Motivation Towards English Learning and the Acquired Proficiency in ESL: A Study of Native Speakers of Chinese in the UK and Chinese Universities

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Abstract. This study investigated the relationship between English learning motivation and second language writing ability among Chinese university students. Data were collected from 45 Chinese students (undergraduate to doctoral students) at universities in China and the UK using the Gardner Motivation Scale and a timed writing task. Lexical and syntactic complexity of their writing was assessed using the CTAP (Computed Topic Text Analysis Tool). The study found that: Instrumental motivation was dominant (68%), particularly among native Chinese students with a strong desire for career development. The high-motivation group performed significantly better in writing than the low-motivation group ($t=4.32$, $p<0.01$), with their text lexical diversity (HDD index) averaging 0.28 higher. Although the UK international students had slightly lower motivation intensity (mean 0.7 points lower), their syntactic complexity (average number of clauses per article) surpassed the native group by 37%, demonstrating a compensatory effect of immersion on writing ability. The results highlight the crucial interaction between motivation type, intensity, and learning environment on second language writing ability, providing empirical evidence for differentiated writing instruction.

Keywords: English writing performance; Instrumental motivation; Lexical complexity; Syntactic complexity; Transnational education environment.

1. Introduction

Second language development has known to be affected by many factors, including motivation, attitude, age and many more [11]. Previous research has highlighted motivation as playing a significant role in second language acquisition [7, 23]. Gardner and Lambert divided the motivation for language learning into two types, the first is instrumental motivation, which means that learners learn a language for functional and useful goals, such as enhancing job prospects [10]. The second, integrative motivation, entails learners seeking to immerse themselves in the target language's culture and communicate with its speakers. Studies conducted by Wimolmas and Nguyen examined the relationship between motivation and English language learning [18, 24]. Notably, among the two types of motivation, instrumental motivation has been found to be more effective in influencing students' learning of English.

While there is extensive research on the relationship between motivation and second language acquisition, most researchers have focused on evaluating speaking ability rather than writing ability as a measure of learning outcomes. Few prior studies have investigated the relationship between motivation and second language (L2) writing performance. Writing, as an output method for language learning, plays a crucial role in the English language learning process. Through writing practice, learners can not only learn and solidify grammatical knowledge but also identify and target areas for improvement [5]. Understanding this relationship is important to demonstrate the extent to which different levels and types of motivation lead to varying outcomes in L2 writing, which is the motivation behind the present study.

To address this research gap, the present study delves into the quantitative exploration of the relationship between motivation and L2 writing performance. Initially, a comprehensive assessment of participants' motivation levels is conducted. Subsequently, employing a multifaceted approach encompassing questionnaires, writing tests, and advanced tools such as NLP tools for social sciences and CTAP (Common Text Analysis Platform), the study evaluates learners' writing proficiency by researching levels of lexical and syntactical complexity. Furthermore, the study investigates the

impact of various types of motivations across different proficiency levels on the learning outcomes of second language writing. By employing rigorous quantitative analysis techniques, this research seeks to elucidate the nuanced interplay between motivational factors and writing performance, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of effective language learning strategies.

The study focuses on Chinese university students studying English as a second language. This population is particularly relevant because learning English has become a significant goal for many young people in China, and governments, schools, and parents are increasingly emphasising English proficiency due to its importance in the current globalised world [14, 21]. The study included 45 participants: 23 studying in the UK and 22 studying in China. Compared to previous research that primarily focused on participants with the same educational backgrounds, such as undergraduates, this study increases diversity by including participants ranging from undergraduate to PhD levels. By including students studying domestically and internationally, this study took a step further into how and why motivations can orient differently in different cultural and educational backgrounds.

After a brief introduction to the study's purpose, background, innovations, and value, the second section of the paper will review the literature related to this research, and the third section will explain the methodology used. The fourth and fifth sections will present the study's results and discuss and evaluate the findings. Finally, the sixth section will provide a summary of the entire study and article.

