

Applying the Expectancy-Value Theory to Foreign Language Learning Motivation: A Case Study on Takming College Students

I-jung Chen & Samuel P-H Sheu*

ABSTRACT

Being inspired by Gardner's (Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret, 1997) plea to expand the spectrum of the social-educational model to different learning contexts, in terms of culture, language, and educational policies, this paper aims to examine other variables that affect the motivation of Asian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. Expectancy-Value Theory (Lewin, 1951) is introduced to the model to strengthen the study. The sample consisted of 451 first-year college students with Mandarin as their first language. The proposed model was tested using the linear structural equation analysis. It was concluded that the new motivational factors, such as Expectancy, Perceived Ability, Valence, add to our understanding of motivation in learning English as a foreign language among Asian learners.

Key words: expectancy-value theory, social-educational model, linear structural equation, learning motivation, parental encouragement, learning attitudes

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Introduction

Gardner's social-educational model of second language acquisition (SLA) is one of the most influential theories employed to explain how language learners are motivated and how their learning motivation would affect their achievements. In other words, increasing learners' motivation would have a positive effect on their performance in learning the language. However, his studies were mostly conducted in a second language learning setting and the subjects' first language was either French or English (Gardner, 2001; Gardner, Masgoret, & Tremblay, 1997; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). It is unclear that the model could apply to a situation where English is mainly learned as a foreign language (EFL) and a school subject like that of Taiwan. This paper, therefore, adapting Gardner's model, aims at examining the factors which would have an impact on English learning motivation of Asian EFL students.

Literature Review

In the social-educational model of SLA, Gardner identifies motivation as the core driving force for L2 learning, because the effects of many factors related to language learning are dependent on motivation (Gardner, 2001). For example, when learners are motivated to learn the language, they are more likely to use learning strategies. Motivated learners appear to have more positive attitudes toward the language they are learning, and then, they want strongly to achieve their learning goals; as a result, they will spend more efforts on learning the language. That is to say, the more learners are

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motivated, the more effort they intend to spend, and the more benefits they will receive. As Gardner (1985) defines, motivation is a combination of efforts, desire to achieve the goal of learning a language, and positive attitudes toward learning the language. This often leads to success in language learning (Gardner, 1985; Gardner et al., 1997; Nakanishi, 2002; Peng, 2002; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Sung & Padilla, 1998).

With respect to how motivation is generated and affected, Gardner (2001) points out three important elements: attitudes toward the learning situation, integrative orientation, and instrumental orientation. Firstly, attitudes toward the learning situation involve learners' attitudes toward all aspects of the situation in which the language is learned. In the school context, for example, these attitudes could be directed toward the teacher, the course, the course materials, or the activities associated with the course, etc. Students who have positive attitudes toward the learning situation tend to be more motivated than those who are not in favor of learning (Gardner, 2001). Secondly, integrative orientation refers to a genuine interest in learning another language because of "a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other language group" (Lambert, 1974 cited in Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991, p. 58). Finally, in contrast with integrative orientation, instrumental orientation emphasizes the pragmatic value and advantages of learning a new language, such as getting a better job or higher salary (Lambert, 1974; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991).

It should be pointed out that Gardner (2001) also inserts an indirect impact of history on motivation. By history, he means the complex of social and personal variables that learners bring to influence the language learning. Examples include the society in which learners live, culture background, values and beliefs of learning the language, and personal family background. In this paper, learners' history mainly refers to parents' attitudes and involvements in English learning.

Given the fact that Gardner's model is based on the second language context, the Far East Asian culture has two unique features from the point of view of English language learning. First, most Far East Asian countries, such as Korea, Japan and Taiwan, are in a monolingual environment. This means that the English is learned as a foreign language and as a compulsory subject in schools. In this context, most students do not have immediate needs to use English in their daily lives.

