Department of Education, University of Oxford

Assignment Cover Sheet

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Front Matter

Abstract

This study investigated the effects of an intervention program on motivation and English language proficiency amongst English language learners at a middle school in China. Twenty-three grade 7 (11-13-year-olds) were randomly assigned to either the treatment or the control group. The treatment group were explicitly taught the motivated learning strategy of goal setting (goal setting group), while the control (or normal teaching group) received English instruction as usual. The intervention lasted for 18 weeks, wherein students were taught about goal setting, set goals and actions to achieve them, and reflected on them weekly. The evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention included data from pre and posttest motivation questionnaires, and standard test results for reading and language use, as per the school's requirement, from two data points (pre and posttest). The results of the immediate training effects of goal setting on motivation and English proficiency were promising, despite being statistically non-significant. The feature of the current study design allowed for an exploration of the possibility of manipulating motivation through goal setting and the possible effect on language achievement.

Acknowledgments

There are many hands that supported the completion of this dissertation. Those hands are probably as pleased as I am about reaching the finish line. The owners of those hands are too many to mention but I'd particularly like to acknowledge Hamish Chalmers, my supervisor, advisor, and at times, counsellor. Nathan Thomas, whose patience helping me to understand theories and whose enthusiasm was always contagious. Heath Rose, for keeping me focused throughout my two years under his guidance at the University of Oxford. Oliver Hadingham, for his sarcasm, wit, and our oft-shared despair.

Covid-19 Statement

Due to the continued impact of Covid-19 in China, some of the original proposal for this study was not possible. During Chinese New Year, February 2022, Shenzhen (where the study was conducted) went into another lockdown which resulted in 8 weeks of online teaching. As a result, it was not possible to conduct the qualitative data collection as planned. This study was originally going to be a mixed methods study. As a result of the unexpected lockdown, it became a solely quantitative study.

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A longitudinal study of the effects of teaching motivational strategies to adolescents from a self-determination theory perspective

1. Introduction and rationale for the study

The present study engages with motivation and second language acquisition in several ways. As Dörnyei noted in 1998, motivation is one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of foreign language learning. This is something that has been widely accepted by scholars, teachers, and learners for decades, and is still relevant 25 years later. However, despite the plethora of research into motivation, we still know little about how motivation effects success, if success effects motivation, or if there is another variable we have not yet considered or have perhaps overlooked. As such, this research dissertation aims to add to the literature and fill the gap between theory and research by investigating if it is possible to manipulate motivation with a positive effect on second language acquisition.

There is a wealth of research on motiva**tion** but what makes this study different is that it looks at motiva**ting** language learners through goal setting and its effect on English proficiency. While we know that there is a positive correlation between motivated learners and second language acquisition (SLA), we do not know if one impacts the other or if there is another variable we have not considered yet. In a quasi-experimental design, students were given pre and posttest motivation questionnaires to attempt to observe changes in levels of motivation along the self-determination continuum following the intervention. Alongside measurements of motivation, students' changes in English proficiency were observed through the school's standard Measure for Academic Progress (MAP) tests, which are conducted twice a year. For this study, students' reading and language use scores from the end of grade 6 (July 2021) and from the end of the first semester (January 2022) of grade 7 were compared to attempt to observe any patterns of improvement after the intervention of explicitly teaching goal setting for 18 weeks.

Goal setting is something that people do consciously and sub-consciously. If we're hungry, we set the goal of finding and eating food but usually do not think of that as goal setting. Satisfying hunger is also a physiological and psychological need, a primary drive. As is the need for

knowledge, which is one of the reasons motivation in SLA continues to fascinate researchers and practitioners and why incorporation of self-determination theory into SLA, with psychologists, education psychologists, and applied linguistic scholars working together has been so successful.

On the other hand, if we decide to learn a new skill such as scuba diving, we might consciously set the goal of getting certified to dive to 20 meters by the end of the year. By consciously setting goals, noting the actions needed to reach them, and the sense of accomplishment when we do achieve them, our levels of motivation and confidence increase each time. In terms of language learning, it could be possible to turn goal setting into a metacognitive skill which could result in improved rates of and success of language learning. Previous studies have shown that by taking time away from content teaching in order to make way for teaching learning strategies can result in more efficient language acquisition. In other words, students learn how to learn, which could also be a life-long, transferable skill.

A key objective of this study was to see if it was possible to improve levels of motivation amongst grade 7 (11–13-year-olds) to learn English as a foreign language (EFL). For the purpose of this study, the terms English as an additional language (EAL), English as a second language (ESL), and English as a foreign language (EFL) are used interchangeably due to the heterogenous classes of language learners in terms of their English language proficiency. Usually, these terms would not be used interchangeably as they can mean quite different things and are often contextually dependent.

It was hoped that by explicitly teaching goal setting, and hence tapping into an individual's interest, connections could be made with the relevance of English to their daily lives and thus increase their motivation to learn English. By guiding the students to set goals that were achievable, challenging, and relevant would align with the measurement of self-determination as used by Noels et al., (2000) in the subcategories of intrinsic motivation: knowledge, accomplishment, satisfaction. Intrinsic motivation is the most powerful and effective form of motivation and is therefore the ideal level to aim for in the language classroom. It may be that some students are naturally intrinsically motivated, or self-determined, but the aim of this study is to find out if that is something that can be manipulated, and if so, if it can also have a positive effect on English language proficiency.

2. Literature Review

Since 2005 there has been a surge in empirical and theoretical research in second language (L2) motivation. This phenomenon has been quantified as the equivalent of one paper being published every twenty-two days in 2005, and one paper every five days in 2014 (Boo, Dörnyei, & Ryan, 2015). This unprecedented boom is still on an incline, meriting the unique domain status of L2 motivation (Boo et al., 2015).

While much research has been done on motivation over the past 50 years, this research has largely concerned itself with the associations between motivation and attainment, to the extent that we have a clear understanding that the two are associated. That is, students with high levels of motivation tend also to have higher level of attainment (Dörnyei, 2008). However, very little research has been conducted to assess whether deliberate attempts to raise motivation actually results in higher levels of motivation and consequently higher levels of attainment. A substantial number of studies examine the motivational strategies *teachers employ* rather than *deploy* without looking at the pertinent student perspective. This study aims to add to the literature by conducting a longitudinal study amongst grade 7 (11–12-year-olds) English language learners (ELLs) at a bilingual school in China. It aims to assess whether deliberate teaching of motivational strategies improves motivation and second language (L2) attainment.

Research into the relationship between motivation and SLA achievement is vast but much of the research looks at what *already* successful learners do rather than *how* they learnt to do it. The effects of explicitly teaching motivational strategies to ELLs is also scarce. Furthermore, there is a stark lack of research on motivatING (as opposed to motivation of) adolescent language learners. Alongside a focus on achievement, this study will look at how and if the motivational levels of ELL teenagers can be improved over the course of a semester (18 weeks) through goal setting. The research is analysed through a lens of self-determination theory (SDT) as presented by Deci and Ryan (1985).

Below is an overview of some of the concepts related to this study, followed by reviews of noteworthy case studies, including some strengths and limitations of this area of research.

2.1. What is motivation?

Before considering if motivation is still the predominant language learner characteristic, it is helpful to explore what is meant by motivation. Dörnyei and Otto (1998) define L2 motivation as "the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritised, operationalised and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out" (65). Hence, motivation is a multifaceted, dynamic, and complex construct eluding a singular definition. However, researchers agree that motivation is responsible for human behaviour but exactly how this occurs remains uncertain.

The study of motivation seeks to answer *why* questions concerning human behaviour. As far back as Freud (1917), theorists have attempted to determine what causes certain behaviours. Both psychological and physical needs have been cited, and a blurring of the two. For example, according to Freud (1917), the two main drives were sex and aggression, whereas for Hull (1943), there were four main drives: hunger, thirst, sex, and the avoidance of pain. Arguably these drives combined could all be categorized as physical needs. Throughout this study, the psychological needs of competence, relatedness, and knowledge are at the fore of motivated behaviours through goal setting.

2.2. Why is motivation important to SLA?

While learning a second language is not a necessity, motivation is necessary to successfully learn another language (Dörnyei, 1998, 2008; Nurhidayah, 2020). In most language learning situations, it is difficult to facilitate optimal input and output opportunities outside of the language learning classroom. As such, language learners need to be self-regulated, motivated learners in order to be successful (Dörnyei, 2001; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Noels et al., 2000). In some instances, especially during the school years, students might have to learn a language but not want to nor care if they are successful or not. With this in mind, if motivation can be taught and manipulated, these young language learners could potentially have more success and enjoyment from learning another language. This study aims to investigate that possibility.

2.3. Historical context

Three core historical phases illustrate the development of L2 motivation theory by providing a picture of the research landscapes that gave rise to some of the most significant L2 motivation models.

Until the 1990s, a sociopsychological approach, spearheaded by Gardner and Lambert in the 1970s took centre stage. Research in this area emerged in Canada, a truly bilingual environment due to anglophone and francophone communities' coexistence. However, germination of this approach began in the late 1950s, again with Gardener & Lambert as the key cultivators. The aforementioned took notice of the research in L1 acquisition and the driving forces behind it in an attempt to better understand success or failure in an L2. Analyses of a battery of tests taken by high school students in Montreal indicated that two factors were positively correlated with achievement in French: motivation and aptitude. Previously, linguistic aptitude was held as the Holy Grail of L2 success, but it has been suggested this only occurred due to the tangibility of the factor, in contrast to others such as motivation and interest. In other words, it was easier to give systematic attention to aptitude than, say, motivation due to the relative ease of measurement. Building on research regarding L1 acquisition, such as Mowrer (1954) and Ervin (1954), Gardner & Lambert's (1959) *Orientation Index* included indices of motivational intensity *and* orientation. Mowrer's theory suggests that language acquisition is first driven by a yearning to be the same as family members, and then later the wider community. Ervin developed this view to include emotional dependence and respect for a linguistically different individual as a motivating factor, and indicator of L2 success. Thus, the now ubiquitous characterisation of motivation in terms of *integrative* (learners want to integrate into the linguistic community) and *instrumental* (learning for practical or pragmatic reasons) drivers took (and have kept) the fore. Gardner and Lambert's seminal paper not only offered a new theoretical construct but also a novel research direction. 60 years later, the parallels between L1 and L2 acquisition are well-known, but at the time this was a breakthrough for the field of applied linguistics. To cite something six decades after its publication, and for it to remain relevant, is a testament to the importance and impact of Gardner & Lambert's (1959) paper. Despite Gardner et al. coming from a psychological field interested in second language acquisition, and modern L2 motivation specialists becoming interested in psychology, the influence of one upon the other has remained.

Only a marginally diminished impact of *integrative* motivation amongst studies in languages other than English (LOTEs) has been observed (Al-Hoorie & MacIntyre, 2020).

Later, through rigorous data collection over a period of 12 years, Gardner & Lambert (1972) surmised that attitudes towards the L2 communities were the precedent to success or failure in the L2. Thus Gardner's (1985) integrative/instrumental motivation theory came to fruition. This was operationalised by the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) which has been utilised in numerous studies such as Gardner and Macintyre (1993b), Cocca, Garcia, Zamarripa, Demetriou, and Cocca (2017), and Al-Mubireek (2020). Integrative (intrinsic) motivation stems from positive attitudes towards the L2 community, a willingness to communicate in the L2, and in some cases, even cultural appropriation (Dörnyei, 2001). Instrumental (extrinsic) motivation, in contrast, is the motivation to learn a language for practical reasons such as applying to university or furthering one's career. This macro-perspective helps researchers make inferences about language learning communities, language globalisation, multilingualism, and language contact. While this theory paved the way for a surge in research in the L2 motivation field, the integrative/instrumental dichotomy has been criticised for not offering a micro-perspective on L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 2003).

During the 1990s, there was a shift in the educational research landscape, acknowledging the classroom environment as an influential factor in successful learning. This pragmatic shift saw researchers take an education-based approach, considering real-life teacher experiences. The connection of theories with practice thus boosts the relevance and impact of such research (Dörnyei, 2003). During this time, cognitive psychology influenced the SLA field with constructs such as Attribute Theory (Försterling, 1998), Self-efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977), and Deci & Ryan's (1998) Developmental Model. Another important paradigm shift during this time was the novel connection between cognitive psychology and neurobiology: cognitive neuroscience. As initiated by Schumann (1997), cognitive neuroscience allowed SLA brain functions, which could only be speculated upon before, to be scientifically observed. His pentaplex motivation theory, of which stimulus appraisal is the main component, was developed. According to his research, stimulus appraisal occurs along five dimensions in the brain: novelty, goal significance, coping potential, and self/social image (Schumann, 1997). Schumann (2002) later added to his theory with the conception of mental foraging, suggesting learning activates

the same neural systems as when organisms forage for food or mate (Dörnyei, 2003). Connections can be seen here with goal theory, self-determination theory, and motivation theory, plus alluding to the innate underpinnings of the human need for knowledge.

