

Achievement goal orientation, classroom support, and language learning motivation among Chinese University EFL students: Foundations for constructing an integrated language learning framework

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Abstract

This study examines the relationships among achievement goal orientation, classroom support, and EFL learning motivation in Chinese universities. Surveying 320 non-English major students, it reveals classroom support's direct impact on motivation, with motivation serving as a mediator between achievement goals and support. Results show a focus on performance and mastery goals, and students rely more on peer support. Integrative motivation surpasses instrumental. These findings deepen understanding of EFL learning dynamics, informing strategies for enhancing motivation and support in Chinese university settings.

Keywords: achievement goal orientation, classroom support, language learning motivation, EFL, integrated language learning framework

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1. Introduction

Globally, English as a second language education faces multifaceted challenges, with China increasingly emphasizing English proficiency for academic and professional success. Despite considerable investments in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, Chinese university students encounter various challenges, including sub-optimal classroom environments, limited access to resources, and diverse motivational profiles. These challenges underscore the need for comprehensive research to understand the intricate interplay among achievement goal orientation, classroom support, and language learning motivation in this context. Achievement goal orientation refers to individuals' underlying goals when engaging in academic tasks or pursuits. In language learning, goals may vary from mastering the language for personal development to aiming for performance-related objectives such as grades or test scores. Elliot et al. proposed a theoretical framework categorizing achievement goal orientation based on self-reference, social reference, and task reference, validated in subsequent studies in 2011. Xu (2018) highlighted correlations between different goal orientations, emphasizing their impact on learning outcomes.

Achievement goal orientation pertains to an individual's convictions, preferences, and approach concerning the attainment of academic success. In the realm of EFL learning, students may embrace various goal orientations, such as mastery-oriented or performance-oriented goals. Language learning motivation, driven by intrinsic or extrinsic factors, plays a pivotal role in students' engagement. Motivation stems from various sources, including interest in the language or external rewards. Fan found gender differences in social support perception, with female students leveraging social resources more effectively in 2010. The study of learning motivation has long been a standard subject in psychology and education research. The nation's overall strength in education and the caliber of university instruction are significantly impacted by the degree of learning motivation among college students. This study shed light on the complex relationships among achievement goal orientation, classroom support, and language learning motivation, particularly in the Chinese university EFL context. Understanding these dynamics is vital for addressing challenges and enhancing learning experiences. By identifying factors influencing student motivation and support, educators can design effective teaching strategies and foster a conducive learning environment. This research contributes to the ongoing efforts to improve EFL education in China and globally, ultimately benefiting students' academic and professional success in an increasingly interconnected world.

Objectives of the study - In general, this study sought to examine the relationship among achievement goal orientation, classroom support, and language learning motivation among Chinese University EFL Students and their effect on students' English Learning to provide a strategy for enhancing pupils' English language proficiency. More specifically, it determined the respondents' achievement goal orientation in terms of performance-approach goals, mastery-approach goals, performance-avoid goals, and mastery-avoid goals; identified the respondents' classroom support according to teachers' academic support, teachers' personal support, peer academic support, and peer personal support; assessed the respondents' learning motivation in terms of instrumental motivation and integrative motivation; tested the relationship of achievement goal orientation, classroom support, and learning motivation in terms of age, sex, and major; and proposed a language learning program based on the study's conclusions.

2. Methods

Research Design - This study used a descriptive method of research that involves interpretation of findings. The researcher sought to gather information from the respondents through providing survey questionnaires. It was used to describe achievement goal orientation, classroom support, and language learning motivation among

Chinese EFL students.

Participants of the Study - The participants of the study were 320 non-English majors who enrolled in College English courses. The Raosoft Sample Size Calculator was utilized to ascertain the sample size required. (The margin of error is 5%, and the confidence level is 95%), The subjects consist of 161 males (59.7%) and 159 females (40.2%). The age of the participants ranged from 19 to 22 years old.

Data Gathering Instrument - The main instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. The achievement goal orientation questionnaire used in this study is the four-point achievement target orientation scale compiled by Liu et.al in 2003, and the expression of some items is slightly adjusted according to the actual situation of English learning. The design of the classroom support questionnaire is the result of the modification of the classroom life measure (Liao, 2013). The questionnaire of learning motivation was revised according to the one designed by Tomoharu (2018). The three questionnaires were validated by experts by one of the panelists. Then, it was pilot-tested among 320 college students and modified for the current study. The modified questionnaire had the result of Cronbach $r = .880$. The questionnaire includes three parts: Achievement Goal Orientation Questionnaire, Classroom Support Questionnaire, and Language Learning Motivation Questionnaire. It has about 71 items. These were in the form of a 4-point Likert scale: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree.