2. Literature review

Language learning motivation has a significant impact on learners' language proficiency and plays an important role in the improvement and development of learners' language skills in the process of learning a foreign language [7, 23]. Many research findings have shown that when learners are motivated to learn, they develop language skills more rapidly [1, 18 and 24]. Furthermore, by investigating the relationship between language learning motivation as well as the level of language proficiency, it is beneficial for both educators and learners.

2.1 The motivation for learning a foreign language

Motivation is a complex human construct, a multifaceted concept widely researched across diverse academic fields. However, no single theory can fully capture and explain the intricacies of motivation [23].

Numerous definitions of motivation for language learning exist in prior studies, often classifying it into different types. Lightbown and Spada suggested that second language motivation is a multifarious phenomenon, describable in terms of two factors: the learner's communicative needs and attitudes toward the target language [13]. Gardner defined motivation as the degree to which the learner strives to achieve language learning goals and derives satisfaction from the process [9].

The varying types of language learning motivation reflect learners' reasons for acquiring a second language [19]. Ryan and Deci categorised motivation as intrinsic or extrinsic based on the underlying reasons or goals [22]. Extrinsic motivation stems from external factors, such as avoiding punishment or gaining rewards. For instance, some learn languages to access better career opportunities that bilinguals or multilinguals may have. Conversely, intrinsic motivation is driven by internal rewards, such as personal growth, broadening horizons, and forming connections with speakers of other languages. A key distinction is that intrinsic motivation is voluntary and intentional. Alternatively, Gardner and Lambert proposed instrumental and integrative motivations [10]. Instrumental motivation involves practical reasons like university admission or better employment prospects. Integrative motivation reflects a desire to integrate into the community speaking the target language, such as forming friendships with its speakers.

Numerous studies have demonstrated motivation's crucial role in language learning success [20]. Motivation affects learners' engagement, attitudes, confidence, and initiative throughout the learning process. Highly motivated students actively seek language learning opportunities, discuss related

issues with teachers and peers, and dedicate substantial time and effort, thereby enhancing their proficiency [18].

2.2 Second Language writing and its performance evaluation

Writing was once thought to play a minor role in second language learning, but recent findings indicate that writing can play a facilitating role in learners' language development [24]. Writing provides learners with opportunities to use and relate to the language as they learn it, practising vocabulary and grammar skills. At the same time, by correcting problems in writing and receiving feedback from others, the same problems can be avoided over and over again [25]. From another perspective, writing is usually the last skill to be taught in the second language learning process because writing in a second language requires learners' second language skills to reach the standard at which they are able to write.

The role of writing in language learning goes beyond just practising skills. Writing can be used to systematically check learners' overall linguistic competence. For example, from a mini-composition, learners' mastery of grammar, punctuation and spelling can be shown and the learners' language structure can be revealed. Writing performance can also reflect the learners' use of vocabulary, including the level of difficulty and the richness of vocabulary. In addition to this, writing can also show learners' ability to organise and express ideas [2, 25].

Two key concepts related to writing performance research in second language acquisition are lexical complexity and syntactic complexity. Lexical complexity in writing refers to the richness, variety, and sophistication of the vocabulary used, and is one of the aspects of judging language proficiency which includes vocabulary range, lexical morphology, and accuracy in choosing vocabulary [17]. Syntactic complexity, on the other hand, refers to the sophistication, variety and richness of the sentence structure that the writer uses to convey a message, which consists of many aspects such as sentence length, sentence type and syntactic complexity [15].

2.3 Relevant research

There have been many studies focusing on the relationship between motivation to learn a second or foreign language and proficiency in that language.

For example, the Nguyen's experiment explored the motivation of 371 at Vietnam National University students to learn English as a second language and whether students' backgrounds affected their motivation to learn English [18]. The results of the study showed that students' instrumental motivation and integrative motivation were both high, but instrumental motivation was higher than integrative motivation. And students' family backgrounds also had an impact on students' ability to learn, with students being more motivated if they had any family member who spoke English.

