

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN MOTIVATION AND PRAGMATIC
COMPETENCE: A CASE STUDY OF CHINESE
EFL LEARNERS OF HEBEI UNIVERSITY**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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by

LI RUI

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMTB	Attitude/Motivation Test Battery
CCSARP	Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project
CLT	Communicative language teaching
DCT	Discourse completion task
EFL	English as a foreign language
ESL	English as a second language
FL	Foreign language
ICT	Information and communication technology
IFID	Illocutionary force indicating devices
ILP	Interlanguage pragmatics
L1	First language
L2	Second/foreign language
MDCT	Multiple-choice discourse completion task
MOE	Ministry of Education
MSA	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy
SDT	Self-determination Theory
SL	Second language
SLA	Second/foreign Language Acquisition
TEM-4 Oral Test	Oral Test for English majors-Band 4
TSEM	Teaching Syllabus for English Majors
WDCT	Written discourse completion task

**SATU PENYELIDIKAN KE ATAS HUBUNG-KAIT ANTARA
MOTIVASI DAN KECEKAPAN PRAGMATIK: SATU KAJIAN
KES TENTANG PELAJAR BAHASA INGGERIS SEBAGAI
BAHASA ASING CINA DARI UNIVERSITI HEBEI**

ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan tentang faktor yang mempengaruhi pemerolehan pragmatik bahasa kedua/asing (L2) khususnya dan kecekapan pragmatik L2 umumnya bermula sekitar 1900-an tetapi kesan sesetengah faktor individu terhadap perkembangan kecekapan pragmatik pelajar L2 masih belum banyak dijalankan. Salah satu faktor ini ialah motivasi, yang dianggap menyumbang pada kesedaran tentang ciri bahasa sasaran dan pembelajaran pragmatik L2 (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Schmidt, 1993). Bagi mengkaji sama ada terdapat hubung-kait antara motivasi dan kecekapan pragmatik pelajar dari segi kesedaran dan penghasilan pragmatik, satu kajian telah dijalankan ke atas pelajar bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua (EFL) Cina dari Universiti Hebei. Kerangka konseptual bagi kajian ini berteraskan Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1993) dan Acculturation Model (Schumann, 1978, 1986). Kajian ini mengumpulkan data melalui soal selidik motivasi, tugas melengkapkan wacana pelbagai pilihan (MDCT) dan tugas melengkapkan wacana bertulis (WDCT) daripada 85 orang pelajar ijazah pertama tahun tiga yang bermajoran Bahasa Inggeris di Cina. Selain itu, dua belas responden telah ditemuduga tentang rasional membuat keputusan dalam melengkapkan WDCT dan MDCT dan juga aktiviti

pembelajaran mereka di luar kelas Bahasa Inggeris. Data dianalisis secara kuantitatif dan kualitatif dengan mematuhi rekabentuk penyelidikan kaedah campuran. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan pelajar EFL Cina adalah lemah dalam mengenal pasti dan menghasilkan bahasa yang betul mengikut konteks. Mereka lebih banyak memberikan tumpuan terhadap kuasa sosial daripada darjah kesukaran melakukan lakuan bahasa yang sedia ada dalam sesuatu situasi. Mereka menghadapi masalah untuk mengenal pasti maksud pragmatik dan kuasa yang didukung oleh strategi dan bentuk linguistik yang berbeza dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Data kajian ini juga menunjukkan motivasi mempengaruhi kesedaran dan penghasilan pragmatik pelajar EFL Cina. Antara subskala motivasi yang dikaji, minat intrinsik didapati merupakan penyumbang utama terhadap kecekapan pragmatik. Selain itu, didapati motivasi juga mempunyai kesan tidak langsung terhadap penghasilan pragmatik melalui kecekapan pragmatik dalam pembelajaran pragmatik L2. Sebagai perbandingan dengan pelajar yang kurang bermotivasi, pelajar yang bermotivasi tinggi secara relatifnya lebih memberikan tumpuan terhadap penggunaan Bahasa Inggeris dan budaya L2 dalam aktiviti pembelajaran yang melibatkan kedua-dua jenis pelajar, misalnya semasa menonton filem Inggeris dan semasa bertutur dengan penutur jati Bahasa Inggeris. Kajian ini mencadangkan perlunya menyemai motivasi dalam kalangan pelajar EFL Cina bagi meningkatkan kecekapan pragmatik L2 khususnya dari segi penghargaan mereka atau kesukaan/kegembiraan mereka terhadap bahasa sasaran dan budayanya. Kajian ini juga turut menyumbangkan maklumat tentang pembelajaran pragmatik L2 yang dapat dimanfaatkan oleh

guru-guru EFL dalam merekabentuk dan melaksanakan teknik pengajaran yang meningkatkan kecekapan pragmatik pelajar.