Procedure - At the beginning of the research, the author extensively read a large amount of literature and had in-depth discussions with consultants and mentors to construct the questionnaires. Before the comprehensive investigation began, the author conducted a preliminary investigation. The results show that the overall reliability of the questionnaire is good and can be used for data collection. Finally, through the "Questionnaire Star" platform, the author sent the survey questionnaire to individuals from multiple professional fields.

Data Analysis - After the data were collected, each questionnaire was examined individually, and incomplete questionnaires were discarded. A statistician from Lyceum University of the Philippines' research center utilized SPSS 20.0 for data analysis. The researcher used composite mean and systematic analysis to evaluate respondents' responses. Differences in responses based on demographic profiles were examined, along with exploring correlations among variables. Findings from the analysis led to the formulation of a development plan aimed at enhancing students' listening learning styles, learning self-efficacy, and self-regulated skills in the context of online learning.

Ethical Consideration - Ethics is a crucial component of research, since each respondent reads and comprehends the consent form and agrees to the study's terms before participating. The participants' responses and personal information were taken very seriously and kept private. In order to ensure that the intended respondents were ready to respond to the questions posed by the research, the researcher requested permission from the institution via letter and other correspondence. Additionally, it protected the respondents' privacy and anonymity by not requesting their identities while they completed the questionnaires. The investigator made certain that the participants voluntarily provided their willful answers to the questions. Ultimately, the research center of Lyceum University of the Philippines provided the ethical authorization.

3. Results and discussion

Table 1

Summary Table on Achievement Goal Orientation

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Performance-approach goals	3.25	Agree	1.5
Mastery-approach goals	3.25	Agree	1.5
Performance-avoid goals	3.19	Agree	3
Mastery-avoid goals	3.21	Agree	2
Composite Mean	3.23	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 1 shows the summary table on achievement goal orientation with the composite mean of 3.23. Among

these dimensions, respondents strongly prefer both performance and mastery orientation, indicating a positive mindset in achieving success and acquiring new knowledge. Although they score higher in performance-avoidance and mastery avoidance goals, their overall average still reflects a tendency toward agreement. This suggests that they are also concerned about avoiding failure and steering clear of unfamiliar territories, but their overall positive orientation towards goals is insignificant. Researcher (Zhu, 2018) has shown that individuals exhibit different focuses and behavioral patterns under different target states. In approaching the target, individuals mainly focus on task mastery, learning, and understanding and evaluate performance through self-progress and deep understanding. Educators should focus on students' goal orientation in classroom teaching, balance performance, and mastery orientation, and help students cope with concerns about performance-avoidance goals. At the same time, they should encourage students to establish positive learning attitudes, cultivate self-learning abilities, and provide personalized support and guidance to promote their comprehensive development and learning achievements.

Table 2*Summary Table on Classroom support for students English learning*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Teachers' academic support	3.33	Agree	2.5
Teacher's emotional support	3.33	Agree	2.5
The academic support from the classmates	3.35	Agree	1.5
The emotional support from the classmates	3.35	Agree	1.5
Composite Mean	3.34	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 2 summarizes the classroom support for university students English learning in terms of four aspects: teachers' academic support, teachers' emotional support, the academic support from the classmates, and the emotional support from the classmates. The composite mean of 3.34 suggests that the respondents agree with the above indicators. Li (2022) found that peer support can significantly alleviate depression among college students, reduce academic pressure, and promote faster adaptation to academic pursuits. In addition, social support, including peer support, has been shown to reduce suicidal behavior caused by negative emotions such as depression, stress, and anxiety. He and Sun (2019) further pointed out that peer support has a regulatory effect on the negative emotions perceived by college students, which can reduce the impact of negative emotions on individuals and prevent them from going to extremes. Hou (2021) also reached a similar conclusion through investigation and research: peer support can help college students quickly recover from low emotions, prevent individuals from falling into negative states for a long time, and promote positive emotional regulation.

These studies indicate that peer support is vital to college students' mental health and emotional regulation. College students can receive peer support and assistance when facing academic pressure, negative emotions, and other issues to better cope with and solve problems. Therefore, educators and society should attach importance to peer support, provide more support and assistance to college students, and promote healthy growth and development.