Second, it is almost true to say that learners hardly have choices of learning a

language and often are forced to learn a language because of parental beliefs concerning the advantages of learning the language. In other words, the effects of parental involvement appear to be greater than learners' efforts in language learning, because they contribute to a sense of purpose and valence. What is more, previous research has found that the role of parental beliefs has been associated with children's intrinsic motivation and school performance (Aunola, Nurmi, Niemi, Lerkkanen, & Rasku-Puttonen, 2002). This suggests that parental encouragement plays an important role in children's language learning.

It seems that these two factors have a direct impact on the causes of motivation to learn a foreign language among Asian learners. This led us to consider the relationship between motivation and expectancy-value theory and found that Lewin's (1951) expectancy-value theory can be an appropriate supplement to Gardner's model.

Expectancy-Value Theory

Vroom (1964) explains this theory by stating that the effort exerted toward any action is determined by the valence of outcomes and expectancy that the action will lead to the desired outcomes. By definition, Lewin (1951, cited in Wen, 1997) refers to valence as "the psychological value of a particular goal". Expectancy is defined as "the probability of attaining successful performance" (Wen, 1997, p. 236). The expectancy-value theory emphasizes that learners frequently have reasonable expectations for attaining the goal and an understanding of the value of achieving the learning goal in order to sustain motivation for L2 learning. Therefore, the significance and probability of attaining the learning goal are two deciding factors that keep the learning going. As Spolsky (1989) states, a language might be learned for any reason or a collection of practical reasons. The importance of the reasons for learning would decide the degree of effort students will spend and what cost they will pay for. In the school context, if a learner does not see the relevance between the curriculum and personal needs, or if the learner perceives that the goal is unattainable, his or her initial motivation will soon disappear. In other words, L2 learners are motivated to learn another language when they value their learning outcomes (valence), when they appraise the learning goals as attainable (expectancy) and when they perceive their capability of reaching the learning goals (perceived ability). McCombs and Pope (1994,

cited in Center for Educational Research and Innovation, 2000, p. 20) state, "Individuals are naturally motivated to learn when they do not have to fear failure, when they perceive what they are learning as being personally meaningful and relevant, and when they are in respectful and supportive relationships with teachers." Tremblay and Gardner (1995) also point out that the amount of motivational behavior exerted in reaching a specific outcome will be influenced by the perceived probability of the attainability of the goal. In summary, this theory estimates that expectancy directly affects motivation, and perceived ability of the learners also directly affects motivation. In this connection, attitude toward learning situation as a variable affecting motivation would be meaningful only if it is substantiated by the expectancy and perceived ability factors.

Figure 1 provides a proposed motivational model based on the preceding discussion and literature review. Attitudes toward the learning situations and parental encouragement are the external influences on a learner's English learning motivation. Expectancy, perceived ability, and orientations are internal influences from the learner's inner self. The path of influences starts from extrinsic factors, and then one's individual senses. These factors pass through one's perception, build up in one's expectancy, and yields to an orientation of action where motivation for achievement is activated. The authors also hypothesize that valence, the learner's value of the learning outcomes, indicates the influence of parental encouragement on both integrative orientation and instrumental orientation. This is based on the existing culture beliefs of Chinese in Taiwan. Chinese parents often have both high expectations and significant influences on the academic performance of their children (Zhang & Carrasquillo, 1995). At the same time, Chinese students are usually willing to place family values over individual's wishes (Jianhua, 1994).

Aims of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the relationship among motivation, attitudes toward learning English and parental encouragement. The following research questions were examined.

1. To what extent does parental encouragement have a direct impact on valence?
2. To what extent is the influence of valence on integrative orientation and

instrumental orientation respectively?

3. To what extent do integrative orientation and instrumental orientation have a direct impact on learning motivation?

4. To what extent is the impact of attitudes toward learning situation on expectancy and perceived ability respectively?

5. To what extent do the expectancy and perceived ability have a direct influence on learning motivation?

These questions were investigated by the use of a modified model that included all the paths of motivational factors (see Figure 1).