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
MOTIVATION AND PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE: A CASE
STUDY OF CHINESE EFL LEARNERS OF HEBEI UNIVERSITY**

ABSTRACT

Research into factors that can affect second/foreign language (L2) pragmatic acquisition, in particular and L2 pragmatic competence, in general began in the 1900s but the effects of some individual factors on the development of L2 learners' pragmatic competence are still under-researched. One of these factors is motivation which is assumed to contribute to the noticing or awareness of the target language features and the learning of L2 pragmatics (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Schmidt, 1993). In order to examine whether a relationship exists between motivation and pragmatic competence in terms of pragmatic awareness and production, a study was conducted on Chinese English as a foreign language (EFL) learners of Hebei University. The conceptual framework of the study is based on the Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1993) and the Acculturation Model (Schumann, 1978, 1986). The study collected data through a motivation questionnaire, a multiple-choice discourse completion task (MDCT) and a written discourse completion task (WDCT) from 85 third-year English-major undergraduates in China. In addition, twelve participants were interviewed about their decision-making rationale in completing the WDCT and the MDCT as well as their learning activities outside the English classroom. The data were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively following a mixed methods

research design. The results of the study showed that Chinese EFL learners were weak in identifying and producing appropriate language in context. They paid more attention to social power levels than to the degree of imposition inherent in the situations and they had difficulty in identifying the pragmatic meaning and force that different strategies and linguistic forms convey in English. The research data also revealed that motivation influenced Chinese EFL learners' pragmatic awareness and production. Among the motivation subscales examined, intrinsic interest was the primary contributor to their pragmatic competence. Moreover, it was found that in the learning of L2 pragmatics, motivation had an indirect effect on pragmatic production through pragmatic awareness. In comparison with less motivated learners, relatively highly motivated learners were more likely to pay attention to English language use and the L2 culture in learning activities that involved both types of learners, such as watching English movies and talking with native English speakers. The study addresses a need for the cultivation of motivation among Chinese EFL learners in order to enhance their L2 pragmatic competence, especially their appreciation or fondness of the target language and its culture. It also provides an insight into the learning of L2 pragmatics that EFL teachers can draw upon in designing and implementing teaching techniques that promote learners' pragmatic competence.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

In many countries, learning a foreign language (hereafter FL) is mainly focused on the ability to use the target language for communication purposes. In China, English has been learnt as a foreign language (hereafter EFL) for the country to meet the requirements for effective communication in business, trade and cultural interactions with other countries since the end of the 20th century. This is particularly important especially after China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001 and has become one of the dominant global players in world trade.

According to Hymes (1972), one of the indispensable parts of communicative competence is pragmatic competence. As such, it has been highlighted in FL learning as an essential element in effective communication. However, acquiring pragmatic competence is not an easy undertaking, partly owing to the influence of the learning environment. In most cases, FL learning environment is inadequate for pragmatic acquisition because it is unable to provide sufficient target language input and interactive opportunities for the learners to produce the language outside the classroom (Kasper & Rose, 2001).

In recent years, several researchers in the research field of interlanguage pragmatics (hereafter ILP) have shown a keen interest in investigating the factors that may

enhance pragmatic competence in FL learning environment (DuFon, 2003; Niezgodna & Röver, 2001). One of the factors that has been investigated is motivation which is believed to be able to compensate for the deficiencies in learning conditions (Dörnyei, 1998). In ILP, motivation is assumed to influence pragmatic development in two aspects: attention and noticing of pragmatic knowledge and foreign/second language (hereafter L2) learners' pragmatic production (Kasper & Rose, 2002), which, according to Schmidt (1993), are closely related to each other in that conscious noticing or awareness is a necessary condition for the learning result.