Wimolmas researched the relationship between motivation to learn English and English proficiency among undergraduate students in Thailand [24]. The main purpose of the study was to find out the rank of students' motivation to learn English and as to whether this motivation is integrative or instrumental. The results of the study indicated that students were high in motivation to learn English, and that this motivation was more instrumental, with the majority of them believing that a high level of fluency in English would lead to more success.

The questionnaire was used in all of the studies surrounding the relationship between motivation to learn a language and proficiency in that language. The source of the questions in the questionnaire was Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery, which was half instrumental and half integrative motivation [9].

2.4 Research gap and research questions

From reading and analysing the previous studies, and in conjunction with the researcher's proposed guidelines for future studies, previous studies suggested the need to include more participants and broaden the range of participant. Many of the studies only includes undergraduate students, such as

in the study of Wimolmas the participants were 30 first year undergraduate students from Thammasat University [24].

Therefore, I increased the diversity of participants from undergraduate to PhD, from International students to Chinese university students. By expanding the range of participants, it was possible to gather participants with different levels of English proficiency, educational environments, language exposure opportunities and language learning strategies and thus the research was able to investigate and analyse the relationship between motivation to learn the English language and fluency in English from a wider range of angles and a wider range of experiences.

Also, previous studies did not dive into the relationship between second language writing performance and motivation. Instead, most is about speaking performance. Judging from how writing can be a powerful perspective to look into learners lexical and syntactical competency, this study specially focuses on researching the writing performance. Based on an analysis of prior research and in alignment with proposed guidelines for future studies, it has been indicated that there is a necessity to expand participant demographics and increase diversity.

Thus, the research questions for this study are outlined as follows:

(1) What motivates Chinese students to learn English as a second language?

(2) How do distinct motivational profiles of learners correlate with the lexical and syntactic complexity of their writing?

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The participants in this experiment were 45 Chinese university students whose first language was Chinese and second language is English, of which 23 Chinese students were studying in the UK and the remaining 22 participants were all studying in China.

Their educational backgrounds ranged from undergraduate to PhD students.

3.2 Data collection

The questionnaire methodology employed in this study was conducted online, providing participants with a user-friendly interface accessible via their mobile devices or computers, thereby ensuring ease of access and completion. Participants were required to finalize all sections of the questionnaire before submission, ensuring comprehensive data collection and analysis.

The first section of the questionnaire is the informed consent section. It informed participants about the study's purpose and assured them that their data would be used solely for the student's assignment while guaranteeing privacy. Participants could freely choose to participate or not, and the study proceeded only with their consent.

Following the informed consent section, participants were directed to the demographic information section, designed to gather pertinent details such as age, gender, duration of English language study, and geographical location (i.e., whether participants were based in China or the United Kingdom).

Subsequently, participants proceeded to the motivation test section, which presented a series of 20 questions sourced from Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery [9]. These questions were strategically designed to assess both instrumental and integrative motivations, with a randomized presentation to minimize response bias. Participants provided their responses using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), thereby enabling a nuanced understanding of motivational factors influencing language learning.

The final section of the questionnaire comprised the writing test, wherein participants were tasked with composing a short essay of 100-200 words in response to a provided prompt. The duration of the writing task was recorded for subsequent analysis, allowing for an examination of writing proficiency alongside motivational factors.

3.3 Data analysis

The initial step in data analysis involved screening the questionnaire responses to identify and eliminate ineffective or invalid results. This included instances where participants provided nonsensical or unrelated responses for the writing task, exhibited response patterns indicative of non-substantive responding. For example, someone selected the same score for all questions and so on.

For the personal information, I created a table to list out the number of participants according to educational background and gender. I also used Excel to generate the average age and years of learning English.

