating that elementary schools start to offer English class from Grade Three as a mandatory subject. In this guideline teaching goals and requirements as well as implementation and management procedures were also identified (MOE, 2001). From then on, elementary school students from Grade Three will have English classes averaging three class periods each week (Hu, 2007). Also as a required course in secondary schools, three-year English instruction in junior and senior periods averages 400 hours and 900 hours respectively (Zhao & Campbell, 1995).

At the tertiary level, the MOE issued the English syllabus in 1999, requiring that the first and second year undergraduate students have four 50-minute intensive English classes per week. The 1999 syllabus was further developed into the 2004 edition entitled *College English Course Requirement* with even higher demand (Cai, 2006). To achieve continuity in learning English at university level, an additional 100 class hours of optional ESP (English for Specific Purposes) classes will be offered to the third and fourth year students (Yang, 2006). Currently, at over 1,000 universities two English syllabi are actually put into effect for English major and non-English major students respectively (Xu, 2006).

All in all, Chinese EFL learners nowadays are required to start learning English earlier and with added credit hours and higher demand. Considering the boom of students these years, the expansion of TEFL in China is remarkable. In addition, the students are encouraged to attend various part-time English programs to get extra certificates as evidence of qualifications if they want to enroll in a key school, the one with better quality and higher enrollment rate to universities. Thus, the Chinese EFL learner's instrumental motivation is reinforced by the official curriculum requirement.

### *Certificates*

The craze for certificates is very pronounced in China. Certificates of one kind or another are imbued with high educational and social status. As was mentioned in previous sections, intense competition in education and employment accounts to a large extent for the pursuit of certificates at all levels of education and in various fields of work. Take formal school education as an example, children from an early age, voluntarily or not, begin to learn for certificates, as it is very popular in China that almost every subject

area in the curriculum is tied to certificates, and so is with many extracurricular activities. As the competition at upper level of education becomes more intense, students are driven to obtain multiple certificates in order to secure the successful enrollment in a good school.

Among the subject areas, an English certificate is the most numerous, most popular and the most valuable. For EFL Learners, whether they are students at school or people at work, there are various English certificates available for diverse purposes. Young learners aged four to twelve are attracted by Cambridge Young Learners English Certificate; more and more secondary school students and the interested public aim at the Public English Test System (PETS) certificates; university students must obtain Certificate of College English Test (CET) to graduate; and in-service employees favor Business English Certificate (BEC), to name only a few. Therefore, test or exam related instructions are included in formal school teaching as well as in in-service training programs. English instructions are planned with consideration of these tests and exams to help the learners become well prepared for high scores, while learners are targeting at these tests and exams to get certificates, both further promoting the formation of instrumental motivation among Chinese EFL learners.

### *Exams*

Throughout the history of China's education development, exams have always been the criteria to determine one's status in education and in society, which are directly linked to social recognition, respect, authority, and one's future. With the new development in the last three decades, types of exams have increased and scales of exams have extended. As English is seen as being highly desirable in achieving social, economic and academic goals, English exams are playing a more and more important role in education.

Unified large scale standardized English exams are normally administered at national or provincial levels for entrance to senior high schools and universities. Meanwhile, more and more imported exams are emerging and rapidly flourishing, which are introduced by National Educational Examinations Authority (NEEA), an official organization under the MOE. Various kinds of exams are offered to meet the diverse needs of EFL learners. Some of them are compulsory, mainly intended for educational purposes, while others are optional, functioning as avenues to employment and material gains.

In formal educational settings, the most representative exams are the National Matriculation English Test (NMET) and the College English Test (CET). NMET is designed for secondary school students who wish to pursue higher education. After it was disrupted due to the decade long political turmoil between 1966 and 1976, enrollment to universities resumed in 1977 and since then English has been included in the unified entrance examinations. Once the students are admitted to the university, CET, which started from 1987, becomes one of the most important English exams for non-English major undergraduate students who account for the majority of university students.

The English major undergraduate students, on the other hand, are to take the TEM Band 4/8. Students who want to further their education abroad can choose from Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Graduate Record Exam (GRE), Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and so on. And for those who plan to stay in China upon graduation, CET6, BEC, PETS might be the ones they are after.