A small number of empirical studies have recently reported a few interesting findings relating to whether or not motivation contributes to pragmatic development and if it does, what components of it affect this development (Eslami & Ahn, 2014; Taguchi, 2013; Takahashi, 2005, 2012, 2013). However, these studies have reported complex findings and most of these studies have examined pragmatic awareness and production separately, which fail to demonstrate the actual effect of motivation on L2 learners' pragmatic development. Moreover, the effects of motivation on Chinese EFL learners' pragmatic development are still indistinct as a result of the neglect on their pragmatic production (Chen, 2010; Mou, 2011; Shao, Zhao, & Sun, 2011) .

The present study strives to investigate motivation and pragmatic competence in terms of pragmatic awareness and production among Chinese learners of English in a FL learning setting in China. The following sections briefly introduce the background of the study and Chinese EFL learning context.

1.1 Background of the Study

Pragmatic competence, which is related to the appropriate language use in contexts (Rose, 1999), has become a field of enquiry in L2 teaching and research. Ever since Hymes (1972) proposed that communicative competence includes the ability to use the language in a variety of communicative situations in addition to the knowledge of grammatical rules, pragmatic competence has been recognized as an essential component of communicative competence. Compared to grammatical mistakes, pragmatic errors may cause more serious problems in communication, because they are typically interpreted by native speakers as arrogance, impatience and rudeness, and thus they are less likely to be forgiven by native speakers (Nelson, Carson, Batal, & Bakary, 2002). In recent years, there has been an upsurge of studies on L2 learners' pragmatic competence in ILP.

Research on ILP examine how non-native speakers understand and carry out linguistic action in a target language, and how they acquire L2 pragmatic knowledge (Kasper, 1992, p. 203). They primarily address two components of pragmatic competence: pragmalinguistic competence and sociopragmatic competence. Pragmalinguistic competence is concerned with the available linguistic resources to perform communicative functions, while sociopragmatic competence deals with the appropriate use of those resources based on sociolinguistic conventions (Kasper, 1997; Leech, 1983). In order to be pragmatically competent, L2 learners need to acquire both the target linguistic forms and the social and cultural knowledge to

apply those forms appropriately in various contexts.

In view of the current focus in ILP, studies in this area mainly follow two strands: L2 learners' pragmatic competence and how it is acquired, as suggested by the definition of ILP. The first strand of ILP investigates different aspects that L2 learners display to be pragmatically competent, including how L2 learners understand and produce the target language or the receptive and productive abilities of language use. To this date, previous studies have explored learners' ability to perceive and produce speech acts (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Gass & Houck, 1999), ability to convey and interpret non-literal meanings (Bouton, 1988), ability to perform politeness or discourse functions (Omar, 1992, 1993; Yeung, 1997), and ability to use cultural knowledge (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Wierzbicka, 1994).

The second strand explores the acquisition issues, mainly the developmental patterns of L2 pragmatic competence and the factors that contribute to the development. A number of studies have been conducted on the second issue (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; Matsumura, 2003; Xu, 2009). Researchers propose that a number of factors may explain L2 learners' deviation from native speaker language, including L2 input, instruction, L2 proficiency, first language, length of residence in the L2 community, and individual factors, such as age, gender, motivation, social and psychological distance, social identity, and so on (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). Individual factors, especially motivation, have received much attention in recent years in response to the

conflicting findings with regard to the effects of learning environments.

The second language (hereafter SL) learning environments are thought to be more conducive for L2 pragmatic acquisition, where the target language being taught and learnt dominates the social interactions, such as English in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. The reason is essentially because that appropriate language use is sensitive to social and cultural factors, and the SL learning environment can meet L2 learners' need for diverse and frequent language input for pragmatic development (Kasper & Rose, 2001). In contrast, the FL environments, in which the target language is learnt, but not generally used in social interactions such as English in China and Korea, are inadequate in offering opportunities for language input.

However, the findings of the empirical studies are inconsistent in as far as the effect of learning environments are concerned. A number of researchers have found that the SL learning environment is superior to the FL environment in pragmatic acquisition (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Churchill, 2001; Schauer, 2006), while others have reported that it does not necessarily outperform the FL learning setting, and FL learners' pragmatic competence can also be well- developed (Niezgoda & Röver, 2001; Xu, 2009).

When analysing their conflicting findings, researchers showed significant concern about the effect of motivation (Niezgoda & Röver, 2001; Xu, 2009). For example, Niezgoda and Röver (2001) proposed that their Czech students enrolled in a

competitive university FL teacher preparation program were highly motivated to achieve native-like knowledge of the pragmatics of English. Xu (2009) found that the Chinese EFL learners were highly motivated to learn the L2, and they made great efforts to develop L2 proficiency, which could explain the development of their L2 pragmatic competence.