At the end of the 1990s, in consideration of the dynamic character and temporal variation of motivation, Dörnyei & Otto's (1998) influential Process Model emerged. By operationalising a process model, in contrast to Gardner's (1985) static notion of integrative or instrumental motivation, Dörnyei & Otto (1998) provided a framework that better reflects the true nature of language learners' general flux of L2 motivation. Three distinct phases are utilised in the process model: preactional (selecting of a goal or task), actional (relating to the L2 learning environment), and postactional (reflective evaluation). Many studies have examined the temporal relationship with motivation using this process model, such as Mori (2004) and Huang (2011). Mori (2004) found there was no statistically significant difference between motivation orientations and the amount of reading done in a Japanese EFL class, whereas Huang (2011), found that content-based language instruction (CBLI) had a positive impact on lessons but no statistically significant change in young EFL learners' motivation.

A current paradigm in the L2 motivational field examines contextual and dynamic aspects of language learner motivation, best illustrated by Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System, (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). In line with contemporary psychology developments, the L2 motivational self-system (L2MSS) accounts for temporal changes in motivation through an interrelated tripartite system: Future L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, and L2 Learning Experience. The L2MSS can be interpreted as an educational application of Markus and Nurius' (1986) work on Possible Selves: might become, like to become, and afraid to become. The L2 Learning Experience has seen much less interrogation than the two future guides of the L2MSS, but that seems to be changing.

The L2 Learning Experience focuses on the immediate learning environment, such as the teacher, curriculum and materials, classmates, and tangible success, whereas the L2 self-guides focus on future selves or goal attainment. It was not as developed as the Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self at the time of publication because it was not rooted in the established possible-selves theory; it did not get the head start the future-selves did. Dörnyei (2019) acknowledged this when

he named it the ‘Cinderella’ of the L2MSS and offered a further definition of the L2 Learning Experience as ‘the perceived quality of the learners’ engagement with various aspects of the language learning process’ (26). Through goal setting, this study aims to see if it is possible to enhance this.

While this could be seen to suggest a departure from the previously aligned SLA-Gardnerian motivational paradigm, it should in fact be perceived as a new branch from the same tree. The L2MSS can by no means replace integrative motivation, rather these are situational constructs which may be more or less applicable to the second language learner, depending on their personal dynamic and temporal flux. As Claro (2020) suggests, the two systems should be seen as complementary, with the former locus of identification being external and the latter being internal. Undoubtedly, one could identify with both notions simultaneously. Some scholars have, and may argue that integrative motivation is not applicable to those learning languages other than English (LOTEs) nor relevant to the world of Global Englishes (GE). This is because the notion of *integrative* suggests *integration* and that there needs to be a target local linguistic community to be part of. However, with the rise of digital technology this is no longer the case. Furthermore, *lingua franca* is not restricted to English and therefore LOTE learners most likely do have integrative motivation to learn a language.

The above gives a brief historical overview of the L2 motivational field but is by no means exhaustive. Further prominent theoretical conceptions worth noting include Bandura’s (1977, 1997) Self-Efficacy theory; Weiner’s (1972, 2010) Attribution theory; MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels’ (1998) Willingness to Communicate in an L2 theory (WTC), and Complex Dynamics Systems Theory (CDST) (Adolphs, Dörnyei, MacIntyre, Henry, et al., 2014; De Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2007).

For the purposes of this study, Noel’s et al.’s (1999) self-determination-based language learner orientation survey of intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivation (LLOS-IEA) was adopted. A closer overview of the instrument’s background and SDT follows.

2.4. Self-determination theory

Deci & Ryan’s (1985) presentation of self-determination theory (SDT) has deep roots reaching back some 30 years earlier to Gardner & Lambert’s *Orientation Index* and *Motivational Intensity*

Scale (1959) and their 1972 seminal work, as mentioned above. SDT is an empirically based, organismic theory of human behaviour and personality development. Unlike self-regulation theory, SDT looks at motivation from a primarily psychological level. As such, socio-contextual factors and basic psychological needs are at the forefront of the theory. Deci & Ryan (1981) took into consideration the natural temporal flux of motivation in order to create a continuum to measure motivation, from a psychological perspective. A welcomed instrument in the field of applied linguistics.

The pillars of SDT are based on three basic psychological needs and is therefore an arguably more holistic way to understand L2 motivation. The three orientations are Knowledge, Relatedness, and Accomplishment (also cited as attainment, competence, or mastery).

Knowledge - we have an innate desire to learn things which can be easily understood as a psychological need. As mentioned above, Schumann's (2002) cognitive neurological research visually shows the area of the brain for satisfaction lighting up when we learn something. This aligns the importance of knowledge with that of food for living beings. This innate need for knowledge is something that could potentially be harnessed in the language learning classroom.

Relatedness means how much someone can relate to the task they are doing, or how relevant and important it is to them. Here, context is key, especially when talking about language learners. The psychological need to relate to things in our daily lives is also greatly applicable to learning languages. To elucidate, imagine a teenage language learner living in their native country but whose parents want her to learn Arabic as an L2, despite having no contact with an Arabic linguistic community. It will be nigh on impossible for her to feel relatedness to this L2 task. On the other hand, take the same teenager whose family has emigrated to an Arabic speaking country and who enjoys Arabic pop music. Her relatedness to the L2 will skyrocket in comparison to the former, thus increasing her chances of SLA success. Gardner and Lambert's (1972) paper was not immune to scrutiny given their basis in the bilingual environment of Anglo-Franco Canada, which in hindsight was probably connected with relatedness, i.e., despite the rigorous methodology and persuasive data, little was known about the transferability of the theoretical proposal.

Accomplishment reflects how we feel when we achieve or complete something, but also how attainable a task is. If we believe something is achievable then we will be more determined to attempt to complete the task. Ockert's (2018) study on the effects of positive self-review (PSR) supports this notion in a very tangible and relatable way. By employing 14-year-old Japanese ESL learners (n=18) and videoing them asking quiz questions in English, Ockert found there was a statistically significant positive correlation between their language abilities amongst the students who watched their own iterations for self-review than those who did not. The students who participated in the PSR part of the study remarked on feelings of accomplishment, surprise, and newfound confidence in their ability to speak English and to do so in front of their peers.

Deci and Ryan's (1985) insight into the *energization* and *direction* of behaviour and its influence on motivation (and thus consequences, positive or negative), is of a similar calibre to Gardner and Lambert's (1972) influential paper. Similarly, to cite this 1985 paper almost 30 years later could be seen as uncustomary in terms of journal shelf lives. Contrarily, it would be uncustomary not to provide an accolade to this work. In terms of motivation theory, *energy* encompasses one's needs, whereas *direction* address the structures and processes to meet those needs. A theory that does not encompass both spheres is not regarded as a motivation theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The authors classified motivation theories along a continuum of *mechanistic* to *organismic*, which we have now come to understand as *amotivated* to *intrinsically motivated*. The difference can be further understood as *passive* through to *active* behaviour.

A key development in motivation research, especially of intrinsic motivation, came from a call to action from White (1959) who realised a need for a better explanation of 'normal' human development without need for reinforcement, such as play and exploration. Play and exploration are behaviours where consequential competence acts as the reward, in and of itself. White (1959) termed this *effectance motivation*, also known in psychoanalytic terms as *independent ego energy.* Empirical psychologists soon encapsulated this non-drive-based type of motivation as *intrinsic motivation*, which has become a modern-day laymen term with varying degrees of understanding. Then, as now amongst scholars, the term neatly categorizes the organismic need for competence and self-determined behaviour.

Deci & Ryan's (1985) motivational theory (addressing *energy* and *direction*) allows exploration of the interplay between self-determined and non-self-determined behaviours and processes. This paper leans towards organismic theories of motivation, wherein active organisms strive to be effective and satisfy their needs. However, the human organism, whilst wired for the latter, is also capable of being passive and thus developing fractured structures and processes within (Deci, 1980), hence the need for a continuum to measure motivation.

In Chapter 8 of Deci & Ryan's (1985) publication, information-processing theories which are also cognitive theories, are elaborated on. Together, Tolman (1932, 1949) and Lewin (1951) agreed that energy sources (drives or tensions/energy) are what lead to goal setting and goal achievement. A key difference between these two theories and other similar theories of the time is that they focused on the pull rather than the push factors behind drives. In SLA, we talk of the 'push' and 'pull' factors (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) to learn another language, which can also be understood as intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. For example, a push factor might be to improve one's career, whereas a pull factor could be to easily travel to other countries. Likewise, a push factor in the context of this study could be parents encouraging (or forcing) their child to learn English in order to go to a college overseas.

Expectancy (probability estimation) theory is another cognitive theory about motivated behaviour which addresses predicting behaviour. For Vroom (1964), this was in the field of industrial motivation. His algebraic formulae quantified 'force toward action' (Deci & Ryan, 1985:215) in an attempt to predict work-related behaviours. Due to the dependence of outcomes (valence) for this formulae, Vroom's (1964) model places importance on extrinsic motivation, i.e., rewards in the broad sense of the term.

Atkinson is another key scholar in motivation theories. Atkinson's (1957) theory differs from Vroom's in that it attempts to explain achievement behaviour rather than work-related behaviour, and also evaluates valence based on expectancy. In other words, the value of the goal balanced with the chances of success to determine whether the goal should be undertaken or not. Therefore, this theory is also connected with task difficulty and the consequences of that perception. The differences between the two theories can also be understood as intrinsic (Atkinson) and extrinsic (Vroom) motivation theories (Shapira, 1976). Alignment with the Zone

of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory (Vygotsky, 1978) can also be seen here where tasks need to be challenging but attainable in order to maintain determination. ZPD measures what someone can do without help and what they can do with guidance. This area, or zone, is where optimal learning can happen. Bandura's behavioural change theory (1977a), advocated for dividing the notion of expectancy into the two factors of *attempt to achieve desired reinforcements* and *being efficacious*. As above, this can loosely be delineated to instrumental or extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). As mentioned, for a theory to truly be a motivation theory, it must consider both energy and drives. Bandura's theory has been criticised for not considering the intrinsic value of efficacy. Later, although Bandura and Schunk (1981) acknowledged the notion of self-motivation, the omission of intrinsic behaviour or needs renders their theory belonging to cognition rather than motivation. Bandura and Schunk hypothesised that proximal goals (such as getting the same grade again) would be more effective than distal goals (such as improving by 3 grades) in maintaining motivated behaviour. Indeed, their experimental study supported this hypothesis, however, their sample was school children struggling with arithmetic. As such, the implications of this theory as it relates to language acquisition is unclear. In later studies, proximal goals have been shown to be detrimental to intrinsic motivation (Manderlink & Harackiewicz, 1984; Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Key questions regarding motivated behaviour concern the four main areas of *instigation*, *energization*, *direction*, and *termination*. Regarding the first category, Miller, Galanter, and Pribram's (1960) Test, Operate, Test, Exit (TOTE) theory can elucidate further. Here, motivated behaviour is instigated when there is incongruity between stimulus and an internal standard. This is also known as a feedback loop, which is likewise applied in other areas of SLA such as listening and speaking (Field, 2010). According to Hunt (1965), this same stimulus-internal-standard (or circumstance vs plan) discrepancy provides energy (energization) for the motivated behaviour. The feedback loop will continue until the discrepancy is resolved. For example, an English L2 learner may have an idea of how a sentence sounds in their head but when they say it aloud there is a discrepancy between the internal standard and the sentence they produce. Therefore, the student will practice saying it until the discrepancy is resolved. In terms of motivated behaviour, this can be applied to most fields of human actions, including mastering physical or mental skills. Regarding *direction*, Hunt (1960) considered this a direction-hedonic

question, in that organisms will only approach situations with optimal incongruity: too much or too little incongruity results in avoidance. Finally, the question of *termination* of motivated behaviour is one that still rests heavily in theorists' minds. For Hunt (1960), with an information-processing approach to motivation, Sokolov's (1960) work on the orientating reflex and Helson's (1964) adaptation level theory provided possible answers. These all link back to the notion of stimuli-incongruence in that the motivated behaviour will wane in accordance with less discrepancy between the stimulus and the internal standard. Once the two become balanced, the motivated behaviour is terminated (or *exited* in terms of TOTE theory). In sum, exploration and manipulation scenarios which provide optimal levels of incongruity between stimuli and internal standards are attractive to humans. Incongruity begins the motivated behaviour and congruity terminates it.