Apart from the compulsory English exams for curriculum requirements and other educational purposes, many native or foreign exams are job-related, because it is a tradition that companies and government departments alike set English proficiency requirements for the promotion or professional development of their employees. Exams with such purposes include BEC, PETS, Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), National Accreditation Examinations for Translators and Interpreters (NAETI), Financial English Certificate Test (FECT), Main Suite Examinations (MSE), etc.

English exams, with an unprecedented speed especially in recent years, are now spreading all over the country, thus greatly enhancing the exam-orientated English learning environment. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that statistics regarding the test takers from newspaper archives and Web sources explains the widespread craze for learning English across China. According to EduLife News Center (2006), candidates for the 2006 spring BEC exam increased by 20 percent compared with the same period of the previous year. On September 23, 2006, 160,000 children from 30 provinces sat for the Cambridge Young Learners English Test (Han, 2006). In 2007, ETS (2007, November) announced that seats for new TOEFL iBT increased by 80 percent in only six months. Also in the same year, PETS test takers were over one million people at test centers scattering in 31 provinces all over China (NEEA, 2007). Further, Jiang and Tang (2007, May) reported that about 10.1 million people have registered NMET in 2007, registration reaching another record high.

As a result, the drive for taking exams and getting certificates triggers the gold rush in the English learning and training market, which yields a total value of nearly 15 billion RMB, or 0.1 percent of GDP and it is estimated that this will have been doubled by 2010 (Li, 2007, August). It is evident that this enormous English learning industry further enhances the instrumentally orientated English learning environment in China, which in turn, has become the determining factor to the certificate or exam motivation among Chinese EFL learners.

### *Social Expectations*

Social expectations play a vital role in the expansion of public exams and in the shaping of exam/employment-targeted English learning environment, which ultimately determines the motivation type of EFL learners. These social standards are further intensified by some newly emerged exams. A good case in point is illustrated by a news item entitled *TOEIC boom in China* (Guo, 2004). In this report, Mr. Li, an inspector of a learning company, released the marketing strategies for TOEIC. The first goal was set at company groups – to have more of them accept the test and make it a necessity in the job

application process; the second goal was targeted at campuses – to prepare students for the competitive job market.

On the other hand, social values attached to the English certificates largely account for the motive of most EFL learners in China. Very often, the level of English proficiency is regarded to outweigh the achievement of academic knowledge. Therefore, English certificates function as the major means to realize one's academic and personal goals and are viewed with social expectations. CET certificate is a good example to illustrate this relation. In light of the fact that CET certificate is requested by the prospective employers as one of the recruiting requirements, many universities carry out special policies to promote the learning of English on campus, aiming at higher CET passing rate among their graduates. One of them is to tie CET certificate to the grant of diploma/degree. That is, bachelor's degrees are only granted to students with CET certificates, which has caused serious anxiety and frustration for many university students. In February 2005, the MOE reformed the CET grading system and the issue of affiliated certificates, hoping to lower social expectations of them. Accordingly, many universities dropped their corresponding policies since. Unfortunately, the new policy from the MOE fails to change the English certificate status in the real job market. Pan (2007, December) described a student's frustrating experience in this situation. Without a CET Band 6 certificate, the student is still considered as being disqualified, thus very unlikely to have any chance for even a job interview. The certificate motivation is thus reinforced despite any attempt of MOE to down play it in order to reduce the tension and frustration of the learners.

Probably in view of the social expectations of various English certificates as proofs of one's English proficiency, most parents press their young children for extra certificates, and their role in this can not be underestimated. People's Daily Online (2005, December) reported that "Parents are desperate to boost their children's educational resumes in hope for a PETS certificate, which will help them get into a better middle school, almost a prerequisite to get into university." The news entitled *Beijing Kids Take Adult-targeted English Test for a Better Future* evidenced that it is the parents who are persuading or even forcing their children to obtain as many English certificates as possible, even if their children are not the intended test takers. Another report also supported the fact that parents are among the top driving forces in motivating their children to learn English. After the MOE disqualified students at compulsory education period<sup>3</sup> to write the adult-targeted PETS (MOE, 2007, April), 28 disappointed parents in a northern city filed a complaint to MOE, insisting that their children are English learners as well, and they should be allowed to have their English ability assessed (Zhang, 2007, December).