It has been widely accepted that motivation plays an important role in language learning. It determines learner's "direction of attentional effort, the proportion of total attentional effort directed to the task (intensity), and the extent to which attentional effort toward the task is maintained over time (persistence)" (Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989, p. 661). Apart from the fact that highly motivated learners are attentive to the target language features, they are keen to understand and make immense efforts to use them and are able to maintain the efforts. Thus, it can be deduced that they tend to achieve better performance in language learning than those less motivated.

As mentioned earlier, in ILP, the effect of motivation on L2 pragmatic competence has become a field of enquiry in recent years. More empirical studies have been conducted in FL learning environments than those in the SL learning contexts (Chiravate, 2012; Tagashira, Yamato, & Isoda, 2011; Taguchi, 2013; Takahashi, 2005, 2012). The reason is that motivation not only triggers L2 learning and maintains efforts in the learning process, but it also compensates for the deficiencies in learning conditions (Dörnyei, 2005). It has been argued that FL learners are not immersed in

the target language, and the target language is seen as a tool to acquire information rather than as a means of survival. Therefore, FL learners' interest in and attitude towards the language as well as their desire to learn the language play a crucial role in whether they will take advantage of the limited language input and how much they will acquire.

The emphasis on motivation and pragmatic competence in the FL learning environment also indicates the depth of interest especially pertaining to how L2 learners acquire this ability in the FL learning environment. Kasper and Rose (2001) argued that in many countries, "curricula and materials developed in recent years include strong pragmatic components or even adopt a pragmatic approach as their organizing principle" (p. 3). In relation to the current research, China is, for this reason, a case in point.

The following section introduces the EFL learning context in China, especially the integration of pragmatic components in formal English education. The section will also present the emerging issues pertaining to the English language learning environment at the tertiary level.

1.2 EFL Learning Context in China

With a geographical expanse of about 9.6 million km², the People's Republic of China is vast in territory. Taking into consideration the sizeable magnitude of the country, it is expected that even within the country itself English language learning

contexts are different. For example, English is one of the official languages in Hong Kong, while in most other parts of China, English is instead learnt as a foreign language. Therefore, it is imperative to specify the context in which the study is carried out.

1.2.1 Chinese Speakers in China

The People's Republic of China is administratively divided into 23 provinces, five autonomous regions, four municipalities, and two special administrative regions (Hong Kong and Macau). All the administrative units except the two special administrative regions are referred to as Mainland China. There are a number of differences between Mainland China and the two special administrative regions, particularly in terms of education system and official language. For example, Mainland China uses Mandarin Chinese as the official spoken language, while Cantonese, a dialect of the Chinese language, is officially used in Hong Kong and Macau.

In spite of the differences, Chinese speakers in Mainland China and the two special administrative regions share various similarities. For example, Standard Chinese is used as the formal written language for all Chinese speakers. In addition, the traditional Chinese culture, which all Chinese speakers adhere to, is influenced by the religions in China, such as Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. In this study, the term China is specific to Mainland China, and Chinese speakers refer to all people who can use Mandarin Chinese or other Chinese dialects inside or outside

China.

1.2.2 Confucianism-influenced Chinese Culture

It is believed that Chinese culture is most influenced by Confucianism, a philosophical system which developed from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius. The essential concept of Confucianism is harmony which “presupposes the coexistence of different things and implies a certain favorable relationship among them” (Wei & Li, 2013). Confucianism suggests that social harmony can be achieved if every individual knows his/her place in the society and plays his/her role well.

In Chinese society, the social roles that individuals play are defined by a system of human relationships which respects differences in social status. Those of a relatively low social status show reverence to those of a high status and a great amount of reverence is given for authority and age. For example, the authority of parents and teachers is rooted in wisdom and they are expected to be highly respected by their children and students. Addressing parents and teachers by their given names is frowned upon.

In addition to the hierarchically structured relationships, the Chinese culture under the influence of Confucianism is group-oriented and attaches great importance to collectivism. Individuals are required to be attentive to social norms and conform to the collective values. In order for the maintenance of harmony, individuals are

expected to tailor their own needs and desires for the good of a collective entity either family, group, society, or the state.