Table 3*Summary Table on Language Learning Motivation*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Instrumental Motivation	3.30	Agree	2
Integrative Motivation	3.31	Agree	1
Composite Mean	3.31	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 3 summarizes the students' language learning motivation in terms of instrumental and integrative motivation. The composite mean of the student's language learning motivation is 3.31, which suggests that the Chinese non-English primary students have a medium level of learning motivation. This indicates that learners are generally motivated by practical reasons and by a desire for integration into the target language community. Zhang et al. (2020) explored the relationship between motivation and second language proficiency, examining the

mediating role of second language pleasure. Research has found a close correlation between a learner's level of motivation and mastery of a second language, with the pleasure of a second language mediating this correlation. Specifically, when learners feel pleasure in learning a second language, they are more likely to maintain a positive learning motivation, thereby improving their second language learning performance and level. This study emphasizes the importance of emotional factors in language learning, particularly the positive role of pleasure in enhancing learner motivation and improving learning outcomes. Rahardjo and Supratmi (2020) found in their study that a sense of identification and interest in the target language socio-cultural context is closely related to the language learning motivation of learners, which makes them more inclined to engage in learning and more willing to communicate and interact with native speakers. This motivation can encourage learners to participate more actively in the learning process.

Table 4

Relationship Between Achievement Goal Orientation and Classroom support for university students English learning

	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Performance-approach goals			
Teachers' academic support	.734**	0.000	Highly Significant
Teacher's emotional support	.690**	0.000	Highly Significant
The academic support from the classmates	.674**	0.000	Highly Significant
The emotional support from the classmates	.634**	0.000	Highly Significant
Master-approach goals			
Teachers' academic support	.809**	0.000	Highly Significant
Teacher's emotional support	.775**	0.000	Highly Significant
The academic support from the classmates	.766**	0.000	Highly Significant
The emotional support from the classmates	.717**	0.000	Highly Significant
Performance-avoid goals			
Teachers' academic support	.711**	0.000	Highly Significant
Teacher's emotional support	.663**	0.000	Highly Significant
The academic support from the classmates	.661**	0.000	Highly Significant
The emotional support from the classmates	.622**	0.000	Highly Significant
Mastery-avoid goals			
Teachers' academic support	.752**	0.000	Highly Significant
Teacher's emotional support	.710**	0.000	Highly Significant
The academic support from the classmates	.701**	0.000	Highly Significant
The emotional support from the classmates	.677**	0.000	Highly Significant

Table 4 displays the relationship between Achievement Goal Orientation and Classroom support for university students' English learning. The computed r-values indicated a solid direct correlation; the resulting p-values were less than the alpha level. This means that a significant relationship exists and implies that the better the Achievement Goal Orientation, the better the Classroom support for university students' English learning. The table shows a significant correlation between academic and emotional support from teachers and classmates and the three types of goals (performance goals, mastery goals, and avoidance goals). When students receive more academic or emotional support from teachers or classmates, they are more likely to pursue better performance and mastery goals, avoid failing goals, or perform worse than others. This indicates that classroom support (teacher support and peer support) can influence students' language learning motivation and goal setting.

Wu (2018) explored the correlation between goal orientation and classroom support for non-English major students and found that except for a significant negative correlation between performance-avoidance goal orientation and classroom support, all other types of goal orientation were positively correlated with classroom support. Students who approach goal orientation focus on acquiring knowledge and improving their abilities. These targeted students are more likely to become excellent students, as they are more likely to receive help and support from others, feel this support more, and have the ability to seek and utilize the support of others. Therefore, they scored higher in all dimensions of classroom support. In contrast, students who avoid goal-oriented grades are more concerned about proving themselves by obtaining grades. They are terrified of failure and enjoy comparing and competing with others. Over time, this behavior may cause resentment from others, making it difficult for them to establish good interpersonal relationships and thus reducing their classroom support. Therefore, students

who avoid goal-oriented grades receive lower classroom support.

Classroom support significantly impacts an individual's beliefs in success, fame, social promotion, gaining approval, and being accepted by others, affecting their achievement goal orientation. According to Botes et al. (2020), achieving close-to-goal orientation has a significant negative predictive function on classroom support, which means that students who focus too much on grades may have difficulty obtaining equal support and encouragement. In addition, achievement avoidance goal orientation has a significant negative predictive function on emotional intimacy classroom support and a significant positive predictive function on companion conflict. When comparing students with different achievement goal orientations, students who master goal orientations received the highest scores in classroom support, followed by students whose grades are close to goal orientations. In contrast, students who avoid goal orientations received the lowest scores. It was further pointed out by (Wen-Jye et al. 2017) that classroom support occurs through interaction and comparison with others. Students tend to compare their academic performance with others in social interactions, and students with different academic achievements may hold different achievement goal orientations. Students with high academic performance are more likely to have mastery approaching and mastery avoidance achievement goal orientation. In contrast, students with low academic performance are more likely to have mastery avoidance goal orientation.