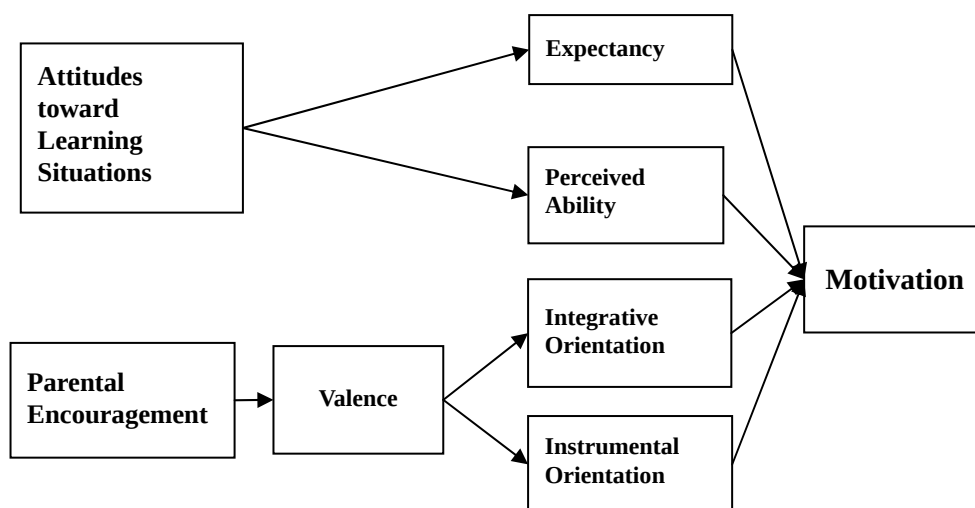


Figure 1 Proposed Model of English Learning Motivation

Methods

Participants and Procedures

A total number of 451 freshmen (89 male, 362 female) participated in the study. All participants were native speakers of Mandarin and have had at least 6 years experience of learning English. Some students might have started learning English early in private English centers or in elementary schools. Data were collected in the school in several sessions. The questionnaire was conducted during regular class time in the school. During the time, all participants were told that their responses to the

questionnaire depended on their own feelings and experiences and that all answers were acceptable. Then, they were given 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Measurements

A questionnaire in Mandarin, consisting of 13 measurers, was used in the study. Measurers for history, attitudes toward the learning situation, integrative orientation, and instrumental orientation were adapted from Gardner's Attitudes/Motivation Test Battery (Gardner et al., 1997). The words "French" and "Canadians" were replaced by "English" and "English speaking people" respectively. Questions referring to specific aspects of French in Canada were excluded. Apart from items on valence, expectancy and perceived ability, the participants were asked to rank items on a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items on valence were rated from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important); items on expectancy were measured by probability of 1 (0%) to 5 (100%); items on perceived ability were measure by estimated ability from 1 (no ability) to 5 (high ability). As Hatch and Lazaraton (1991, p. 539) state, "a test measure is not reliable it cannot be valid measure", the alpha reliabilities for the Attitudes/Motivation Test Battery are shown in Table 1 below. However, since Gardner's Attitudes/Motivation Test Battery is well-recognized and widely used, the validity of the adopted scales used in this study was not conducted.

Table 1 The Alpha Reliabilities for the Attitudes/Motivation Test Battery

Item	α
Attitudes toward English speaking countries (AESC, 3 items)	0.73
Interest in foreign language (IFL, 3 items)	0.64
Attitudes toward Learning English (ALE, 2 items)	0.49
Integrative Orientation (ITO, 3 items)	0.82
Instrumental Orientation (ISO, 3 items)	0.85
Parental Encouragement (PE, 4 items)	0.81
Motivation Intensity (MI, 5 items)	0.76
Desire to Learn English (DLE, 5 items)	0.67
Attitudes toward the English teachers (AET, 4 items)	0.89
Attitudes toward the English course (AEC, 4 items)	0.92
Valence (VA, 5 items)	0.84
Expectancy (EXP, 5 items)	0.87
Perceived ability (PA, 5 items)	0.91

A high score represents a positive response to the items asked.