1.2.3 Formal English Education in China

Ever since the open-door policy introduced by the Chinese government in 1970, English has become the most important foreign language in China for business, trade and cultural exchanges with other countries. A good command of English is regarded as an indispensable attribute to enable individuals to secure a good career or further their study. Most students in China are learning English as a foreign language, because it has been established as a compulsory subject in formal English education.

Formal English education in China mainly involves primary and secondary school students as well as those at the tertiary level. Primary school students are required to learn English as a subject from grade 3 (age 8) (Ministry of Education, hereafter MOE, 2001b). They are provided with 4 years of opportunities to “experience the language and facilitate their own discovery of meaning as a first-hand experience” (Wang, 2002, p. 101). Secondary English education consists of three years of English learning in the junior secondary school and another three years in the senior high school. English is not only the compulsory course in secondary education, but also a mandatory subject in the high-stake Senior High School Entrance Examination (*Zhongkao*) and the College Entrance Examination (*Gaokao*). The Senior High School Entrance Examination (*Zhongkao*) determines whether junior secondary

school graduates can be admitted to common senior high schools, which prepare them for higher education, or vocational and technical high schools for vocational training. The College Entrance Examination (*Gaokao*), on the other hand, is a prerequisite for senior high school graduates' entrance to universities and colleges.

Tertiary level English education includes two programmes, one of which is for English majors, and the other is for undergraduates majoring in other subjects, known as non-English majors. English education for English majors is composed of the fundamental stage (the first two years of tertiary level study) and the advanced stage (the 3rd and 4th year of tertiary level study), while the non-English majors are required to accomplish at least one of the three levels of requirements, i.e. basic requirements, intermediate requirements, and higher requirements (MOE, 2000, 2007).

1.2.4 Pragmatic Components in Chinese Formal EFL Education

Formal English education in China used to focus on grammatical accuracy until the last few years of the 20th century. In 1985, a large scale national survey was conducted on secondary school English teaching by the Ministry of Education of China. The survey found that most secondary school graduates were unable to use very simple English language to express themselves, although they had spent almost 900 hours in learning English (Li, Zhang, & Liu, 1988). In view of this finding, researchers and educators in English education began to re-evaluate Chinese EFL learners' lack of ability to utilise English.

At present several changes have been made to improve the situation. One of these changes includes establishing competence to use English for communication as the general learning objective and integrating pragmatic components into the objectives of the national syllabuses and curricula (MOE, 2001a, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2011). Another change is that the learning materials for primary, secondary and tertiary level students are developed for the enhancement of language use in contexts.

It is stated in the national syllabuses and curricula that in order to enhance the language ability of Chinese students, the pragmatic aspect of language learning should be acquired at different levels within the English education. Primary school students are required to learn English in order to develop their comprehensive language ability to use English, which is specified as developing interest and positive attitude towards English learning, promoting thinking skills and cross-cultural awareness, and developing preliminary ability for daily exchanges and for future study (MOE, 2001a, 2011).

For junior secondary school students, the practical use of English language is taken as the general learning objective, with more specified requirements for acquiring reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. For example, they are supposed to acquire the speaking skills, such as retelling the text, telling short stories, participating in simple simulations, using specific expressions to produce speech acts, and communicating in English on familiar topics. Thirty language functions are specifically classified in the Daily Expressions in Communication list, such as

greetings, introductions, apologies and responses, invitations and responses, and requests (MOE, 2001a, 2011).

It is the national syllabus for senior high schools that explicitly proposes the requirement for appropriate language use in contexts. In the Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools (Trial) (MOE, 2003), it is stated that students are expected to further develop the skills that they acquired when they were junior secondary school students (MOE, 2001). The Curriculum (MOE, 2003) states that senior high school graduates should be able to understand and express communicative functions in contexts appropriately. Among the skills are the appropriate use of greetings, farewells, gratitude, introductions and so on, effective use of proper language in daily communication, and effective expression of emotions, intentions and attitudes using the learnt language functions.

In so far as the tertiary level students are concerned, both English majors and non-English majors are required to develop the ability to use English appropriately (MOE, 2000, 2004, 2007). Non-English majors are required to learn English in order to “meet the requirements for economic development and international communication”, while the teaching target for English majors is specified as the cultivation of interdisciplinary English talents in the areas such as foreign affairs, education, economy and trade, and culture.