However, as is often the case, such theories are temporally vulnerable. Sixty years on and the limitations are clear to scholars. However, twenty-five years after Hunt's theorising, Deci and Ryan (1985) delineated the limitations as follows: *'If organisms have optimal incongruity as their goal, then it is inconsistent for their behavior to be initiated by incongruity and terminated by congruity, for that implies that the goal of their behavior is achieving congruity rather than optimal incongruity.'* (1985:227). A later suggestion of renaming the cyclical process of incongruity-congruity to *novelty* or *challenge* helped previous theories to be more widely accepted as models of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Hunt, 1975a).

Deci & Ryan's (1985) information-processing representation of motivated behaviour is bidirectional in its approach in that they mapped out one path each for self-determined and non-self-determined behaviour. This framework incorporates the strengths of cognitive theories, whilst accounting for sequences of behaviour, the influence of novelty and challenge, and energisation of motivated behaviour.

Information-processing theory again relies on a feedback loop. *Information* here can also be understood as stimuli or input. Information processing can be instant, as in fight-or-flight, or steady and reflectional. Either way, brains are in a constant state of processing, self-correcting, and reflecting. Likewise, information-processing can be physiological or psychological. The affective loadings of internal and external cognitive representations vary from person to person

and are dependent upon experiences and individual differences. These differences also contribute to one's causality orientations which then influence how information is processed. This also has an impact on whether the resulting behaviour is self-determined or non-self-determined. Regardless of the particulars, this information initiates and regulates behaviour (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), self-determined behaviour begins with a motive, or an awareness of a particular need. Primary drives such as hunger are paramount to energising behaviour. The innate need for competence and self-determination fuels intrinsic motivation in that it is an important foundation for motives to grow from. For primary drives, there is usually a tangible reward such as food, water, touch, whereas for intrinsically motivated behaviour, the *rewards* are feelings, or regained equilibrium.

2.5. Self-determination theory in education

Until the 1980s, extrinsic motivation was understood as the driving force in the field of education. However, recognising the basic human need for exploration, knowledge, and understanding as underpinnings of intrinsic motivation saw a shift in perspectives. Here, a student's natural curiosity began to be seen as a force to be harnessed in educational settings. For this to occur, the learning environment must provide optimal challenges and nurture autonomy. Naturally, children are not usually intrinsically motivated to sit still, obediently complete homework assignments, nor learn important but not universally interesting subjects. Accordingly, a balance of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation is needed to facilitate progress in educational settings. Here, the SDT continuum starts to come to the fore. Issues in education during the 1980s led to a questioning of how to exploit extrinsic motivation structures in a way that could result in self-regulated behaviour without detracting from the importance of learning nor stifle an individual's natural curiosity.

Enhancing and maintaining motivation in the classroom is something educators have grappled with for years. In 1962, Bruner suggested the best way for children to learn was to 'free them from the control of rewards and punishments' (82). Education should be a path to *discovery* rather than just learning *about* something (Bruner, 1962: 88), which in itself is a *reward.* In other

words, the cultivation of curiosity and intrinsic satisfaction from accomplishments was thought by Bruner to be paramount in educational settings.

Some research suggests rewards are detrimental to students' intrinsic motivation to learn, be that gold stars, M&Ms, or grades (Schaeffer, 2018). Further, self-worth becomes inextricably tied to externally prescribed achievement (grades). Therefore, the use of extrinsic motivation structures in educational settings needs to be carefully considered, implemented, and monitored. Prior to the 1970s, much of the cognitive evaluation theory research was not done in classroom settings. However, moving in the direction of self-determined behaviour, DeCharms (1976) conducted research in-situ regarding the perception of and influence of the classroom environment upon self-determined behaviour. Deci, Nezlek, and Sheinman (1981) furthered this research through observation plus questionnaires (Harter, 1981b) administered to 610 children. Descriptions of their classrooms were then correlated with their levels of intrinsic motivation, perceived competence, and self-esteem as recorded on the questionnaire. The results of this, and other similar studies (Ryan & Grolnick, 1986) showed a positive correlation between the two factors.

Both classroom structures (physically and scheduling) and teacher orientations have been said to have an impact on children's sense of self and intrinsic motivation. Cultivating such positive learning climates can be problematic, especially in grade-driven cultures. The crux of the issue with extrinsic motivation (reward systems) is the negative effect on conceptual learning. Instead of deep understanding and transferability of skills, controlled learning takes place simply to tick the right boxes. As suggested by Levine and Fasnacht (1974), token rewards may lead to token learning. However, even 30 years later, the literature is still scant on how to move from theory to practice regarding nurturing students' intrinsic motivation, and how to move away from the controlling, omnipresent, global grade-culture. Here, the present study's pertinence is clear. If intrinsic motivation can be nurtured in the classroom, then it will be a step in the right direction for moving from theory to practice.

However, self-determination theory is not permissive to doing whatever one wants. Self-determined behaviour, in educational settings, means exploring, initiating and being active within certain structures. A recurring theme amongst the motivation and self-determination

literature is controlling versus informational learning and environments, with the former undermining intrinsic motivation and the latter enhancing or sustaining it.

With strong foundations in the field of psychology, the integration of SDT into SLA offers a deeper insight into language learners from a humanistic perspective. Deci & Ryan's (2017) Self-Determination theory publication offers very little insight into language learners in their 700 plus page publication. Instead, topics such as raising children, nursing, and successful businesses take the fore. This illustrates how multifaceted and integral to our daily lives motivation and self-determination really are. Therefore, in teaching children to learn how to set goals and achieve them in the language learning classroom, they are also being set up for success in other aspects of their lives.

Although it is often customary to cite research papers less than 20 years old, in this context it is prudent to continue with the chronological exploration of SDT. SDT is perhaps unique in that, despite many developments and elaborations, its tap root in sociopsychology remains intact.

2.6. Case studies

Research into individual differences (amongst which orientations such as motivation are considered) predate the surge in empirical research into L2 motivation in the 1960s. As such, Clement and Kruidenier's (1983) paper shall also be considered as contributing to the foundations of SDT. Through factor analysis, the researchers found that four orientations were common to all eight of their research groups (n=871). The groups were based on ethnicity (French or English), milieu (monocultural or multicultural) and target second language (French, English or Spanish). The four ubiquitous orientations, or reasons for learning a second language, were instrumental (such as to get into college or get a better job), knowledge, friendship, and travel. This is an important paper in that it not only examines the results in terms of possible future studies, but also with regards to the influence of the learning context on orientations. Note connections with Dörnyei's (2018) notion of the L2 Learning Experience. Citing numerous previous studies regarding the hierarchy of orientations for SLA success, Clement suggests that the conflicting outcomes of such studies could be due to the definitional fuzziness of the concepts of integrative and instrumental orientations, and the influence of the linguistic milieu on a case-by-case basis. Where one might define *travel abroad* as instrumental, others might see it

as integrative. Lukmani (1972) adhered to the former, whereas Burstall, Jamieson, Cohen, and Hargreaves (1974) subscribed to the latter. Half a century later and the ambiguity in these definitions remains. Additionally, contextual factors undoubtedly play an instrumental part in success or failure in a second language. Learning English in the Philippines for fiscal reasons, for example, is noncomparable to learning L2 French in a Francophone community. In the context of this study, L1 Mandarin middle school students learn L2 English for a variety of reasons, but namely to be able to go to a foreign high school and then university, with varying states of willingness.

Vallerand's (1997) paper further explored the hierarchical nature of motivation, if indeed there is one, with a focus on the two categories of motivation: *extrinsic* and *intrinsic*. Whereas Porter and Lawler (1968) suggested that the two had an additive relationship, Deci (1971) showed that extrinsic rewards had a negative correlation on intrinsic motivation. This is arguably a case in hand for the importance of looking at the self-determination continuum when considering motivation, i.e., neither one nor the other is more important, and neither are cemented orientations. According to Vallerand (1997), the 1970s saw the first surge in extrinsic-intrinsic motivation research which could then be divided into three subcategories: *effects of situational variables*, such as rewards, feedback, deadlines; *determinants*, such as education, relationships, travel; and finally, the *relationship* between extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation as a global motivational orientation. The latter shift towards an exploration of autonomy is beyond the scope of this paper but is worthy of some acknowledgement in this context. Building on his own and others' previous research, Vallerand's pentaplex Hierarchical Model of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation took into consideration the various ways motivation is represented in an individual. While this is based solidly in sociopsychology, it is another important foundation for the present study's underpinning: Noels et al.'s (1999) LLMOS-IEA.

Vallerand (1997) developed the HMIEA to firstly provide an organisational framework for previous extrinsic-intrinsic motivation research, and secondly to identify psychological underpinnings of motivational changes, in line with SDT. The theory describes the recursive relationship between motivation at each level, in that an increase or decrease of motivation at any stage can impact the chances of an individual ascending or descending through the hierarchy. The presentation of postulates and related corollaries provide strong evidence to support the

HMIEA, but there are of course limitations, specifically to do with individual differences such as race, gender, age, which are omitted. These independent variables could have an influence on levels of motivation and self-reporting reliability (which is often a limitation in even the most reliable of studies). Nonetheless, Vallerand's (1997) model provided conceptual and methodological advances through this multidimensional model of motivation.

Vallerand's (1997) postulates and corollaries of the hierarchical model support the notion that social factors can have an impact on motivation. For the purposes of this study, Corollary 3.2 (*The impact of social factors on motivation is mediated by perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness)* is an important correlation with cognitive evaluation theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985a) in terms of the three main psychological needs. Similarly, Postulate 5 (*motivation leads to important consequences)* aligns with SDT regarding the consequences of levels of motivation, i.e., increased levels of positive outcomes from amotivation through to intrinsic motivation.

In an extension of Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory, Noels, Pelletier, and Vallerand (1999) examined and applied self-determination theory to second language learning. In addition, they examined the relationship between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation with the four orientations explored by Clemet and Kruidenier (1983). A contemporary development in L2 motivation is of the importance of orientations over language aptitude upon SLA success. Orientations (travel, friendship, knowledge, instrumental) and affective variables such as anxiety, attitude, and motivation have been shown to be as important as aptitude (Gardner, 1985; Dörnyei, 2017).

Noels et al. (2000) provided a new framework for measuring orientations and motivation for L2 learners. This reorganisation, combining empirical and psychological approaches to explaining and predicting behaviours and their potential outcomes, has proven advantageous to the field of applied linguistics for language learning and teaching. As is often the case, definitional fuzziness can obscure some of the systematicity of the hypothesis. Case in hand, while externally regulated motivation and instrumentally oriented motivation have similar characteristics, travel, knowledge, and friendship could arguably be placed under extrinsic or intrinsic motivation, depending on the individual and the scholar's own orientation. Nonetheless, it was (and is) important to integrate SDT, from the realm of psychology, into notions of orientations for

learning an L2 in order to create a more holistic, valid, and reliable measurement of L2 motivation.

For this new framework, Clement and Kruidenier's (1983) orientations scale instrument was utilised. Nine items covered Instrumental orientation, and nine for the Knowledge scale. The Travel and Friendship orientations had four items each. Using a 7-point Likert scale, students rated each reason according to their personal reasons for L2 learning. The second part of the questionnaire addressed levels of motivation: amotivation, extrinsic motivation (including external, introjected, and identified regulation subscales), and intrinsic motivation (including knowledge, mastery, and stimulation subscales), which were adapted from the Academic Motivation Scale (Vallerand et al., 1992). The same type of Likert scale as above was used to record students' answers. Regarding antecedents and consequences of self-determination, two scales were chosen to represent theoretical antecedents across the SDT scale. As such, Harter's (1982) Perceptions of Competence instrument, and Ryan and Connell's (1989) Anxiety, and Intention to Continue L2 Studies scales were adapted.

The aim of Noels et al.'s (1999) study was to develop a distinctive and reliable subscale for each motivation subtype. The secondary purpose of the study was to explore relationships between the motivational subtypes and the four orientations. As such, correlations were calculated. Repeated analyses were conducted until there were only three acceptable items for each subscale. All sections were found to be normally distributed, except amotivation which was significantly skewed. The writers argue that this was to be expected given the context of the study, wherein students were voluntarily attending a bilingual school with L2 requirements.

A Pearson product-moment correlation matrix was applied to the scores of each subscale to verify the existence of a self-determination continuum. Indeed, the results of the analyses suggested that L2 motivation could be validly measured using this framework as there were clear, statistical differences between each subscale. However, although the correlations do not suggest causation, they are a reliable predictor for educational outcomes, i.e., higher perceptions of freedom of choice and competence are linked to higher levels of self-determined motivation, and thus more chance of L2 success. Concomitant to this are the correlated levels of amotivation and perceptions of controlling learning environments.