Data Analysis

Statistical analyses were carried out by the use of structural equation modelling (SEM) with the linear structural equation program SEPATH in STATISTICA. The model includes two basic parts: the measurement model and the structural model. The measurement model is used to estimate the relationship between indicators and latent variables. A latent variable is an underlying phenomenon that the indicator variables are intended to reflect. For example, English learning motivation is the latent variable and attitudes toward learning English, motivation intensity, and desire to learn English are the indicators. In this model all of the coefficients associated with the measurement model are significant, suggesting that the hypothesized latent variables are adequately measured by their indicators. The structural model is used to describe the relationship between latent variables. This part involves the calculation of regression coefficients and determines whether the relationships proposed by the paths are significant. A path is represented by a line with an arrow. The direction of the arrow indicates the direction of influence. For example, in Figure 1 there is a path leading from parental encouragement to valence, indicating that parental encouragement would influence valence. In order to examine whether an identical model would fit for the participants, a multisample procedure suggested by Jöreskog and Sörbom (1993) was used. The sample correlation matrix is presented in the Appendix.

The Model Fit

The Generalized Least Square method provided a chi-square measure of the goodness of fit of the model to the data. The chi-square measure was 41.183 (df=15, $p<.01$). The chi-square per degree freedom index was 2.7455, for which values of less than 5.0 were considered as adequate-fit models (Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin, & Summers, 1977). The tested model was also evaluated by two goodness of fit indices: the Goodness of Fit Index was 0.892 and the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index was 0.873; the RMS Standard Residual is 0.029, for which values of .08 or less were considered acceptable (Chou, 2003).

Results

The tested model was evaluated by the linear structural equation program SEPATH in STATISTICA. The standardized beta coefficients for this model are presented in Figure 2.