The Teaching Syllabus for English Majors (hereafter TSEM) (MOE, 2000) emphasises that students majoring in English must be competent enough to be able to

communicate effectively with native speakers of English. TSEM (MOE, 2000) states that English majors, after the completion of their fundamental stage, should be able to understand speakers' attitudes, emotions and real intentions, communicate with native speakers of English in general social occasions, expressing ideas clearly with natural pronunciation and intonation and appropriate language without serious grammatical errors. The requirements for their speaking competence are further specified as clearly expressing ideas, applying communicative strategies, grasping different communicative functions, and using appropriate language with different people in different contexts in order to achieve communicative functions.

In tandem with such objectives, the learning materials have been and continue to be developed or revised to meet the requirements of the learning objectives. For example, many textbooks for the primary and secondary level students are written by researchers and practitioners from China and foreign countries (e.g. the United States of America and Canada), such as "Primary English" by the People's Education Press for the primary school, "Go for it!" for the junior secondary school and "Oxford English" for the senior high school. The newly developed textbooks are topic-centred and task-based, and emphasise communicative use of English language in social contexts (Wang, 2007).

Learning materials for tertiary level students also include the pragmatic aspect of language learning. For example, speech acts are included in the "New Horizon College English" for non-English majors and "New English Course" for English

majors. Speech acts are introduced in three ways: explicitly demonstrating the useful expressions and strategies to make speech acts, offering dialogues to show how speech acts are realized in contexts, and providing situations for students to practice the speech acts through role plays (Hu, 2007).

It is evident from the review of literature that pragmatic components have been integrated into the English education system in China. However, the effectiveness of learning appropriate language may vary according to different levels. For example, secondary school students are restricted by the exam-driven education system in China. As such they have to deal with the competitive high-stake Senior High School Entrance Examination followed by the College Entrance Examination. Their level of proficiency in English in the two examinations is currently being assessed using writing-based exam papers. Accordingly, the focus on communicative language use in English teaching has to give way, to a large extent, to successfully answering questions in English written exams. In other words, rather than developing the ability to use English language for communication, students show greater concern about their performance in the written exams.

On the contrary, the skill of being able to use English in contexts enjoys focus in the tertiary level English education. One obvious advantage is that tertiary level teaching, without much pressure from the high-stake examinations, has the privilege to create an environment in which language is learnt for communication purposes. Furthermore, tertiary level students are more interested in the practical use of

language in contexts, because they are dissatisfied with the traditional teaching due to the inadequate opportunities to develop their communicative competence (Gan, Humphreys, & Hamp-Lyons, 2004).

In recent years, tertiary level English education has been working to better conditions for communicative language use. Yet it still has to deal with two factors which researchers have identified as major setbacks to FL learners' chances to develop L2 pragmatic competence. One of them is teacher-fronted classroom pattern which prevents students from free and collaborative interaction, and the other is the lack of accessibility to authentic and real language use (Fernández-Guerra, Usó-Juan, & Martínez-Flor, 2003).

1.2.5 English Learning Environment at Tertiary Level

China has been working on the creation of an English learning environment to promote EFL students' ability to use English. For example, English native speakers are invited to participate in the teaching process as it provides students with models to imitate and increased opportunities to communicate both in and outside class. Authentic English materials are introduced in large quantity, such as movies, TV programmes, novels, magazines, newspapers and online resources, in order to provide Chinese EFL learners with diversity of English input.

Several changes have taken place in formal English education at the tertiary level. The traditional teaching pattern has been significantly replaced by communicative

language teaching (CLT); the utilisation of information and communication technology (ICT) have increased students' contact with authentic English and students are now positioned at the centre of the teaching and learning process.

It should be noted that CLT has been introduced into English education in China since the 1970s in response to the demand for an approach to solve the problem of the traditional grammar-centred method. Over the years, its use in English classrooms has gained increased popularity. Although there is doubt as to the direct effect of CLT on promoting L2 pragmatic competence (Porter, 1986 as cited in Kasper & Schmidt, 1996), CLT is expected to connect classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom through role plays, information gap activities, problem-solving tasks and discussion. CLT in China has been widely applied in tertiary level English teaching, and it is believed to promote more effective language learning practices in meaningful communicative contexts and cultivate language learners' ability to use English through "real life" communication (Brown, 1994, p. 77) .

The ICT based reform at the tertiary level in 2004 has brought about great changes in English learning process. This reform was initiated by the Chinese MOE in answer to the enrolment expansion in higher education and the deaf-and-dumb English criticism of tertiary level English language teaching (Cai, 2007). Its target was the non-English majors, but English majors were also involved.