Table 5

Relationship Between Achievement Goal Orientation and Language Learning Motivation

Performance-approach goals	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Instrumental Motivation	.708**	0.000	Highly Significant
Integrative Motivation	.715**	0.000	Highly Significant
Master-approach goals			
Instrumental Motivation	.788**	0.000	Highly Significant
Integrative Motivation	.821**	0.000	Highly Significant
Performance-avoid goals			
Instrumental Motivation	.707**	0.000	Highly Significant
Integrative Motivation	.749**	0.000	Highly Significant
Mastery-avoid goals			
Instrumental Motivation	.760**	0.000	Highly Significant
Integrative Motivation	.775**	0.000	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.01

Table 5 presents the relationship between achievement goal orientation and language learning motivation. The computed r-values indicated a robust direct correlation; the resulting p-values were less than the alpha level. This indicates a significant relationship exists and reveals that the better the achievement goal orientation, the more motivated they are. The above data consistently reveals highly significant positive correlations between various goal orientations.

The relationship between achievement goal orientation and language learning motivation is quite complex. In theory, there is a positive correlation between goal orientation and language learning motivation (Honicke et al., 2020). Internal interests and self-improvement often drive learners who hold a goal-oriented mindset. They crave a deeper understanding of the target language and its culture and strive to improve their language skills. This motivation originates from within and does not rely on external evaluations or comparisons with others, thus possessing relative stability and persistence. In contrast, the relationship between achievement goal orientation and language learning motivation may be more complex. According to Daumiller et al.(2020), to stimulate learners' interest and motivation, teachers need to create a supportive learning environment that encourages learners to pay more attention to the process and content of language learning rather than just focusing on the final grades. This helps to promote the development of goal orientation. Educators need to create a supportive learning environment that encourages learners to focus on the process and content of language learning rather than just on final grades. This can promote goal orientation development and stimulate learners' intrinsic interest and motivation.

Table 6*Relationship Between Classroom support for students English learning and Language Learning Motivation*

Teachers' academic support	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Instrumental Motivation	.836**	0.000	Highly Significant
Integrative Motivation	.836**	0.000	Highly Significant
Teachers' emotional support			
Instrumental Motivation	.793**	0.000	Highly Significant
Integrative Motivation	.796**	0.000	Highly Significant
The academic support from the classmates			
Instrumental Motivation	.839**	0.000	Highly Significant
Integrative Motivation	.823**	0.000	Highly Significant
The academic emotional from the classmates			
Instrumental Motivation	.849**	0.000	Highly Significant
Integrative Motivation	.814**	0.000	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.01

Table 6 shows the relationship between Classroom support for university students' English learning and Language Learning Motivation. The computed r-values indicate a robust direct correlation, with resulting p-values less than the alpha level, indicating a significant relationship. This suggests that the better the classroom support for university students' English learning is, the more motivated they are. Numerous scholars maintain a significant correlation between achievement goal orientation and classroom support. The study by (Ruishi et al., 2021) revealed a noteworthy positive correlation between achievement goal orientation and classroom support, encompassing emotional intimacy, assistance, support, and interaction and entertainment. Kiefer (2015) found that teacher and peer support create a positive learning environment. Shao & Kang, (2022) observed that these supports uniquely impact students' motivation to learn English. These findings indicate that teacher support is crucial in explaining the differences in English learning motivation among students who are significant in English.

Table7*Proposed Program for EFL students' Language Learning*

Key Result Area	Plan Objectives	Enhancement Activities	Success Indicators	Persons Involved
1.Achievement Goal Orientation				
1.1Performance-approach goals 2.I always prioritize where I made mistakes in my studies.	1.To Enhance the ability to prioritize study areas efficiently; 2.To cultivate critical thinking skills to identify and address study mistakes.	1.Facilitate peer collaboration for group discussions on study strategies. 2.Encourage students to share their prioritization methods and learn from each other. 3.Introduce educational apps or platforms that help students organize study materials and tasks.	90% of students can improve their learning strategies through group cooperation; 90% of students can learn others' learning experience and prioritize in the learning process; 90% of students can find favorable learning materials from the learning platform shared by others.	Students; Instructors
1.2Mastery-approach goals 7.I always try to achieve the best results in exams to prove that I am better than others.	To cultivate a cooperative mindset by emphasizing shared success. 2.To shift focus from external validation to intrinsic motivation for academic success.	Foster a supportive environment for sharing experiences and learning from mistakes. Instill a belief in the potential for continuous improvement. 3.Conduct sessions on mindfulness to manage stress and focus on personal growth.	90% of students like this inclusive learning environment and learn from mistakes; 90% of the students have a new understanding of their potential; 90% adjust their mindset to release their stress and focus on their learning.	Students; Instructors; Dean
1.3Performance-avoid goals 2.I often worry that I cannot fully understand what I have learned in English class. (such as grammar explanation, etc.).	1.Enhance the ability to comprehend and fully understand English class materials. 2.Increase confidence in using and understanding English.	1. Arrange pre-class preview tasks, and understand the materials and grammar knowledge to be learned in advance; 2. The grammar exercises should be matched with the knowledge learned; 3. Provide more positive feedback to students.	90% of students can have some understanding of the knowledge and can fully master the knowledge by doing exercises after class; 90% of students can promote English learning through teacher motivation and positive feedback.	Students; Instructors