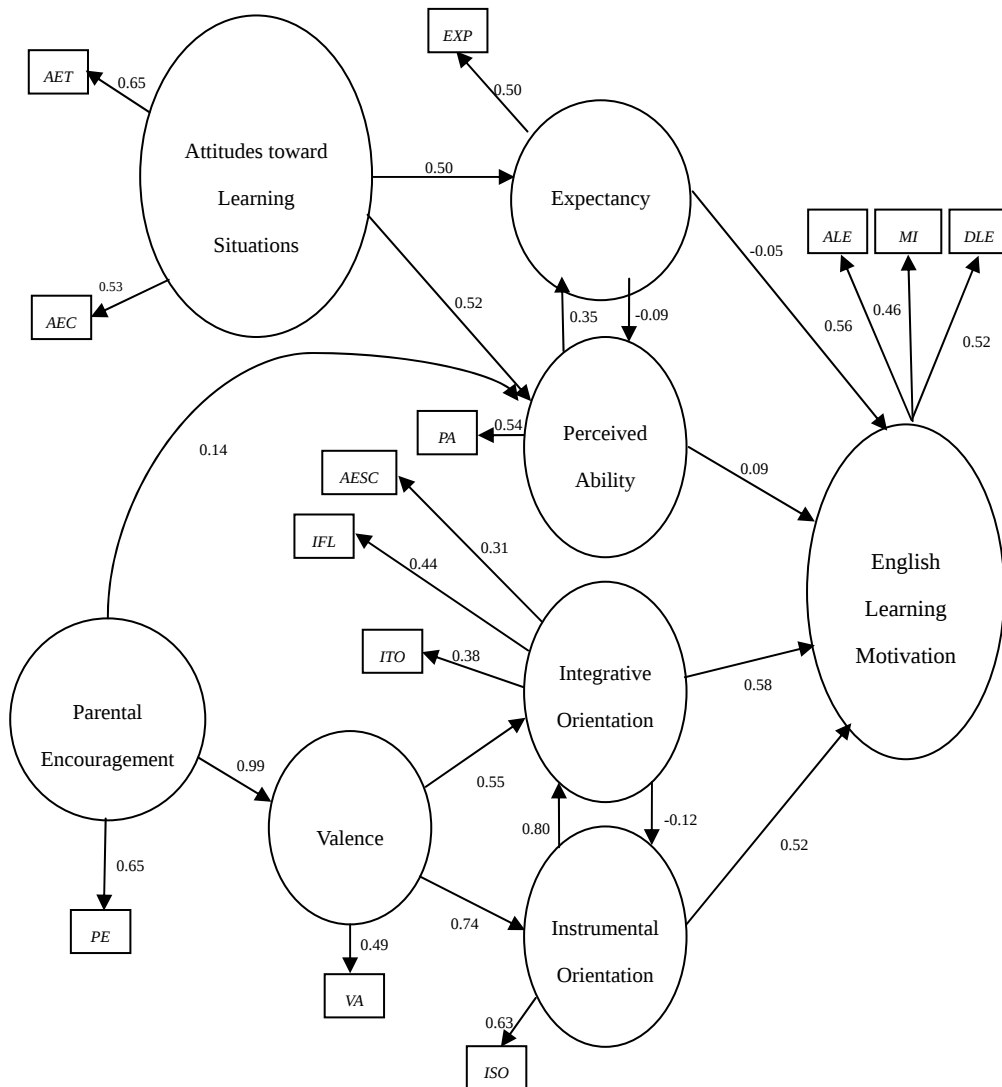


Figure 2: The Model of English Learning Motivation

To what extent does parental encouragement have a direct impact on valence?

The results revealed that there was a high co-efficiency of y ($y=.99$) in the path of parental encouragement and valence of English study. This seems to suggest a direct impact of parental encouragement on valence. The result indicates the importance of parents' roles in their children's academic lives. Another possible reason might be the imposed nature of the English study. That is, students in Taiwan were normally forced to learn English by their parents, so the learning of English often depends on their parents' encouragement and involvement. Moore, Walton, and Lambert (1992) find that in a survey of Asian students in high schools in the United States, parental interest is one of the key reasons for enrolling English classes.

To what extent is the influence of valence on integrative orientation and instrumental orientation respectively? And to what extent do integrative orientation and instrumental orientation have a direct impact on learning motivation?

Valence was strongly associated with integrative and instrumental orientation. Taking the effects of valence, the results showed that both integrative and instrumental orientation had a positive direct association with motivation. In short, the effects of valence had a direct influence on students' English learning motivation through orientations. It should also be noted that instrumental orientation has an impact on integrative orientation. This confirms the finding of Shaaban and Ghaith (2000), whose research results revealed that there was a positive correlation between integrative motivation and instrumental motivation.

To what extent is the impact of attitudes toward learning situation on expectancy and perceived ability respectively?

Students' attitudes toward the learning situation affect their expectations of the courses and their own estimated language ability. This means that a pleasant, meaningful learning environment fosters learners' expectancy and self-confidence in language learning. Learners' perceived ability, at the same time, is influenced by parental encouragement suggesting that the more attention parents pay to their children's study, the more self-confidence the learners will have in their study. Also, the path between perceived ability and expectancy indicates that students' higher

perception of their own language ability will increase their expectations of the language courses.

To what extent do the expectancy and perceived ability have a direct influence on learning motivation?

There are two paths in this model that require comment. The positive coefficient correlation between Expectancy and English Learning Motivation was frequently reported in previous studies. Thus, the authors initially proposed that the expectations towards English courses would promote learners' English learning motivation. In the present model, however, the result showed that the correlation of this path was negative and the value was unexpected low ($y = -.05$). This suggests that the effect of expectancy on learning motivation was limited. Similarly, the coefficient correlation between Perceived Ability and English Learning Motivation also appeared to be low ($y = .09$). This indicates that learners' self-confidence had little contribution to learning motivation. As a result, the answer to the question "To what extent do the expectancy and perceived ability have a direct influence on learning motivation?" was negative.