As mentioned earlier, it can be observed that drastic changes have taken place in the learning conditions and the way in which English is learnt. A large number of multimedia classrooms, networked classrooms, and online courses either on a LAN network or via the internet have been built since 2004. Moreover, learning materials, which emphasise authentic and real language use, are presented in different forms, such as the hardcopy textbooks, CD-ROMs and/or online courses. These materials cover the content of students' textbook, teacher's book and other auxiliary learning materials and activities in audio or visual form. Apart from that, a computer and classroom based teaching model is recommended to make the most of online learning and face-to-face classroom learning. This model requires that students receive face-to-face instruction after they have finished a certain amount of time in autonomous online learning.

These changes greatly influence how English is learnt at the tertiary level. The utilisation of ICT increases the width and breadth of English language and culture that students can get access to and enhances the simulated interactive opportunities in English. Students have access, outside class, to a great amount of learning materials that teachers monopolised in the past, and in the classroom they participate in communicative activities to practice what they have learnt. Accordingly, students become the centre of the English learning process, and they are required to take more responsibility for their own learning.

The ICT-based reform creates a relaxed communicative environment for tertiary level students to develop their language ability. However, several problems have been identified in the students' learning process, such as getting lost in the rich information input, lacking student-initiated learning practices, insufficiently investing time and efforts and low learning efficiency (Du, 2011; Jia, 2006; Li & Li, 2012). These problems illustrate that suitable curricula and teaching per se are not adequate to ensure learning achievement (Dörnyei, 1998).

Instead, students' determination to engage in the learning activities and the attention and effort that they put in the learning process remain crucial to the learning success. As a result, students' motivation to learn English needs to be addressed when we explore whether and how they develop the ability to use English, as motivation functions as a key factor to L2 achievement. Motivation is believed to initiate learning activities required to fulfil particular goals, leading to increased effort and persistence in activities and enhanced performance (Ormrod, 2003).

Overall, it can be argued that Chinese EFL students, especially those at the tertiary level, are learning English in an environment which integrates pragmatic components into the curricula and learning materials, supplies many opportunities for diverse L2 input, and requires high level of motivation to ensure enough attention and energy in the learning process. This current study addresses motivation and Chinese EFL learners' pragmatic competence at the tertiary level.

1.3 Problem Statement

Motivation has long been assumed to account for the individual differences in L2 pragmatic development (Cook, 2001; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Takahashi, 2001). However, the pursuit of empirical support for this assumption started to become evident only in recent years, not only in China, but also in other parts of the world (Eslami & Ahn, 2014; Shao et al., 2011; Takahashi, 2010, 2012, 2013). This phenomenon is in accordance with the fact that previous studies in ILP focus on non-native speakers' pragmatic language use rather than development (Kasper & Rose, 2002), and many issues relating to acquisition have yet to be examined.

In ILP, existing studies on motivation have examined L2 learners' recognition and assessment of pragmatic errors (Mou, 2011; Tagashira et al., 2011), identification of the appropriate utterances (Chen, 2010; Shao et al., 2011), pragmalinguistic awareness (Takahashi, 2005, 2010, 2012), and speech act production (Ahn, 2007; Eslami & Ahn, 2014; Taguchi, 2013). However, to date it is not very clear as to how motivation influences the development of L2 pragmatic competence.

One of the reasons is that these studies are small in number and have reported complex findings as to whether and to what extent motivation plays a role, and what components of motivation contribute to the learning of L2 pragmatics. For example, among the studies on speech act production, a positive correlation between integrative orientation and L2 learners' pragmatic competence in terms of speech act production has been reported in some studies (Ahn, 2007; Taguchi, 2013), but not in

the other (Eslami & Ahn, 2014). Therefore, the existing literature is inconclusive to account for the effect of motivation on pragmatic competence.

Moreover, most of the empirical studies on motivation have been conducted with the examination of either pragmatic awareness (Chen, 2010; Mou, 2011; Shao et al., 2011; Tagashira et al., 2011; Takahashi, 2005, 2012) or pragmatic production (Ahn, 2007; Eslami & Ahn, 2014; Taguchi, 2013). Takahashi's (2013) study on Japanese EFL learners may be the only one focusing on motivation with the combination of both awareness and production. Given the proposal by Schmidt (1993, 1995, 2001) that conscious noticing or awareness of the target language form in the input is the necessary condition to convert the input into intake, separate examination of the effects of motivation on pragmatic awareness and production respectively fail to demonstrate the actual effect of motivation on L2 learners' pragmatic development. Therefore, motivation, so far, is still under researched with regard to its effects on the developmental process of L2 pragmatic competence.