The motivation test utilised a 7-point Likert scale. Excel analysis was employed to obtain the minimum, average, and maximum scores of instrumental and integrative motivations for two groups of participants: Chinese students studying in China and Chinese students studying in the UK. The average scores of each group were then compared against the thresholds illustrated in Figure 1 to assign the corresponding motivation levels. Additionally, I calculated the difference between the instrumental and integrative motivation scores within each group to determine if the two types of motivations affected the groups differently.

1.00-3.00	Low motivation
3.01-5.00	Moderate motivation
5.01-7.00	High motivation

Figure 1. Levels of English Learning Motivation

To assess the results in the writing section, I examined both lexical and syntactical complexity. The previous research employed various tools for this purpose. For syntactic complexity, metrics like Mean Length of Sentence (MLS), Complex T-unit Ratio (CT/T), and Dependent Clauses per T-unit (DC/T) were utilized, as described by Larsson and Kaatari [12]. Likewise, for lexical complexity, indices such as RTTR, CTTR, and MATTR were utilized, as outlined by Dewi [6].

In this study, for the lexical complexity, Moving Average Type Token Ratio (MATTR) was used. MATTR is to move a window containing N markers along the text markers, starting from the first marker and moving one marker at a time, and finally the average of the TTRs of each window is calculated to be the final score [4]. The parameter setting in this study was 50. Then I used the NLP tools for social sciences, which employs TAALED, to calculate the MATTR scores.

For the syntactic complexity, this study utilised Mean Length of T-unit and the Common Text Analysis Platform (CTAP) [12]. Measuring Mean Length of T-unit is to count the number of words of a main clause plus any subordinate clauses or non-clausal elements attached to it [8, 16]. CTAP is a tool designed for automatically extracting and analysing linguistic text features related to linguistic complexity [3].

4. Results

4.1 General information about participants

After screening the 45 questionnaires, five were deemed invalid and removed, leaving 40 effective questionnaires. Of these, 20 were completed by Chinese students studying in the UK, and 20 by Chinese students studying in China.

As shown in Figure 2, the participant pool consisted mainly of undergraduates, with a small number of postgraduates and PhDs: 32 undergraduates, six postgraduates, and two PhDs. There was a considerable gender imbalance, with female participants outnumbering males by 18.

	Gender			Educational Background		
	Number	Female	Male	Undergraduate	Master	PhD
UK	20	13	7	14	4	2
China	20	16	4	18	2	0
Total	40	29	11	32	6	2

Figure 2. Demographic information of participants

From Figure 3, it can be observed that the average age of participants was around 22 years old for both groups. Notably, while the average ages were similar between the two groups, Chinese students studying in the UK had been learning English for a considerably longer period, with an average of 15.75 years compared to 12.25 years for those studying in China, a difference of approximately 3.5 years.

	Length of Learning English (year)			Age (year)	
	Max	Average	Min	Max	Average
UK	25	15.75	10	30	22.65
China	18	12.25	8	25	21.94

Figure 3. Length of learning English and age of participants

4.2 Motivation

According to Figure 4, both groups demonstrate a high level of instrumental motivation and a moderate level of integrative motivation. This suggests that Chinese students studying in both countries generally exhibit strong motivation for studying English, with instrumental motivation being more prominent than integrative motivation.

	Instrumental Motivation (average score)	Level of Instrumental Motivation	Integrative Motivation (average score)	Level of Integrative Motivation
China	5.3	High	4.3	Moderate
UK	5.4	High	5.0	Moderate

Figure 4. Level of instrumental and integrative motivation

Figure 5 shows that the differences in instrumental motivation between Chinese students in the two countries. Figure 5 illustrates the differences in instrumental motivation among Chinese students in the two countries. Firstly, regarding the average value, the instrumental motivation of Chinese students in the UK (5.4) is slightly higher than that of Chinese students in China (5.3), showing a 0.1 difference. However, a notable variance is evident in the minimum values of the two groups, the Chinese students in the UK was 4.9 and the students in China was 3.5, with students studying in China scoring 1.4 points lower.