The impact of social expectations on the English learning environment is so powerful that it keeps pushing the EFL learners at all levels. According to Jiang and Tao (2007, August), a survey conducted by the Social Investigation Center of China Youth Daily revealed that 90 percent of the public agree that the Chinese people at all ages are learning English. It was also pointed out in the same survey that half the public sees English as one of the basic skills needed in this modern society. When asked to comment

on the reason for learning English, 65.8 percent of the subjects admitted that they learn English for schooling and exams, 62 percent for promotion and professional development, and 83 percent for employment opportunities. Moreover, the survey cited an interviewee, holder of several English certificates and one of the many English learning enthusiasts, as saying that it is worth any efforts and investment to learning English and the hard work will definitely be paid off in the future.

The increasing influence of certificate motivation among Chinese EFL learners is the result of many forces functioning together. The institutional requirement from both MOE and school authorities, the pressure from the parents, the requirements from the employment markets and the desire of the learners themselves all contribute to this prominent phenomenon in China.

### Implication of Instrumental Motivation on TEFL Instructional Design

Chinese EFL learners are instrumentally motivated; in other words, they exhibit certificate or exam motivation, which is largely determined by the overall English learning environment. This seems in striking contrast with what happens in the western countries where instrumental motivation is generally deemed not as powerful and motivating, and in some cases, it may even pose a negative effect on the learners. For example, it is argued in the western context that extrinsic motivation does not usually stimulate true learning, while in the Chinese context, extrinsic motivation is more practical than integrative motivation, and thus appeals to the learners. The existence and persistence of such instrument motivation among EFL learners tremendously influences the instructional approaches both at school and in training programs. Zhao and Campbell (1995) summarized that “Learning and teaching for examinations have dominated TEFL in China” (p. 385). Apparently, preparing for exams becomes the needs of the learners and therefore should be attended to in the English instruction.

Despite the practical side of the certificate/exam motivation, the EFL learners, TEFL experts and recruiting employers have realized some limitations of its impact on the teaching and learning process and its outcomes. Dingfang Shu, author of *FLT in China: Problems and Suggested Solutions*, pointed out the adverse effects of the two most important national standardized English exams, namely the NMET and the CET, on the present reality of exam-orientated English teaching and learning, a phenomenon usually termed as “high scores and low ability”(Shu, 2004).

In a corresponding book review, Xu (2006) cited that:

At secondary education level, over 90 percent of schools spend the whole third year reviewing what has been learned and preparing [the students] for NMET, and not teaching anything new. Of college students, 59 percent believe that current EFL teaching is orientated to testing, and not to improving proficiency. Thus, the problem is that many students pass a certain test, but their ability to use English remains very low (p. 756).

The undesirable side effect, however, does not hinder the ever-increasing demand for learning English in the whole society and the boom of English learning and training market. Considering the dual reality, that is, the learner's needs and motives for passing English exams and the negative effect of this on the improvement of their English proficiency, the instruction should balance the criteria of both. So enabling EFL learners to raise their knowledge and skill of English to earn the requested certificates, develop their ability to use English, and foster their capacity to become autonomous in undertaking the lifelong task of learning English challenges the practice of instructional design. In other words, the present situation calls for various English programs to address all the above-mentioned needs of the learners, aiming not merely at passing exams for various certificates, but more importantly, at really improving their language competence and fostering their ability to learn English; that is, design instructions that may lead to the training of learning strategies in order to counter the negative consequence of instrument motivation.

First of all, it must be realized that the adoption of proper learning strategies and the corresponding academic performances are inevitably influenced by the learning context. As the Chinese testing system supports certificate/exam motivation, instructional approaches should consider these factors to satisfy the extrinsic determinant to learning and facilitate the learning process. A research study by Yip (2007) indicated that high and low academic achievers differ significantly in their selection of study strategies. Reflecting on the exam-orientated TEFL in China, instructors tend to overemphasize test-taking skills in the instruction but neglect the teaching of other basic study strategies for better academic performance, such as the selection of appropriate strategies for different learning tasks, the effective use of certain study strategies to achieve best performance and so on. Fortunately, with educational technology these strategies can be built into instructional process and be demonstrated in an appealing way. A good case in point is the use of *Inspiration*, a graphics organizer program for brainstorming and demonstrating the relationship between ideas in writing.