In addition, a major concern of the existing literature focuses on Japanese EFL learners, in particular their pragmatic awareness and/or production (Tagashira et al., 2011; Taguchi, 2013; Takahashi, 2005, 2012, 2013). This is deepened by the fact that other FL learning contexts is relatively weak. Given the fact that motivation is multifaceted and context-sensitive (Dörnyei, 1994; Gardner, 1985), there is a need to enhance research on other L2 learning groups, such as Chinese EFL learners.

In China, early studies on motivation and pragmatic competence started in 2010. They focus on Chinese EFL learners' identification of the most appropriate utterances or the pragmatic errors, and reported that motivation is an influential factor to L2 pragmatic learning (Chen, 2010; Shao et al., 2011; Mou, 2011). However, those studies are still inadequate to reveal how Chinese EFL learners' motivation to learn the L2 contributes to their learning of L2 pragmatics. One of the problems is that they were inconsistent as to the effect of motivation components, especially the influence of instrumental motivation (Chen, 2010; Shao et al., 2011; Mou, 2011). Another problem is that those studies focused on Chinese EFL learners' knowledge of appropriate language rather than on how they use the knowledge in production. The exclusion of pragmatic production may be related to the fact that productive data test is "difficult to score because it requires recruiting, training, scheduling and paying raters" (Brown, 2001, p. 320) .

The neglect on productive aspect of appropriate language use is also a problem in the research on Chinese EFL learners' level of pragmatic competence. The majority of Chinese researchers working in this field utilise multiple-choice questionnaire as the main data elicitation method, which may not objectively show Chinese learners' ability to use English, because they may make a guess in doing this type of test (Wu & Chen, 2006) . Some Chinese researchers supplement the multiple-choice questionnaire with a judgment task, but no barometer of the respondents' judgment is provided (Hong, 1991; Meng & Liu, 2000). To date, there is still a lack of in-depth insight into the current level of Chinese EFL learners' pragmatic competence.

Therefore, it is too early to conclude whether and how motivation influences pragmatic competence in Chinese EFL context due to the small number of studies on motivation and the limitation as regards to the lack of insightful exploration of Chinese EFL learners' pragmatic competence. In view of the demand for "the ability to use English for communication" by the curricula and syllabuses for different levels of English education in China (MOE, 2000; 2001a; 2004; 2007), there is an urgent need for a more comprehensive examination of Chinese EFL learners' pragmatic competence, especially in addressing the effect of motivation.

1.4 Research Objectives and Research Questions

The present study investigates motivation and Chinese EFL learners' pragmatic competence in terms of pragmatic awareness and production in a FL learning context in China. This study is conducted with the following objectives:

- 1) To investigate the current level of Chinese EFL learners' pragmatic competence in terms of their pragmatic awareness and production.
- 2) To explore the relationship between motivation and pragmatic awareness of Chinese EFL learners in order to determine whether and in what aspects they are related.
- 3) To examine the relationship between motivation and pragmatic production of Chinese EFL learners in order to determine whether and in what aspects they are related.

4) To investigate the effect of motivation on pragmatic awareness and production in order to uncover whether and how L2 pragmatic acquisition is influenced by motivation.

The following research questions are proposed:

- 1) What is the current level of Chinese EFL learners' pragmatic competence in terms of pragmatic awareness and production?
- 2) What is the relationship, if any, between Chinese EFL learners' motivation and their pragmatic awareness?
- 3) What is the relationship, if any, between Chinese EFL learners' motivation and their pragmatic production?
- 4) To what extent, if any, does motivation contribute to Chinese EFL learners' pragmatic awareness and production?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Focusing on the FL learning context, the present study intends to shed light on the effects of motivation on FL learners' pragmatic competence, and to contribute to the FL pedagogy. First of all, this study is targeted at Chinese learners of English in a FL learning setting of China. A majority of previous studies on motivation and pragmatic competence have been concerned with Japanese EFL learners, while there are very limited studies on Chinese EFL learners. Considering the multifaceted and