This seminal research provided a means to gain further understanding of motivation constructs (IM and EM) and the importance of orientations upon L2 motivation.

Zhou and Zhou (2018) explored the relationship between motivation, processing styles, and English language learning amongst 187 high school students in Macau. Their empirical research revealed that self-determined motivation was statistically significantly positively related to academic performance in English, whereas identification with commitment and ruminative exploration (external regulation) negatively predicted English achievement. However, ruminative exploration was found to be the only predictor of academic performance for students with low levels of self-determined motivation. Despite English language learning being a staple of every student's life from kindergarten, many students still reported low levels of proficiency when entering university. Upon investigation, it has been suggested that this could be due to poor attitudes towards learning English.

A bountiful of literature cites the success of SLA as dependent on motivated, autonomous learners. 'Autonomous' would place such students at the intrinsically motivated end of the SDT continuum. However, the majority of these studies use Western samples and therefore there could be transferability issues to Eastern samples. For example, some studies have argued that the role of autonomy in SLA differs between individualist and collectivist societies (Littlewood, 1999) and that Eastern societies are less likely to view autonomy in a positive light (Hart, 2002; Smith, 2003). Still, there is a difference between autonomy and independence - autonomy has been shown to be beneficial across cultural groups, through experience of volition and choice, which is in fact congruent with collectivist ideals rather than in opposition (Vansteenkiste, Zhou, Lens, & Soenens, 2005). Likewise, Clarke and Gieve (2001) found similar autonomous behaviour amongst Chinese and British students; Pae (2007) found intrinsic motivation to be a strong predictor of Korean university students' English achievement; and Wang (2008) found a positive correlation between EFL success and autonomous motivation amongst Chinese university students.

In Lo, Lu, and Lincoln's (2017) study, 120 sophomore English majors at a university in China were randomly assigned controlled or intervention group for an experimental study on self-regulated learning. Over a 9-week period, the intervention group was given training sessions on

goal orientation, self-efficacy, time and study environment management, language learning strategies, and attribution. Both control group and intervention group were given the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (Pintrich et al., 1991), and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning – English Language Learner Student Form (Oxford, 1990) pre, mid, and post-test (Test 1, Test 2, Test 3). Likewise, the College English Test (CET-4), a standardised test used nationwide in China to assess undergraduates' English proficiencies was administered at week 1, 5, and 9. However, only the reading section was used. According to the authors, their study allowed for a systematic examination of motivational variables and learning strategies in the language learning classroom.

While their study regards SRL, there are numerous similarities with SDT. For example, three key periods also outline SRL: theoretical development, intervention, and operation (Schunk, 2013). As with definitions of the self-determined learner, the self-regulated learner is metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviourally active in their own learning (Zimmerman, 1989). Furthermore, a fourth element of SRL mirrors the influence of the environment on SD behaviour: the social-affective element. In terms of L2MOT, this would be classified as the L2 Learning Experience (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009).

The period of intervention (1990s-2000s) is particularly relevant to the present study in that there was a focus on investigating the teaching of SR processes and the effect of such training. While we know there are some positive correlations between achievement and self-regulation, in teacher training and practice, it appears that very few teachers effectively prepare students to self-regulate their learning experiences. SRL training has been shown to be beneficial upon achievement in reading, writing, mathematics, science, special education, distance education, computer-based learning environments, and hypermedia environments. From the 1990s to present day, the period of operation has seen substantial research into the operation of SRL processes and the reciprocal relationship between SRL and achievement.

Zimmerman (2000) proposed a process definition which depicts self-regulation as "self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions that are planned and cyclically adapted to attainment of personal goals" (p. 14). It is also a process-oriented approach to this construct which includes forethought, performance, and self-reflection, much like Miller et al.'s (1960) TOTE model.

Martinez (2006) suggests that the effect of self-regulation on academic achievement is mediated by motivation, thus motivation as a pivot for success is a recurring theme amongst the literature, regardless of the theoretical lens one applies.

Lu, Lo, and Lincoln (2017) are in agreement with previous research regarding the effects of SRL intervention upon sustained levels of motivation. For them, the intervention group showed increased levels of intrinsic goal orientation and self-efficacy, whereas the control group showed a decrease in motivational levels over time. The authors believe that their findings are inline with other studies which confirm the effect of SRL training upon improving motivation. Furthermore, there were statistically significant differences between the control and intervention groups' academic performance, according to the CET-4 tests. At the beginning of the study, the groups showed comparable levels of proficiency (control: M=22.19, intervention: M=21.76). However, for Test 3, the control group's mean was 23.54, whereas the intervention group increased to 28.21. It could be argued that other external factors could have influenced this change, including familiarity with the CET-4 as it was administered just 4 weeks apart each time. However, given that the intervention group also received less explicit English instruction due to the SRL intervention, the results can be safely attributed to the intervention, especially regarding setting goals and taking responsibility for self-directed learning outside of the classroom. Thus, confidence and self-efficacy would also have continued to increase in a reciprocal process (Lu, Lo, and Lincoln, 2017).

According to Schunk (1995), students' motivation and self-efficacy are enhanced when they acquire self-regulatory strategies and realize they are performing skilfully or becoming more competent. Ockert's (2018) PSR study also demonstrates this. As with SD, SR is difficult to assess due to its dynamic characteristics which are prone to temporal flux and are usually context specific. As with SDT, SRT has roots in educational psychology and has more recently shifted into the field of SLA and L2 education. Despite a wealth of literature on the role of SRL strategies in education, experimental research on explicit strategy instruction in L2 classrooms is by no means comprehensive. There is an increasing amount of such research happening in China, and the present study aims to contribute to this evolving line of enquiry.

2.7. Goal Setting

One way to enhance motivation amongst EFL learners is to give them guidance on creating and achieving language learning goals during classes and incorporate them into students' Higher Education plans and career development (Gao, Zhao, Cheng, & Zhou, 2007). Exploration and research into Locke and Latham's (2013) goal setting theory suggests that goals can be divided into two groups: mastery and performance. Mastery goals are generally related to academic performance, learning new skills and building on prior knowledge. Performance goals are founded on a desire to perform better than others (Pintrich, Conley & Kempler 2003). According to Rubin (2015), in the field of SLA, mastery goals can be further split into language goals (grammar, vocabulary) and learning goals (applying learning strategies such as seeking help). A plethora of research into the effects of goal setting for language learners has yielded mostly positive, but inconclusive results.

In Shih and Reynolds' (2018) study, 101 tenth grade EFL Taiwanese students were randomly assigned control or intervention group. The intervention lasted one academic year and consisted of goal setting and reading strategy instruction. Shih and Reynolds found that the intervention was successful in increasing reading proficiency and motivation. Reading strategy instruction consisted of the traditional preview and predict, skimming, scanning, making inferences, etc. For goal setting instruction, motivational tips in the textbook were given attention, students set goals for test scores, and created actions to achieve their goals. Students also gave a score out of 10 for effort they put into achieving their goals and were able to change their actions if they were not helping them to reach them. Students in the intervention group entered 36 items into the goal-oriented checklist.

The quasi-experimental study used a pre-post intervention design with two intact classes, one as control and one as intervention (n=101). The control group received traditional reading instruction while the experimental group received integrated goal setting and reading strategy instruction. Both groups had EFL classes twice a week for two hours for 36 weeks. Both groups used the same reading textbook. Both groups also completed the GEPT and the motivation questionnaire pre and post-test. The intervention group also completed a five-item goal setting questionnaire at the end of the academic year (week 36).

In Taiwan, as in other Asian countries, there is a dichotomous approach to learning English. That is, in schools it is mandatory to learn English but for those who want to get ahead with communicative skills and international test preparation, afterschool classes, or cram schools, are attended. According to Shih and Reynolds (2018), the mandatory English classes are deemed difficult and boring, whereas the cram school classes are perceived as fun and useful. Furthermore, in the additional classes, learners are given clear instructions as to what and why they have to learn something, which could be interpreted as setting goals, especially for those students who want to attend foreign universities (Oladejo, 2006). Therefore, many students are more motivated in cram schools than in their regular English classes (Lin & Chen, 2006; Liu 2012). Goal setting plays a pivotal role in initiating and maintaining motivation, achievement, and self-efficacy in numerous academic fields, including EFL (Haynes, 2011). What seems to be missing from language learning classrooms (and indeed, other subject classrooms) are clear goals to guide student learning. There appears to be a gap between theory and practice regarding this, which could be attributed to teacher training, constraints on time, curriculum, and scheduling, or even resistance from students to incorporate such strategies into their learning. While Shih and Reynolds' paper focuses on incorporating goal setting into reading strategy instruction, their results carry pedagogical implications and future implications beyond EFL reading.

According to Locke and Latham (1981, 2006), goals can be effective when set by different sources, i.e., by the individual, teacher, or other. They define goals as "attaining a specific standard of proficiency on a task, usually within a specified limit" (Locke et al., 1981:126). Locke's (1996) goal setting theory, which has roots in Aristotle's *final causality*, argues that goals have both internal and external aspects, with the internal being the idea, and the external being the condition sought after, i.e., a test grade. According to McCombs and Pope (1994), a simple way to guide students through goal setting is the ABCD approach: ***A***chievable, ***B***elievable, ***C***onceivable, and ***D***esirable. This overlaps with notions that tasks should fall within an individual's Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) in order to maintain motivation. In comparison to SDT, the subcategories of intrinsic motivation (knowledge, stimulation, accomplishment) share qualities with effective goal setting. Furthermore, if a task is

too easy or too difficult, a learner will be less driven to tackle it, as in the optimal incongruency theories detailed above.

While a considerable amount of research has been done on goal setting in L1 settings, goal setting can also have positive effects in L2 classrooms. Even for reluctant learners, achieving mini-goals or short-term goals, can lead to increased L2 motivation and achievement by improving self-efficacy and confidence (Dörnyei, 1994). For Harrison (2004), strategy instruction can improve SLA, supporting previous notions that classroom time given over to learning strategies instruction is beneficial.

Although Shih and Reynolds (2018) found a statistically significant difference between the control and intervention's group reading proficiencies they did not find a statistically significant difference in overall motivation. However, they did find an increase in extrinsic motivation for both groups, which could be due to the requirement of passing the end of year English exam, regardless of setting goals or not. The motivation subcategories of intensity, intrinsic, and extrinsic saw a statistically significant difference for the intervention group only, which could be attributed to goal setting. However, due to the duality of the intervention, it is difficult to extrapolate the effects of goal setting from reading strategy instruction. Reading strategy instruction could lead to improved self-efficacy, which in turn leads to more intrinsically motivated behaviour. Likewise, goal setting without reading strategy instruction could have similar effects. Future research could consider goal setting and strategy instruction as two separate interventions.

In Öztürk's (2019) 11-week, quasi-experimental design, 25 Turkish EFL learners set goals and writing plans before writing essays. Every two weeks they wrote an essay (five in total). Later, they were asked to reflect on their goal achievements after receiving feedback on their essays. Along with goal setting, a pretest-posttest Attitudes towards Writing in English Questionnaire (Öztürk, 2019) was administered. Although there was no statistically significant change in the overall attitudes of the participants towards writing in English ($p<.05$, $t=1.980$), there was a positive change in the sub-scale of intrinsic motivation for EFL writing. However, although the researcher cited this as 'a positive significant change' (Öztürk, 2019:89), it was not statistically significant ($p=0.53$, $p<.05$).

The goals students set were counted and categorized. Of the 220 goals set during the 11-week intervention, 140 (64%) were classed as language goals according to the goal taxonomy set out by Zhou et al. (2006). Other goal objectives were rhetoric (16.3%), composing process (0%), ideas and knowledge (0%), learning and transfer (0.32%), and identity and self-awareness (0.32%). Actions to achieve goals were then categorized according to Zhou et al.'s (2006) actions taxonomy. Self-regulation or heuristic actions were by far the majority (70%). These data lend support to the positive relationship between goal setting and self-regulated behaviours, and is worth further investigation.

A limitation of this study the absence of a control group. With a control group for data comparison, the findings would be more robust. Nonetheless, these findings support the notion of goal setting being beneficial when students are given guidance, take actions, and reflect on goal achievements. In other words, students can learn how to learn using goal setting with support from teachers.