1.4Mastery-avoid goals 3.If I ask the teacher a question but I cannot understand her. I will be worried that the teacher thinks I'm not smart and can't work out simple questions.	1.Increase confidence in seeking clarification without fear of judgment. 2.Create an environment where students feel comfortable asking questions.	1. Implement self-confidence building exercises. 2. Conduct regular class discussions to normalize asking questions. 3. Provide resources on effective ways to ask questions and seek clarification.	90 percent of students can increase their confidence in English learning; 90 percent are more comfortable to ask questions or consult with others.	office of academic affairs
2. Classroom support				
2.1Teachers' academic support My teacher is concerned about my English learning situation. 2.2Teachers' emotional support 4.The teacher usually cares about me very much	1. To increase the interaction between teachers and students, so that students can more intuitively experience the care of teachers. 2. To let the teachers know more about the students' English learning situation.	Increase interaction between teachers and students · change the previous classroom mode based on teacher teaching, let students show more, and give encouragement.	90% students can realize that teachers encourage themselves and increase their motivation to learn English.	Students; Instructors; Dean
2.3The academic support from classmates Some students are willing to practice English speaking with me. 2.4The emotional support from classmates 1.Many classmates regard me as a friend.	1. To create an environment more conducive for students to practice oral English, and let students take the initiative to practice oral English with their peers. 2. To create an equal and friendly learning environment.	Hold English corners to give students enough time to practice their oral English. Encourage fair competition and friendly cooperation between students.	Ninety percent of the students have the opportunity to practice their oral English, and 90 percent of the students can get their help and support in the process of English learning.	Students; Instructors; Administrators
3. Language Learning Motivation				
3.1Instrumental Motivation 6.I learn English because I want to study abroad. 3.2Integrative Motivation 10.I am determined to study English as best as I can to achieve maximum proficiency.	1.To help students to find their own goals of learning English. 2.To help students understand a truth-learning a language is not an overnight process, it is a gradual process.	Watch some inspirational movies to inspire students to learn English well, not everyone learns the language in order to live in the country.	90% students would Keep the motivation to learn English, and try our best to improve the English ability in all aspects.	Students; Instructors

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the data gathered, several conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, respondents exhibited a strong drive towards higher academic outcomes, with performance-approach and mastery-approach goals being the most prominent, while performance-avoid goals were least emphasized. Secondly, participants showed a high appreciation for classroom support, particularly from classmates, in both academic and emotional aspects. Additionally, their overall language learning motivation was moderate, with integrative motivation outweighing instrumental motivation. Finally, a proposed language learning program aims to adjust students' achievement goal orientation, enhance classroom support, and boost learning motivation among Chinese University EFL students.

To enhance English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning outcomes, various strategies can be implemented by university administrators, EFL teachers, and learners themselves. Firstly, administrators may initiate professional development programs for EFL teachers, focusing on improving their ability to provide academic and personal support. This training could emphasize cultivating positive teacher-student relationships, effective communication skills, and personalized support strategies. Secondly, EFL teachers can foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable seeking assistance and sharing their learning goals. Thirdly, EFL learners are encouraged to engage in self-evaluation and reflection, prioritizing the identification and correction of mistakes. Active participation in group discussions, sharing of learning strategies, and learning from peers' experiences can also enhance learning outcomes. Additionally, future studies should consider expanding sample sizes, grades, and specialties to ensure the diversity and representativeness of research

findings. Lastly, regular evaluation of the proposed language learning program's effectiveness is crucial. Collecting feedback from both students and teachers will help identify areas for improvement and allow for necessary adjustments to ensure ongoing success.

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