Discussion

The main purpose of this paper was to examine the extent that parental encouragement and attitudes toward language learning facilitate learners' motivation and the possible role of involved factors in this relationship. The results supported the hypothesis that parental encouragement and attitudes toward language learning played a key incentive for motivation to appear. Parental encouragement was highly related to valence, which was also positively associated with both integrative and instrumental orientation. In contrast, the influence of parental encouragement on perceived ability was slightly low. This study also found that the relationship between attitudes toward language learning and expectancy and perceived ability was positive. However, the influences of expectancy and perceived ability on motivation were not so obvious.

Parental Encouragement and Motivation

The results of parents' high encouragement to their children's English learning

increase their children's beliefs in the value of learning, and through orientations, have an impact on learning motivation. These results were similar to those found previously by Gotteried, Fleming, and Gotteried (1998) and support their concept that parents' encouragement is a key factor influencing children's development of motivation. Thus, parents' roles of motivating their children to learn cannot be ignored. First, parents' encouragement may show what parental beliefs have in their children. As Aunola, et al. (2002, p. 322) say, parents who think their children are capable in learning English may invest more effort in encouraging their children to learn the language. Second, parents' beliefs may influence what kind of feedback they give to their children. That is, parents who have positive opinion about English learning may encourage positively and frequently their children to learn. This may lead children to relate valence to their learning. Third, parental encouragement may be influential because children often internalize the expectation of their parents (Phillips, 1987). One explanation for this may lay on the fact that in most Asian culture, parental beliefs in children has a great amount of influence on their children's language learning. That is, the goal or purpose of learning English is often determined by how their parents perceive the value of learning the language. In short, in order to increase learners' motivation, how parents treat their children's language learning and how they view the benefits of learning the language should be taken into account simultaneously.

Instrumental and Integrative Orientation

Our findings also revealed that instrumental orientation may increase integrative orientation, and conversely, the later may decrease the former. This suggests that by starting with the instrumental orientation in language learning, students may gradually develop integrative attitudes toward the target language. In other words, in order to increase students' English learning motivation, school and teachers should first help students clearly identify their goals in studying English, including short-term and long-term goals. This is because whether a learning environment is meaningful and relevant to a learner is subject to the concreteness of his or her learning goals. Once these learning goals are identified, a meaningful learning environment can be designed and established. This can be done by exposing students to rich foreign culture environments, visiting related workplaces, or giving career planning counseling in

accordance with various learning goals. In addition, similar to the formulation of a roadmap to achieve their goals, the design of curricula, contents of the courses, teaching materials and methods should be accordingly directed to learners' needs. For strengthening and maintaining students' learning goals, schools may want to establish an academic supporting network involving teachers, students, and parents. By doing so, participants can share their ideas, experiences and feelings, and more importantly, encourage each other and learn something from others. Or, an interactive counseling group can be arranged to help students evaluate their English learning orientations and readiness for the language. With this evaluating program, students can take up English when they are ready and when they have identified specific learning goals. These are definitely what we should aim to achieve.

Attitudes toward Language Learning and Motivation

Attitudes toward language learning have been seen as one of foundations for motivation in language learning. This influence is usually related to two elements, expectancy and perceived ability. However, this study showed that such an influence was not as strong as we might expect. In other words, learners' attitudes seemed to have a positive impact on their expectancy and perceived ability, but their motivation was not therefore increased. This is obviously different from Gardner's social-educational model which emphasizes a positive sequence of attitudes toward language learning and motivation. The difference between the results of this study and previous ones may be contextual. As mentioned earlier, English in Taiwan is learned as a foreign language. Learners with positive attitudes may learn the language with some expectation, but once they find their expectance become unrealistic in their daily lives, their motivation will immediately disappear. Another possible reason for this may lie in the fact that English is a compulsory subject in the school and the learning is often related to meaningless drills and tests. In this situation, although students may come to learn English with some hopes, they cannot perceive that their motivation will be enhanced. This raises the inappropriate and inadequate use of current English instructions. Examines or tests should not be the focus of the English learning; rather, learning English should be fun, interesting and something they will be able to use outside the classroom. When students find their expectation is not achievable, they will

soon become unmotivated; when they lose their interests in learning English, it is very difficult to bring them back, and we will feel sorry that we should have done something interesting when we started the lessons.