It is difficult to talk about language learning strategies (LLS) without acknowledging the coupling of achievement with the use of them. Likewise, it is difficult to talk about motivational strategies without looking at the effect on language learning success. The language learner motivation literature suggests that the use of LLS must be intrinsically deployed to promote a self-determined language learner. However, from a self-determination theory perspective, the use of such strategies can be 'other-regulated'. In the context of this study, wherein teenagers must learn English, this 'other-regulated' use of strategies could be more applicable than the better-known L2 motivation theory such as the Ideal Self (Dörnyei, 2009). As Thomas and Rose (2019) pointed out, there is no reason for SD and LLS use to always be connected. Building on this notion, this study will explore the 'other-regulated' use of motivational strategies from the student and teacher perspective, attempting to marry the psychology of SDT with L2 motivation through goal setting.

A host of motivational strategies have been published and disseminated over the years, with little universal transferability. Teachers have been surveyed for their most successful strategies; students have been observed for theirs. Literature on the long-term use of strategies is scant. Dörnyei's *Ten Commandments for Motivating Language Learners* advises the teacher but does

little to provide a transferable life skill to the students. Making sure the teacher is 'available' and classes are 'interesting' is all well and good, but does little to improve the self-efficacy, self-determination, nor autonomy of the learner. Promoting autonomy amongst language learners so that they can continue to learn and enjoy learning a language is a vital responsibility of all language teachers. Providing and developing the tools an individual can use to improve their quality of life-long learning should be a priority in language classrooms, especially in environments wherein students are under a lot of external pressure to perform and achieve in another language, such as in China (Liu, 2012).

Goal setting as a motivational tool transcends disciplines' boundaries. Perhaps most well known in relation to sportsmanship, goal setting and visualization are also well-established concepts in psychology, rehabilitation, and less so (though increasingly so) in educational psychology and applied linguistics. A multidisciplinary approach to improving the experience of the language learner is imperative, and one which seems to be becoming more popular. Indeed, the concepts of Self-Determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and Self-Regulation (Bandura, 1988) are borne of the same spirit but from different domains, psychology and education respectively. The difference between the two can be difficult to articulate, but they can be used interchangeably if the ontology is understood, and the terms used contextually.

3. Methodology

3.1. Aim & hypotheses

The aim of this study was to investigate the longitudinal effects of teaching a motivational strategy to EAL learners over the period of one semester, (18 weeks).

In this instance, the strategy of *goal setting,* as per Locke & Latham's (1990) *goal setting theory* was employed as an intervention with two intact grade seven classes at a bilingual school in China. English proficiency levels were also measured pre and post-test and correlations between these scores and motivation levels were explored.

Hypotheses

To realise the aim of the study, the following research question was addressed:

RQ1: What is the effect of explicitly teaching a goal setting strategy on middle school students' motivation to learn English and their English language proficiency?

The following hypotheses were adopted:

Null hypotheses

H_0: Teaching a goal setting strategy is not associated with improved language learning motivation.

H_0: Teaching a goal setting strategy is not associated with improved English language proficiency.

Alternative hypotheses (one tailed)

H1: *Students taught a goal setting strategy report greater motivation to learn a foreign language, compared to students who are not taught a goal setting strategy.*

H2: *Students taught a goal setting strategy demonstrate greater improvement in English proficiency over the course of the intervention than students who are not taught a goal setting strategy.*

3.2. Design

The research question was addressed using a two arm, non-equivalent groups design. While random allocation at the level of the individual would have been preferable, context demanded that intact classes were used as the unit of allocation. These classes were randomly allocated to receive the intervention through a coin toss, which is accepted as a legitimate process to use for randomization (see Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015). This type of experimental design is most suitable for addressing the research question given that motivation is a construct that cannot be directly measured. The results of experimental designs allow indirect measurements of motivation by comparing groups' empirical data.

3.3. Setting

The experiment took place at a bilingual, or *Minban*, school in Southern China. Minban schools are a relatively new phenomenon in China (Wang & Chan, 2015). They are private schools which are also controlled by the government, with varying degrees of autonomy depending on the district and relations with the local government (Wang & Chen, 2015). Minban schools can set fee structures and have some flexibility in the curriculum they deliver. Therefore, many minban schools offer bilingual education (Mandarin and English) which warrant higher fee structures. As such, many minban schools (including the school setting of the present study), receive students from high socioeconomic status families with intentions for their children to eventually study abroad. Bilingual minban schools are an accessible alternative for Chinese families who cannot enroll in international schools given their nationality (international schools in China can only accept students who are foreign passport holders). However, "Operators of minban schools must manoeuvre within the space created by an uncertain and evolving institutional environment" (Wang & Chan, 2015:90) which implies that the government has ultimate control and can change the rules for such institutions at any time.

3.4. Participants

Participants were native Chinese speakers in grade seven (ages 11 to 13). Table 1 gives the descriptive statistics of the sample at the beginning of the study, with the youngest being 11 years, 11 months and 3 days, and the oldest being 13 years, 4 months and 30 days. In the NTG, the gender ratio was 57% female and 43% male, while in the GSG it was 42% female and 58% male. All participants had attended the same school during the previous two academic years, from when the school opened in September 2019. As shown in Table 1, despite two years of attending this 'bilingual' school, there are still large discrepancies between students' language abilities, which can be partially attributed to their language learning prior to joining the school.

Table 1: Baseline descriptive statistics for both groups at the beginning of the study

	Normal Teaching Group	**Goal Setting Group**
n	14	12
Female	8 (57%)	5 (42%)
Mean age (years and months)	12.63	13.01
RIT* language use - $\bar{x}$ (SD)	205.86 (5.171)	198.25 (3.914)
RIT reading - $\bar{x}$ (SD)	202.86 (4.115)	197.42 (4.236)
	etc	etc

*RIT = Rasch UnIt of measurement for academic growth

3.5. Instruments

To collect English proficiency data, the school's Measurement for Academic Progress (MAP) data from the previous academic year and current academic year were collated for the two classes. MAP data give an in-depth analysis of an individuals' language use and reading abilities, along with a Lexile range for each student (www.nwea.org/map-growth). The Lexile Framework for Reading places reader ability and text complexity on the same scale. This allows readers to pick texts within their range (100 below and 50 above) to ensure the texts are challenging but not frustrating. This also permits reading test scores to be actionable. For the purposes of this study, each students' MAP language use Rasch UnIT (RIT) score and reading RIT score were used as baseline and endpoint measures to show progress. The RIT scale ranges from 100-350 and is a scale used to simplify test scores and measure academic growth year on year (Briggs, 2019). For example, in a native English environment, a student may score 188 for reading in grade three and advance to 214 by grade seven. Table 2 shows the grade level conversion for RIT scores and Lexile range.

Table 2: MAP Reading and Language Use RIT Mean scores, Lexile ranges, with US grade level norms*

US Grade Level	Reading			Language Use	
	Fall Mean RIT	Spring Mean RIT	Lexile Range	Fall Mean RIT	Spring Mean RIT
K	141.0	158.1	BR160L-150L	*NA*	*NA*
1	160.7	177.5	165L-570L	*NA*	*NA*
2	174.7	188.7	425L-795L	174.5	189.7
3	188.3	198.6	645L-985L	189.4	200.0
4	198.2	205.9	850L-1160L	198.8	206.7
5	205.7	211.8	950L-1260L	205.6	211.5
6	211.0	215.8	1030L-1340L	210.7	215.3
7	214.4	218.2	1095L-1410L	214.0	217.6
8	217.2	220.1	1155L-1470L	216.2	219.0
9	220.2	221.9	1205L-1520L	218.4	220.4
10	220.4	221.2	1250L-1570L	218.9	220.1
11	222.6	222.3	1295L-1610L	221.5	222.1

*Data taken from NWEA Website 2022 (www.nwea.org/lexile)

To collect information about students' levels of motivation, Noel's (2000) LLMOS-IEA questionnaire was used. To ensure participants understood all the questions, it was translated into Mandarin and the translation verified by a further two Chinese teachers at the same school. The English wording for the seven-point Likert scale options was also simplified slightly, for example, *does not correspond at all* was changed to *100% disagree* (see Appendix 1) There were no issues of validity or reliability of the instrument as it has been validated by numerous prior studies (e.g., Xuejun, 2020; McEown, Noels, & Chaffee, 2014; Goldberg, & Noels, 2006).

3.6. Procedure

During the intervention period, students received a total of seven 40-minute classes of English instruction per week. Of those, three were heterogenous in terms of student proficiency (see Table 1), and four were streamed into upper-beginner or pre-intermediate classes. The intervention took place in the homeroom classes (mixed proficiency) because it was important that the normal teaching group (NTG) and goal setting group (GSG) both received the same content instruction, aside from the intervention. This also allowed the researcher to teach both groups to ensure consistency of teaching in each class and to take observational field notes.

The first step was to randomly assign each class to either control or experimental. This was done through a flip of a coin. Once that was decided, the explicit instruction of goal setting was built into the experimental group's schedule. After a two-week grace period, participants in both classes completed the LLMOS-IEA questionnaire (Noel's et. al., 2000). The control group received normal instruction for the rest of the intervention period.

The experimental group was first introduced to goal setting (see Appendix 5 for an example). Here, language learning goals were introduced and discussed as a whole class and later, individually. Examples were given to students such as 'learn ten new vocabulary words this week' and 'read in English for ten minutes every day'. Goals were heavily personalized given each student's needs and interests. For example, for some students 'learn the lyrics to a Taylor Swift song and understand the vocabulary' was appropriate, whereas for others 'learn ten new words related to basketball' was a springboard.

Students in the experimental group were given a goal setting diary (see Appendix 5) to keep a record of their weekly goals, log their feelings about their progress, and write journal entries either about their progress or about another topic. Some students got tired of writing about their language learning so writing tasks were varied a few weeks into the intervention. The control group were also given weekly writing tasks to do but this was on paper and not in a goal setting journal. 10-15 minutes of one lesson per week were given to goal setting and writing. In an action research fashion, students were able to change their goals as fit them best, similar to how the weekly writing tasks were altered to better suit the students' needs. The teacher gave students feedback on their weekly progress towards their goals (see Appendix 6)

At the end of the semester, the LLMOS-IEA (Noels et. al., 2000) was administered for a second time and routine MAP testing was also completed by all students.

3.7. Data Analyses

Following the collection of proficiency and motivation scores, means were calculated for each category then compared within and between groups. Given the small sample size ($n \leq 30$), the *gain scores* for each group and each variable were used in the final analyses rather than pre and post test results to avoid Type I or Type II errors (Paltridge & Pahkiti, 2015).

For motivation data, given the design of the questionnaire (1–7-point Likert scale), composite scores were determined for each subscale (amotivation, external motivation, introjected regulation, integrated regulation, intrinsic motivation) before applying descriptive statistics (displayed in Table 5 in the results section).

Next, each data set (gain scores' means) was checked for normal distribution using a standard independent *t*-test. The skewness and kurtosis measures suggested normally distributed or generally normally distributed data sets (Paltridge & Pakiti, 2015). The baseline *t*-test results can be seen in Table 3. However, any assumptions must be cautious given the small sample size.

To assess how similar the two groups were at baseline on these measures a between samples *t*-test was calculated. The calculation showed that groups were not statistically significantly different at baseline ($p = <0.5$).

Table 3: Baseline proficiency descriptive statistics

Proficiency		**Normal Teaching Group**	**Goal Setting Group**
Language Use	Mean	-1.36	.42
	Median	.50	.00
	Std. Deviation	7.407	6.082
	Range	27	19
	Skewness	.066	-.015
	Kurtosis	-.413	-.927

	t-test*	1.141	
Reading	Mean	-1.07	-4.25
	Median	.00	-4.00
	Std. Deviation	11.499	6.151
	Range	46	23
	Skewness	-.649	-1.123
	Kurtosis	1.196	2.021
	t-test*	.918	

$p < 0.05$

Table 4: Baseline motivation descriptive statistics

Motivation Subscale		**Normal Teaching Group**	**Goal Setting Group**
Amotivation	Mean	.609	.100
	Median	.500	.000
	Std. Deviation	.678	.966
	Range	2.50	3.25
	Skewness	.425	.761
	Kurtosis	.342	.399
	t-test*	.605	
External Regulation	Mean	-.135	.275
	Median	.250	.250
	Std. Deviation	1.719	.877
	Range	7	3.25
	Skewness	-1.271	.956
	Kurtosis	2.869	2.660

	t-test*	1.932	
Introjected Regulation	Mean	-.058	1.150
	Median	-.250	1.000
	Std. Deviation	1.327	1.075
	Range	5.25	3.00
	Skewness	.764	1.056
	Kurtosis	1.401	.022
	t-test*	.113	
Integrated Regulation	Mean	-.596	-.367
	Median	-.500	-.625
	Std. Deviation	1.916	1.259
	Range	7.75	4.25
	Skewness	-1.910	1.488
	Kurtosis	5.293	2.330
	t-test*	-2.032	
Intrinsic Motivation	Mean	-2.000	-.483
	Median	-.917	-.333
	Std. Deviation	5.225	3.383
	Range	21.08	13.67
	Skewness	-2.648	-.927
	Kurtosis	8.406	3.766
	t-test*	1.554	

*$p < 0.05$

3.8. Ethical considerations

All preparation followed the University of Oxford's Departmental Research Ethics Committee's procedures, including opt-out forms rather than opt-in forms for students. The teacher-researcher status of the writer has positive and negative implications. Background checks were not necessary and there was already a strong relationship with the school leaders. However, there was also the possibility of bias, but as far as possible this was addressed through randomization and strict documentation throughout the intervention.