Secondly, many studies attach great importance to encouraging and motivating self-regulated learning and personal development (Chang, 2006; Xu, 2006). However, the audience of instruction is students with diverse learning styles and different language proficiency, which poses difficulty in designing individualized instruction. A solution to this is the application of educational communications and technology to create a technology-supported learning environment so that individual needs can be largely accommodated. On the one hand, instructional materials and activities are presented in multiple ways rather than the traditional presentation of information and knowledge via lectures with chalk and board and overhead projector (Harris, Kaff, Anderson, & Knackendoffel, 2007). For example, PowerPoint presentation with audio, video and notes, multimedia courseware, interactive online programs or some instructor-created blogs can be used to attract attention and satisfy individual learners. On the other hand, by creating personal blog entries, portfolios, Web sites or podcast series, students can develop independent learning skills and persistently reflect language acquisition process.

Such technology enhanced instruction can greatly promote students' motivation and engagement in learning.

Thirdly, to meet all these instructional objectives, a task-assistant approach might be appropriate. As far as the Chinese EFL students are concerned, under the influence of learning and teaching for passing exams and obtaining certificates, most of them are strong in the English knowledge while weak in communication. To compensate for the negative aspects of certificate/exam motivation, the instructional design should include tasks to provide opportunities to use English and raise the learner's awareness of appropriate language use. For example, in a reading class the instructor can design some learning tasks by using the Internet to increase the amount of information input. To search for specific topics, students must use logic skills to locate proper Web pages, practice skimming and scanning skills to screen materials, and finally apply synthesis skill to make the search result complete and coherent. In this process, students have the opportunity to make use of multiple skills in achieving a particular learning task. In addition, the learners may be asked to present the result of their search to the class, using multimedia means and respond to questions raised from their peers. This instructional design may provide opportunities for learners to integrating their skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, which simulates genuine communication situations. Their capacity for spontaneous interaction in English will also be enhanced.

By engaging in similar tasks, students will develop the awareness of the integration of knowledge and skills in learning. Collaborative learning to complete the tasks can be another option. Instant messaging, email and online discussion forum are good ways to practice productive skills. By sharing information and perspectives with peers and instructors, students can build knowledge in a constructive way. No wonder technology in education not only inspires students' desire to learn but also helps them to master real language skills.

Appropriately designed instruction should take into account of the learners' needs for passing exams and receiving certificates to make learning tasks and activities meaningful and relevant; however, this can not be treated as the only teaching and learning goal. Purposeful and flexible technology-supported instruction design, such as self-paced instruction, synchronous and asynchronous approaches, or intelligent tutoring systems definitely facilitates active learning. So learners can closely monitor their learning process, build confidence in learning and be motivated to engage in higher level learning.

## Conclusion

Motivation plays an important role in language teaching and learning. As opposed to some observations and findings in the western context, Chinese EFL learners exhibit powerful instrumental motivation, which is characteristic of certificate or exam driven motivation. The English learning context in China fosters this unique type of motivation and largely determines the selection of teaching and learning strategies. It is suggested that in addition to helping EFL learners pass exams and get certificates,

instructional design should also emphasize the ability to use the English language appropriately, and guide autonomous learning in order to provide optimal learning experiences while minimizing the limitations with regard to the instrumental motivation to learn the English language. This is really a challenging job which can be fulfilled through application of research findings, continued practice, and integration of technology in the classroom.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Based on the function of English, Kachru (as cited in Hu, 2007) grouped the countries across the world into three concentric circles. Inner Circle refers to wherever English is used as a native language. Outer Circle situates countries where English is institutionalized into a second language. In the Expanding Circle English is a foreign language mainly for international rather than intra-national communications.

<sup>2</sup> Certificate motivation, or called *zhengshu dongji* in Chinese, was first proposed by Huifang Hua in 1998. In this paper, certificate and exam are used with an overlapping connotation as far as instrumental motivation among the Chinese EFL learners is concerned. In the Chinese context, exam is part of the curriculum and a student may not get the diploma without a passing score. Meanwhile, certificate is beyond the curriculum and carries more weight in professional development and social mobility. Under this condition, English learning has become a life-long experience, i.e. students learn English not only to get into good schools, but also to go beyond schools for better employment and social status.

<sup>3</sup> Compulsory Education Law, taken into effect in July 1986, requires that all children are obliged to receive education for nine years, from elementary to junior high school. Compulsory education or *yiwu jiaoyu* in Chinese has the characteristics of being mandatory, widespread and free of charge (MOE, 1986).

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