Conclusion

There are two limitations that should be considered in applying the findings of this study. First, as far as the participants are concerned, the learning goals and the perceived ability to achieve these goals may be still vague to the subjects of this study, because when they answered the questionnaire they were only first semester freshmen. For them, English was mainly a subject of studying a foreign language in the curriculum, and they probably haven't had clear ideas yet about their future engagements associated with English, nor had pressing needs of using English outside of the classroom at that time. Even so, the results gave a real picture of what elements motivated college freshmen to learning English before other factors exerted their influences. This would be very useful for teachers to take into account so as to plan lessons, select materials and assign extracurricular activities. In order to receive more information about students' motivation at different learning stages, it would be very interesting to investigate whether the responses from other students in higher academic years (e.g. year 2, 3, or 4) differ from those in this study. Moreover, our samples only consisted of students from one college. More samples from various schools are needed in future studies. Second, the reliability coefficient of the measure "Attitudes toward Learning English" was not high enough. Thus, the results of structural equation modeling must be interpreted with caution. It has been suggested to include more modifications of the measurement in order to fit the different settings.

In conclusion, the tested model has showed a different picture of English learning motivation from Gardner's social-educational model. As Tremblay and Gardner (1995) suggests, there is no one truly confirmed model that can describe an individual's language learning process. This investigation was carried out in a context (in terms of culture, language, and educational practice) quite different from Gardner's context. Overall, the results revealed that it was valence-orientation influenced by parental encouragement, rather than attitudes toward English learning-expectance and

perceived ability, that contributed to the development of motivation. On one hand, this study revealed that parental interventions fostering valence and orientation may strengthen their children's learning motivation. On the other hand, the results indicated that students' positive learning attitudes are not necessarily related to learning motivation, if the teaching situation is not the way in which learners prefer or expect to do.

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APPENDIX

The Coefficient Matrix of Different Measurers

	AESC	IFL	ALE	ITO	ISO	PE	MI	DLE	AET	AEC	VA	EXP	PA
AESC	1.00												
IFL	0.53	1.00											
ALE	0.43	0.64	1.00										
ITO	0.56	0.52	0.51	1.00									
ISO	0.37	0.38	0.47	0.57	1.00								
PE	0.22	0.33	0.33	0.28	0.31	1.00							
MI	0.32	0.51	0.44	0.34	0.21	0.30	1.00						
DLE	0.52	0.55	0.59	0.54	0.46	0.36	0.48	1.00					
AET	0.17	0.21	0.30	0.17	0.13	0.06	0.24	0.22	1.00				
AEC	0.11	0.13	0.19	0.15	0.13	0.07	0.11	0.16	0.50	1.00			
VA	0.38	0.37	0.42	0.45	0.44	0.25	0.29	0.50	0.31	0.29	1.00		
EXP	0.30	0.34	0.31	0.25	0.17	0.17	0.39	0.31	0.21	0.26	0.39	1.00	
PA	0.22	0.36	0.33	0.19	0.12	0.18	0.45	0.31	0.20	0.17	0.29	0.59	1.00

期望價值理論在外語學習動機之 應用—以德明技術學院學生為例

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摘 要

本論文以技術學院學生為對象探討英語學習動機與相關影響因素之關係。以 Gardner 的社會教育模型為基礎，鑒於文化、語言環境、教育政策...等等皆異於 Gardner 的理論背景，作者因此引用期望價值理論以強化英語學習動機之模型。本研究樣本為 451 位技術學院新生，所採用的分析工具為線性結構方程式（linear structural equation analysis）；研究結果顯示作者所提出來的模型成立。本模型將有助於教育決策者及學校方面在規劃語言教育時之重要參考。

關鍵詞：期望價值理論、社會教育模型、線性結構方程式、學習動機、父母的鼓勵、學習態度

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