Prior to the start of the semester, parents of the participants were notified of the study and opt-out forms were distributed. No opt-out forms were returned so intact classes were able to participate. However, after the beginning of the semester new students joined both classes. These students' data are not included in the report.

Refer to Appendix 2 for CUREC forms, Appendix 3 for Opt-out forms, and Appendix 4 for parent information.

4. Results

The results presented in this section address the two components of the central research question: language learners' motivation and developments in language learners' English proficiency following the goal setting intervention.

At the heart of this study is the notion that grade seven (12-13-year-olds) English language learners (ELLs) could be explicitly taught the motivational strategy of goal setting to a) improve LL motivation, and b) improve English language achievement. The initial analysis of data for motivation to learn English and English proficiency does not suggest any statistically significant differences which could be attributed to the intervention. For motivation, students completed a 7-point Likert scale questionnaire, pre and posttest. The scores were calculated for each subcategory of self-determined behaviour (amotivated, externally regulated, introjected, integrated, intrinsically regulated). For English proficiency, pre and post MAP scores for reading and language use were compared, which were collected directly from the MAP website with the school's credentials.

First, a *t*-test was performed on both data sets for both groups to see if the relative mean scores for both groups were statistically significant. The data satisfied the requirements for normal distribution, comparable variance, and were not statistically significantly different (see table 2.2 in the Methodology chapter). This means that the average levels of motivation and English proficiency in each group were similar at baseline.

Due to missing data, the actual number of participants for both motivation data points for each group were n=13 (control) and n=10 (experimental). Originally, the NTG had 14 participants and the GSG had 12, as can be seen in Table 1 in the methodology chapter. While it is unfortunate to have missing data, it is a common occurrence amongst longitudinal studies. Often, missing data occurs due to attrition and in this study, it was due to student absence on the day of administering the motivation questionnaire. Note that for language proficiency, sample sizes did not change. As a result, the final data analyses for both motivation and proficiency only included the data from participants who were present for all data collection points, i.e., baseline and endpoint LLOS-IEA and MAP tests.

4.1. Were there identifiable changes in motivation for the goal setting group?

The mean gain scores for the NTG and GSG for **amotivation** were .609 and .100 respectively. That is, average level of amotivation in the intervention group rose by 0.4 more than the control group. These data should be regarded differently from the other categories because lower scores are more positive than higher scores, whereas for the other categories, the opposite is true.

External regulation, wherein an outside force perpetrates the motivation to learn English, saw mean gain scores of -.107 and .275 for NTG and GSG respectively. This difference is statistically non-significant (see Table 5 below). If one were to generate an assumption from it, you could argue that the intervention group felt more externally regulated than the control group at endpoint. This would suggest that the intervention had a negative impact on the group, in contention with the results regarding amotivation. However, it could suggest a shift along the SDT continuum.

Introjected motivation, again getting closer to intrinsic motivation on the continuum but still strongly guided by external forces (and feelings of guilt), saw the NTG's mean gain score being -.220 and the GSG's being 1.150. This is one of the larger between-group differences for MOT

(1.75) giving slightly more weight to the theory that explicitly teaching goal setting could influence language learner motivation.

Integrated motivation, a bigger step towards the ideal of intrinsic motivation, saw changes of -.696 and -.366 for the NTG and GSG respectively. The difference between groups is statistically non-significant (see Table 5 below). However, this inconsistency of differences between groups helps to understand the complex, flux status of LLs' motivation, which is also a victim of temporal influence, especially amongst adolescents.

For the final category, **intrinsic motivation**, the details are a little different. For the purpose of this study, with a small sample size, the three sub-categories of accountability, knowledge, and stimulation were collapsed into one: intrinsic motivation. The combined mean gain score for the control group was -2.00, whereas for the experimental group it was -.483. Although both groups showed less intrinsic motivation at the end of the study, the GSG showed marginally less of a reduction than the NTG. Table 6 shows the original data of each subcategory. If we look at the data a little closer, in terms of the subcategories, the greatest difference occurs in the stimulation category.

Table 5: Baseline motivation descriptive statistics

Motivation Subcategory	**NTG mean gain score**	**GSG mean gain score**	***t-test (p < 0.5)***
Amotivation	.583	.100	1.461
External Regulation	-.107	.275	.664
Introjected Regulation	-.220	1.150	2.575
Integrated Regulation	-.696	-.366	.482
Intrinsic Motivation	-2.000	-.483	.796

Table 6: Intrinsic motivation subcategory gain scores

Subcategory	NTG		GSG	
	mean	median	mean	median
Accomplishment	-.641	.000	-.233	.000
Knowledge	-.564	.000	-.200	.000
Stimulation	-.795	-.333	-.050	.125

However, for the purpose of this paper, the results are shown here for information only and will be discussed as one subgroup in the discussion section.

4.2. Were there identifiable differences in English proficiency between the two groups?

Unlike the SDT continuum, measures of language development are reasonably straightforward in this instance, i.e., if the scores go up it shows progress, if they go down, there is regression. As such, the only improvement was seen in the mean GSG language use scores with an increase of 0.417. On the other hand, there was a -4.25 difference between baseline and endpoint measurements for reading in the GSG. However, the NTG saw a decrease in both mean language use and mean reading levels, with a decline of -1.357 and -1.071 respectively.

Table 7: Baseline and endpoint descriptive statistics for language use and reading RIT for NTG and GSG

	Normal Teaching Group		Goal Setting Group	
	Baseline	Endpoint	Baseline	Endpoint
n	14	14	12	12
RIT language use (SD)	205.86 (19.346)	204.5 (18.367)	198.25 (13.559)	198.667 (15.761)
Median	203.00	203.50	201.00	198.00
Min/Max	167; 237	163; 239	178; 218	178; 223
Range	70	76	40	45

Gain score	-1.357		0.417	
RIT reading (SD)	202.86 (15.397)	201.786 (20.200)	197.42 (14.675)	193.167 (15.473)
Median	198.50	204.00	194.00	187.50
Min/Max	171; 229	170; 238	176; 221	177; 220
Range	58	68	45	43
Gain score	-1.071		-4.25	

While the results presented give an inconsistent picture, it does contribute to the flux, dynamic, complex notion of language learners. The nature of quantitative research must reduce individual people to numbers, and multiple individual numbers to a cumulative. The above description of limited results illustrates how difficult and inaccurate that can be with a group of young language learners. In a follow up study (and Covid permitting), a mixed methods approach could help to gain further insight to the ebbs and flows in the data through semi-structured interviews and journaling, as originally planned for this research.

At the end of the study, the NTG saw a mean reading score change of -1.071, whereas the GSG saw a mean change of -4.25. To summarize the results, the NTG showed negative results in language use and reading, whereas the GSG showed negative results in reading but not language use. Regarding motivation, the NTG showed negative results for all five subcategories, whereas the GSG showed positive results in external regulation and introjected regulation, but negative results in amotivation, integrated motivation, and intrinsic motivation.

5. Discussion

Building on long-standing interest in the role of motivation in the SLA field, this study assessed the role of cognitive motivational processes (self-determination) in the relationship between English performance, and the effects of explicitly teaching goal setting in a sample of middle school students. It also assessed whether systematic teaching of motivation strategies resulted in improved English proficiency and improved self-reported levels of motivation.

This section outlines how the present study contributes to the literature on L2 learners' motivation from a self-determination theory perspective. It will also discuss the findings critically in relation to the studies explored in the literature review chapter of this dissertation, and the research questions.

5.1. Motivation & Goal Setting

Regarding levels of motivation pre and post intervention, while no statistically significant difference was found for overall motivation between groups, there were some noteworthy differences amongst motivation subcategories of extrinsic and introjected motivation, which is congruent with Shih and Reynolds' (2018) study regarding integrated goal setting and reading strategy instruction. In other words, they also found statistically non-significant differences in overall motivation for both groups but did find some differences in the same motivation subcategories. In this way, the present study agrees with other empirical studies. However, the 'transformation' of Shih and Reynolds' (2018) EFL reading class is not something that the present study discovered. On the other hand, the fact that the control group showed negative gain scores in all five motivation subcategories, whereas the goal setting group showed positive gain scores in two of the five subcategories suggests that future research in this area is worthwhile. Lu, Lo, and Lincoln (2017) also found a decrease in motivation levels over time for their control group. This seemingly natural decrease in levels of motivation over time, be it an academic year or a semester, is something worth investigating further, especially if it has the potential to be manipulated and course-corrected to positively correlate with SLA achievement.

A very large amount of research has been done on motivation but there is a paucity of research regarding how and if motivation can be manipulated, and what the effects of said manipulation could be. In this instance, the aim of the study was to manipulate motivation to assess whether this effects English achievement. The large body of research on motivation consistently finds positive relationships between levels of motivation and language learning success. This is interesting but, on its own, is of limited practical value to educators. The strategy of goal setting was employed to attempt this and is worthy of further pursuit, despite statistically non-significant findings.

Regarding goal setting instruction, limitations of this study could be addressed before conducting a similar experiment. For example, a teacher with more experience in goal setting instruction could take the lead for the intervention. While the present teacher-researcher was well educated in goal setting, she had no experience in delivering goal setting instruction in the language learning classroom. Teacher training could also have an effect on the success of interventions.

Unfortunately, the scheduled classes where the intervention was to take place were on Mondays and Tuesdays. On Mondays, both groups had a double period (80 minutes), and on Tuesdays they both had a single period (40 minutes). This meant that the teacher did not see them from Tuesday afternoon until Monday morning. In the lives of a young teenager, yet to take full responsibility for their learning, this is very long period wherein it is all too easy to lose or forget subject requirements. Therefore, a future study should ensure that the teacher has daily contact with the groups, and ideally longer than 120 minutes per week, to keep students on track with their goal setting. This could also foster a better relationship between students and teacher thus improving the learning environment, which is known to be an affective variable in motivated language learning (Dörnyei, 2001).

The slight differences in motivation levels in the extrinsic and introjected subcategories is also worthy of further investigation. There is a natural temporal flux in motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2020) which the scores could be attributed to but in order to glean a better picture of motivation (and if it can be manipulated), semi-structured interviews, journals (as planned) or think alouds could be employed in a future mixed-methods experiment. The omission of qualitative methodology in the present study was unfortunate as it almost certainly would have provided some useful data. For example, fluctuations in external regulation could be investigated further to see what they could be attributed to. Intrinsic motivation could also be further understood by asking guided questions regarding stimulation, knowledge, and accomplishment throughout the intervention to better know an individual's learning needs. By knowing this, goals and steps to attain them could be manipulated for optimal results for each student an could possibly lead to improved metacognition regarding language learning.

Furthermore, the reluctant language learners could have been supported more through goal setting guidance if there had been more time. In the early stages of the intervention, one low

proficiency, low motivated student showed changes in behaviour when he realized he could create goals around his personal interests such as basketball and video games. Another student with high proficiency but poor attitude showed changes in attitude when she realized she could include learning English song lyrics and what they meant in her weekly goals. This highly personalized approach is something that could have been tapped into more if the there was more time in the weekly schedule and if students' weekly goal setting journals could have been analysed qualitatively. Congruent with Topuz's (2014) findings, when students selected their own goals, they revealed more positive changes.

5.2. English Proficiency

Regarding the effects of attempting to manipulate motivation through explicitly teaching goal setting on English proficiency, although the results were statistically non-significant, the findings add to the current literature on EFL goal setting and language proficiency.

The present study found no statistically significant difference between groups' proficiency mean gain scores, nor between pre and post-test proficiency scores. The NTG saw a decrease in both reading and language use scores, whereas the GSG group saw a slight increase (0.417) in language use and a decrease in reading scores. The differences are negligible, but an exploration of the learning environment could offer some insight into possible causes of the overall decrease of proficiency scores. However, it also prudent to note that test taking is susceptible to other external factors particular to the time of day, day of the semester, individual experiences and other individual differences (Horowitz & Young, 1991; Tasan et al., 2021). For example, one student was expected to improve her reading and language use scores in line with her general academic achievement but did not improve in either realm *according to the MAP data*. However, a look at the work she produced throughout the semester and formative assessments would show that she had improved. An explanation of this for her, and other students, could be test anxiety (Yue, 1996). Again, a more in-depth mixed methods research methodology would help to understand these possible variables and if they can be manipulated through goal setting.

While Lu, Lo, and Lincoln (2017) found a positive correlation with goal setting and proficiency, the testing effect (McDermot, 2006) could have had an impact on achievement scores, in that the more familiar the students became with the structure of the CET-4 test, the higher their grades

due to familiarity of the language. For the present study, with no significant changes in proficiency, perhaps if practice MAP tests had been used alongside the LLOS-IEA survey pre, mid, and post-test, the results would have been different. However, strategy instruction aims to provide learners with life-long, transferable skills which should yield benefits in multiple contexts, and does not promote 'teach-to-test' environments. In a follow up study for Lu, Lo, and Lincoln (2017), both CET-4 and a general English proficiency test (unseen, post-test) could be compared to see if there is any interaction between test familiarity (testing effect) and proficiency scores.

5.3. Limitations

An important limitation to consider is that of using MAP scores to determine levels of English proficiency. While this is the norm in the school setting of the present study, it is not ideal for the current sample who are EFL learners, not ESL nor EAL. MAP tests are designed for native English speakers and while it can be a good measure of growth, it does not set up EFL learners for success. Nuances in the questions and answers in the tests make it difficult for second language learners to fully grasp what is being asked of them. Furthermore, grade level criterion which are ubiquitously taught in the USA cannot be taught as a foreign language to the same age group. The school environment for these Chinese students in grade seven is labelled 'bilingual' but the reality is a much less balanced language environment. At best, the students at this school experience 70:30 Chinese Mandarin and English, which reflects a more traditional Chinese school wherein English is a specialist subject rather than a core subject. Nonetheless, students are required to measure their language growth using an instrument designed for English leaners in a 100% English immersive environment. It is well-documented that selecting the most suitable materials and assessment instruments which are context-specific is paramount to language learner success (McGrath, 2016). Therefore, future research with similar interests should make this an important consideration. To fully understand the learning environment before tackling the issues of instrument selection is important for all researchers. However, in educational settings, certain factors cannot be controlled for and in order to continue with in-situ research, sacrifices need to be made. Nonetheless, it is recommended to future researchers in the effects of teaching motivational strategies on language proficiencies to pay special attention to the appropriateness of instruments and where possible, further tailor them to the sample's needs.

Due to the small sample size and the impact of Covid-19, each intact class was treated as one data point. The nature of the self-determination continuum allows for the complexity of human nature to be considered (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In other words, one is not simply intrinsically motivated or extrinsically motivated. Motivation, on an individual level, is in a constant state of flux with numerous personal internal and external factors influencing it. One could be amotivated in the morning but intrinsically motivated by the end of the day, and vice versa. The point here is that given time and better circumstances, the results of the LLOS-IEA and MAP data could have been looked at on a student-by-student basis, alongside qualitative research methods to get a better understanding of how and if explicitly teaching goal setting had any effect on this sample of students. To reduce 12 individuals to a single number seems incongruent with the notion of the self-determined language learner.

According to Chamot & O'Malley (1994), L2 learners could have a wider range of learning needs than L1 learners. Therefore, different learning strategies could be more suitable for different students. Therein, goal setting might not have been the best motivational strategy for all the students in this experiment. Goal setting was selected as the motivation strategy to be taught because it is a very tangible, easily differentiated, tool for language learners of all abilities, which was very important for the context of the present study (heterogenous language proficiencies). This limitation could be addressed in a variety of ways. For example, after being introduced to various motivational strategies, students could individually pick the one they feel most drawn to. Of course, this approach also presents some problems. Alternatively, as in Lu, Lo, and Lincoln's (2017) study, a different strategy could be taught each week. However, for the current sample, this would have been too much content to understand and implement within the time frame. Nonetheless, both options are worthy considerations for future research.

Unfortunately, there is missing data from the motivation questionnaire which further limits the data analysis, especially in such a small sample size. However, attrition is an unpredictable factor and occurs frequently in experimental research.

Aside from the major impact of having to teach online from February 2022, Covid-19 also played a role in timetable disruptions throughout the first semester. Covid-testing had to take place in and out of school which often meant losing class time or student absence.

5.4. Implications for teaching

Although the results of this study do not have any significant implications for teaching (as in there is no urgent call to reform language teaching pedagogy based on the findings), the results were not negative. Therefore, language teachers should continue to foster motivation in the classroom and keep up to date with developments in the research field of motivation and educational psychology. Furthermore, context-specific materials and assessment instruments should be promoted and as much as possible incorporated into language acquisition curriculum, with flexibility. Where a standardized test such as MAP is mandatory, other methods of measuring progress should be considered to holistically reflect the growth of the individual student alongside required tests.

5.5. Implications for research

Despite the statistically non-significant results of the present study, it is still important to find out more about manipulating levels of motivation in L2 learning. There's an abundance of research which shows that motivation and achievement are positively correlated, but we don't know whether one effects the other or if there are lurking variables we have not considered. As time goes by, continued research into this tells us less and less about motivation. What we need is more in-depth research on how motivation can be manipulated and what the causal relationship is with L2 achievement. Future research with a similar goal could improve on the methodology of the present study and continue to explore the possibility of manipulating motivation.

Although the results of this study are statistically non-significant, they do not negate the importance of explicitly teaching other learning strategies to language learners. On the contrary, this dissertation calls for more experimental research into the explicit instruction of motivation strategies and more in-depth qualitative methodologies for understanding the effects of such training. Furthermore, the issues outlined in this chapter provide problems to be addressed through in-situ research amongst adolescents and EFL learners. This context-specific problem calls for worldwide cross-cultural collaboration amongst researchers and educators to get a global picture of the language learner and the effects of motivation upon L2 achievement.

6. Conclusion

In this qualitative, quasi-experimental study, 23 grade 7 (11-13-year-olds) attending a bilingual school in China participated in an 18-week intervention study. Two in-tact classes were randomly assigned normal teaching group (NTG) or goal setting group (GSG). The GSG were explicitly taught the motivated learning strategy of goal setting to try to find out if this pedagogical approach could have a positive effect on students' levels of motivation and their English language achievement.

In a nutshell, this study aimed to elaborate on previous research that explored the relationship between levels of self-determined behaviour and the rate of success in second language acquisition. Instead of looking for the relationship between the two, the present study aimed to explore if motivation could be manipulated and if so, could it influence English language proficiency. Despite finding statistically non-significant results, it has provided a stepping-stone to build more robust research designs with a similar goal in mind.

Interpretation of the preceding findings is subject to some limitations. First, as the study was based on students enrolled in a private school in China, the results may not be generalizable to students in other countries or at other grade levels. Second, the researcher-teacher was not officially trained as a goal-setting instructor, and this could have had an impact upon the results. Third, the accuracy of the self-reported LLOS-IEA survey may be questionable due to pressures of social desirability (Nancarrow & Brace, 2000), time of day of reporting (Yue, 1996; Dörnyei, 2017), or disinterest in completing it accurately. The inconsistency of results for the NTG and GSG, that is, no apparent pattern for either group, could be due to the small sample size or time limitations. However, given the dynamic nature of people (and flux of motivation) this could also be attributed to human nature. This is worth further pursuit in future using mixed methods, longitudinal designs.

Although the results of this study do not suggest significant changes to pedagogical practices in EFL classrooms, they do provide a basis to further investigate goal setting as part of teacher training and supports future research into how language learners' levels of self-determined motivation can be initiated, fostered, and maintained. Afterall, there is a consensus that intrinsic motivation positively correlates with SLA success, regardless of one's learning environment,

country, or culture (Dörnyei, 1998, 2009). Furthermore, this study calls for teachers' attention to what is beyond teaching of language skills, in the cultivation of learners' intrinsic interests and autonomy to become life-long learners. In other words, to also help language learners learn how to learn.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Bilingual LLOS-IEA

Why do you learn English?

The following section contains a number of reasons why people might study English. Beside each reason, write the number from the scale which best matches your own reasons for learning English. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers because many people have different opinions.

以下部分包含人们可能学习英语的许多原因。在每个原因旁边，从量表中选出最符合您自己学习英语的原因的数字。请记住，没有正确或错误的答案，因为每个人有不同的想法。

Reason for learning English 学习英语的原因	100% disagree 完全不同意 1	Disagree a lot 非常不同意 2	Disagree a bit 稍微不同意 3	Neither agree nor disagree 中立 4	Agree a bit 稍微同意 5	Agree a lot 非常同意 6	100% agree 完全同意 7
I cannot see why I study English, I couldn't care less about it. 我不知道我为什么学习英语，我完全不在乎.							
Off hand, I can't think of any good reason why I study English. 我想不出学习英语的充分理由.							
Honestly, I don't know; I truly have the impression of wasting my time in studying English. 实话说我也不清楚，我觉得学英语很浪费时间.							
I don't know; I can't understand why I am studying English. 不清楚，我不知道我为什么要学习英语。							

Reason for learning English 学习英语的原因	100% disagree 完全不同意 1	Disagree a lot 非常不同意 2	Disagree a bit 稍微不同意 3	Neither agree nor disagree 中立 4	Agree a bit 稍微同意 5	Agree a lot 非常同意 6	100% agree 完全同意 7
In order to get a more prestigious job later on. 以便日后得到一份更有声望的工作。							
To gain the benefits (e.g. job, money, course credit) which taking English will provide me. 获得学习英语会给我带来的好处（例如工作、金钱、课程学分）。							
In order to have a better salary later on. 为了以后有更好的薪水。							
To gain the benefits that entrance into the English community will provide me. 为了获得英语语言环境中的那些便利和好处。							
Because I would feel embarrassed or ashamed if I didn't know the language. 因为如果我不会英语，我会感到尴尬或羞愧。							
Because I would feel ashamed if I couldn't speak to other people from the English-speaking community in English. 因为如果我不能用英语与说英语的其他人交谈，我会感到羞耻。							
Because I would feel bad if I didn't know the language. 因为如果我不懂这门语言，我会感觉很糟糕。							
Because I would feel guilty if I didn't know the language. 因为如果我不懂这门语言，我会感觉很罪恶。							

Reason for learning English 学习英语的原因	100% disagree 完全不同意 1	Disagree a lot 非常不同意 2	Disagree a bit 稍微不同意 3	Neither agree nor disagree 中立 4	Agree a bit 稍微同意 5	Agree a lot 非常同意 6	100% agree 完全同意 7
Because knowing the language is a part of who I am and what I do. 因为了解语言是了解我是谁和我该做什么的一部分。							
Because it is an integral part of my life. 因为它是我生活中不可或缺的一部分。							
Because it is important part of how I define myself. 因为它是我如何定义自己的重要组成部分。							
Because it is a fundamental part of who I am. 因为它是我的基本组成部分。							

For the enjoyment I experience when I grasp a difficult construct in English. 为了当我掌握一个困难的英语结构时，我所体验到的乐趣。							
For the satisfaction I feel when I am in the process of accomplishing difficult exercises in English. 为了我在用英语完成困难练习的过程中感到满足。							
For the pleasure I experience when surpassing myself in my English studies. 为了我在英语学习中超越自己时所体验到的乐趣。							

Reason for learning English 学习英语的原因	100% disagree 完全不同意 1	Disagree a lot 非常不同意 2	Disagree a bit 稍微不同意 3	Neither agree nor disagree 中立 4	Agree a bit 稍微同意 5	Agree a lot 非常同意 6	100% agree 完全同意 7
Because I enjoy the feeling of acquiring knowledge about the English community and their way of life. 我喜欢了解英语社区及其生活方式的感觉。							
For the satisfied feeling I get in finding out new things. 对于发现新事物的满足感。							
For the pleasure I experience in knowing more about the English language. 我在更多地了解英语方面所体验到的乐趣。							
Because I love doing it; it's fun. 因为我喜欢学和说英语，很有趣。							
For the "high" I feel when hearing the English language spoken. 为了当我听到英语时的兴奋感。							
For the positive feeling that I experience when using English. 为了我在使用英语时体验到的积极情绪。							
Because it's a great feeling to be able to use English. 因为能用英语的感觉真好。							

Appendix 2: CUREC approval

Dear [redacted],

A longitudinal study of the effects of teaching motivational strategies to adolescents from a self-determination theory perspective [CIA-21-279]

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to inform you that, on the basis of the information provided to DREC, the proposed research has been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards, and accordingly, approval has been granted.

Please continue to follow all current guidance issued by CUREC during the pandemic, notably COVID-19: CUREC guidance on research involving human participants, https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/coronavirus

If relevant please also check the CUREC website for their best practice research guides, these can be very useful in refining the writing up of ethical considerations in your research – seehttps://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/resources/bpg

Good luck with your research study,

Keep well and safe,

Yours sincerely,

All good wishes,

[redacted]

Chair, DREC

[redacted]
Senior Research Fellow, Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford
Associate Professor, Department of Education, University of Oxford
Conjoint Full Professor, Newcastle University, Australia
Docent, University of Helsinki, Finland
Extraordinary Professor, North-West University, South Africa
Visiting Professor, Irish Institute for Catholic Studies, MIC, Limerick, Ireland
Honorary Senior Research Fellow, School of Education, University of Birmingham

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

XXXX
15 Norham Gardens
Oxford
OX2 6PY
Tel: +44 (0)1865 284 091
Email: XXXX

A longitudinal study of the effects of teaching motivational strategies to adolescents from a self-determination theory perspective.

OPT-OUT FORM

Ethics Approval Reference: [Insert]

If you **DO NOT** want your child to participate in the above-named research study please fill out the form below and return it to the school by [dd/mm/yyyy].

If we do not receive an opt-out form from you by this date, your child may be invited to take part in this study, as described in the accompanying information sheet.

I, the undersigned, hereby DO NOT give permission for my child to take part in the study titled, A longitudinal study of the effects of teaching motivational strategies to adolescents from a self-determination theory perspective.

Name of child: _____

Name of parent/guardian: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of researcher: _____

Appendix 4: Information for parents

Dear parents and guardians

During the first semester of the next academic year (September 2021 - February 2022), our G7 English Teacher and Assistant Head of English for Middle School, will conduct research as part of her dissertation for the MSc in Applied Linguistics for Language Teaching at Oxford University. The research will be incorporated into her normal classes and integrated into the standard English curriculum for Grade 7 students here at XXXX.

Since your child will be in XXX's class in September, we invite you to read through the research details attached.

If you have any questions you can reply directly to the school office or you may email XXXX

Kind regards

Appendix D

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

XXXX
15 Norham Gardens
Oxford
OX2 6PY
XXXX

A longitudinal study of the effects of teaching motivational strategies to adolescents from a self-determination theory perspective.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 11 TO 15 YEARS

Ethics Approval Reference: [Insert]

We are inviting you to join in a research study. Our names are XXX and XXX (your English teacher in G7 at XXX and we work at the University of Oxford in the Department of Education. Before you decide if you would like to join in, it's important to understand what the study is about, why we're doing it and what it would involve for you. Please read and think about this leaflet carefully. Please feel free to talk to your family, friends, or the researchers about it if you want.
If anything isn't clear or you have more questions you can ask your parent/guardian to give us a call and we can discuss it with you and your parent/guardian.

Why are we doing this research?

We are trying to find out if teaching motivation strategies to students like you helps you to become better at English and to enjoy your English classes more. Some people say it might, and other people say it might not. To find out who is correct we need to do a fair test. That's when we teach motivation strategies to some students and do not teach them to other students, then compare the two groups of students at the end to see if it made a difference. When we have finished this research we can share what we found out with other teachers and students, so they can learn from it too.

Why have I been invited to take part?

We are inviting you to take part because you are a young person in Grade 7, aged between 11-13 years, and will be taught English by XXXX in G7. We are inviting around 40 young people to take part (two homeroom

classes - 7A and 7B).

Do I have to take part?

No - It is up to you. We will ask you to sign a form if you do not want to take part. We will give you a copy of this information sheet and your signed form to keep. You are free to stop taking part at any time during the research without giving a reason, by telling the researcher. If you decide to stop, we will not use the information we have already collected from you. If you decide you do not want to take part in the study it will not affect the way you are taught English and you will receive the same treatment as the other students.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Not much! You will receive the same teaching fromXXX as you would do usually. The curriculum will be the same as the other students in your grade. The research will take place during the first semester, around 20 weeks. Any questionnaires or writing activities you need to do for the study will be done during class time. Any personal data I collect will stored safely and when I write my report your name will not be included. It'll all be anonymous.

When I've written my dissertation, you'll be welcome to read it - although it'll be quite long! I'll create an easy-to-read summary of the report too.

What happens to the results of the study?

The information you provide during the study is the **research data**. Any research data from which you can be identified such as your name, date of birth or homeroom is known as **personal data**.

Personal data will be encrypted and stored on my password protected computer, uploaded to the university's password protected OneDrive for the duration of the study. After that, all personal data will be destroyed.

Other research data will be stored for 3 years after publication or public release of the work of the research.

The research will be written up as part of my dissertation - my final project for my Master's in Applied Linguistics for Language Teaching at the University of Oxford. We also aim to publish our findings in scientific journals, but this may be two to three years from the end of the study.

What are the advantages / disadvantages of taking part?

There are no disadvantages to taking part. An advantage is that you could be contributing to improving the language learning experience of students for years to come - and you'll be the first to know about it!

Will anyone else know I'm doing this?

We will keep your information private. This means we will only tell those who have a need or right to know,

such as the research team and your parent/guardian. We will only share information that has your name and address removed.

What if I don't want to take part in the research anymore?

Just tell your parent/guardian and the people carrying out the research that you don't want to take part. You don't have to give a reason and no one will be annoyed with you. It is YOUR choice.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is organised by XXX of Oxford University, who is a postgraduate student. The study is being paid for by XXX.

Who has reviewed the study?

Before any research involving people can start, it has to be checked by a Research Ethics Committee to make sure that it is OK for the research to go ahead. This study has been approved by the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.

What if there is a problem or something goes wrong?

Please tell us if you are worried about any part of this study, by contacting the researcher [XXXX@XXX]. You may also talk to your teacher/parent/guardian who will let the researcher know. If you are still unhappy or wish to make a complaint, either you or your teacher/parent/guardian can contact the chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford:

Chair, **Medical Sciences Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee**; Email: ethics@medsci.ox.ac.uk; Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD

OR

Chair, **Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee**; Email: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk; Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD

OR

[only for applications reviewed by a Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC)] Chair, **[insert relevant Departmental Research Ethics Committee name]**; Email: [insert relevant departmental research ethics committee email address and postal address]

Data Protection

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your personal data and, as such, will determine how your personal data is used in the study.
The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. Research is a task that we perform in the public interest.
Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from https://compliance.web.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights.

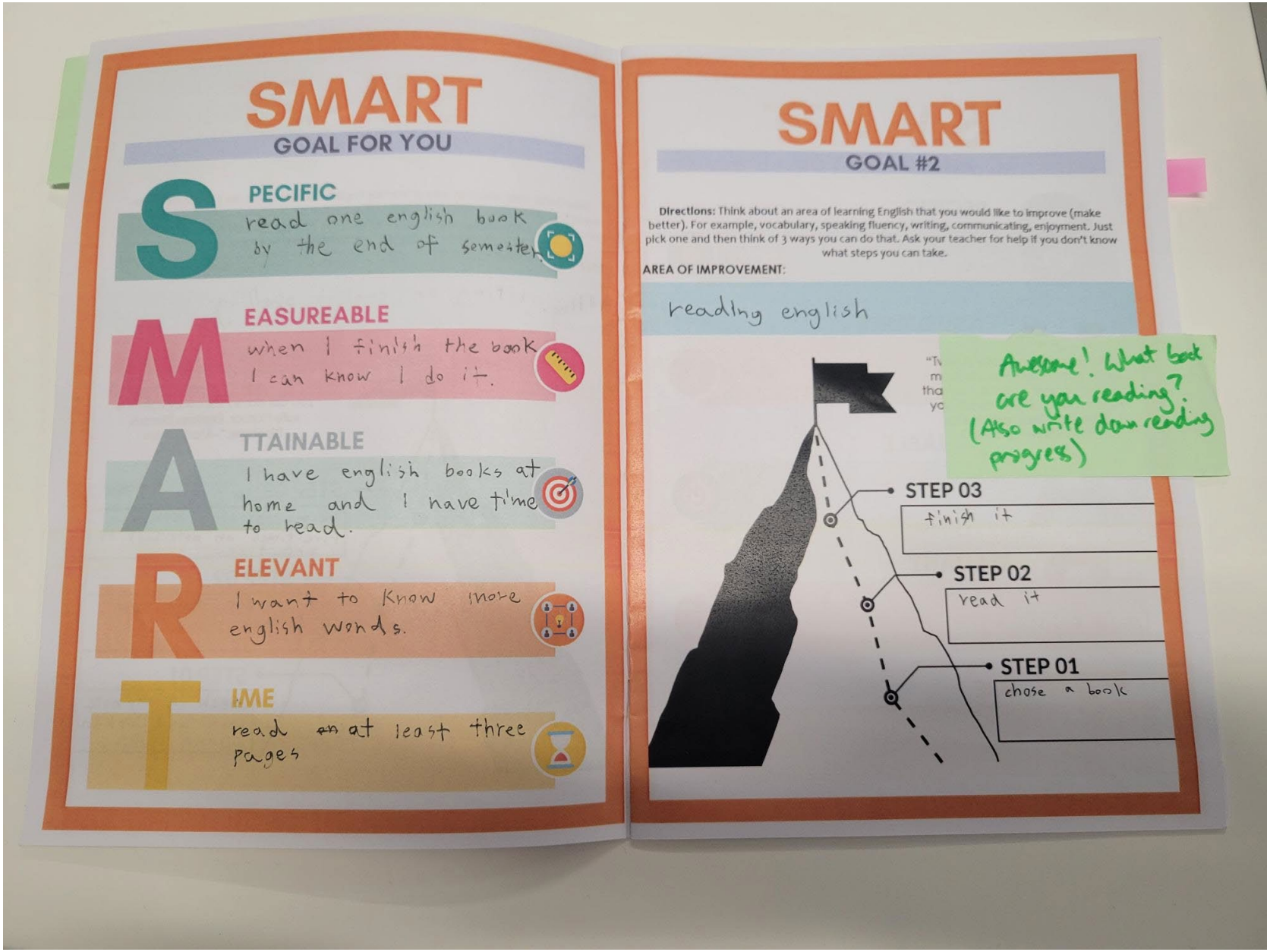
Contact details

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

[Insert Primary Researcher Name]
[Insert Department Name]
[Insert Department Address]
Tel: [Insert Number]
Email: [insert address]

Thank you for reading this – please ask any questions if you need

Appendix 5: Goal setting example



Appendix 6: Goal feedback example

Dear [redacted]

After reading your goals, I've got some ideas and challenges for you.

I can see that communicating with different people in English is important to you. Let's see what steps you can take to improve your communicative English.

Short-term goals (weekly)

10.21 ☑ **Vocabulary:** Learn 10 vocabulary words you need to use when you play basketball.

[redacted] **Writing:** Write 10 sentences using the basketball vocabulary.

10.24 ☑ **Speaking:** Speak in English outside of the English classroom at least once a day. This can be with friends or teachers or family.

Long-term goals (each semester)

10.24 ☑ **Vocabulary:** increase vocabulary size (vocabulary level).

10.25 ☑ **Speaking:** Improve fluency and confidence in speaking English.

10.25 ☑ **Listening:** Confidently understand basketball directions.

Each time you complete a short-term goal, tick the box and write the date next to it.

Every Tuesday, sign this paper and give it back to me.

Sign: [redacted]

Date: 10.26. 2021

De[redacted]

After reading your goals, I've got some ideas and challenges for you.

I can see that you enjoy English and are dedicated to learning. I think you have high expectations of yourself (I have them of you too!). Let's break your goals down into manageable and achievable steps which will help you see your progress.

Short-term goals (weekly)

2021. 10. 22 ☑ **Vocabulary:** Learn 10 new vocabulary words related to volleyball.

2021. 10. 25 ☑ **Writing:** Write a paragraph about volleyball using your new vocabulary words.

2021. 10. [redacted] 19 ☑ **Speaking:** Speak in English outside of the English classroom as much as possible (with friends and teachers).

(No. 1)

Long-term goals (each semester)

☐ **Vocabulary:** increase vocabulary size (vocabulary level).

☐ **Writing:** Confidently be able to write a 5-paragrpah essay on any topic.

☐ **Reading:** Read one extra English novel.

Each time you complete a short-term goal, tick the box and write the date next to it.

Every Tuesday, sign this paper and give it back to me.

Sign: [redacted]

Date: 21. 10. 25