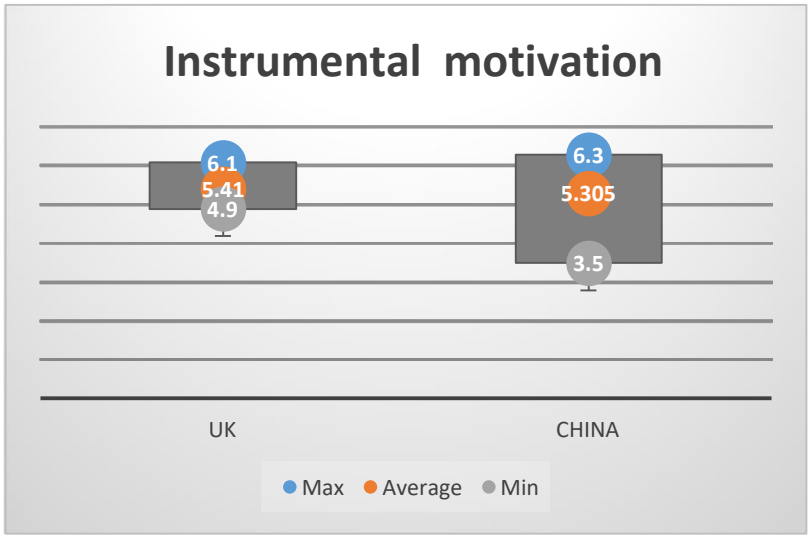

Figure 5. Maximum, average, and minimum scores for instrumental motivation

According to figure 6, the average score of integrative motivation for Chinese students in the UK (5.0) notably exceeds that of Chinese students in China (4.3), showing a difference of 0.7. Interestingly, the scores (maximum, average, minimum) for the UK group exhibit a broader distribution compared to the Chinese group, with the UK's maximum score surpassing that of the Chinese group and the UK's minimum score falling below that of the Chinese group.

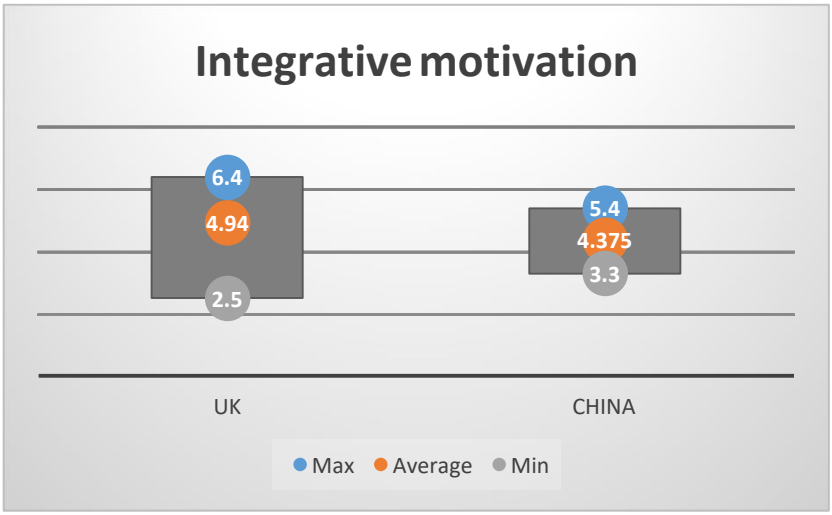

Figure 6. Maximum, average, and minimum scores for integrative motivation

Figure 7 shows the difference between the average scores of instrumental motivation and integrative motivation for two groups of participants. I subtracted the average score of instrumental motivation from the average score of integrative motivation to calculate the difference. International students in the UK demonstrate a slight 0.5 difference between the two motivations, while participants in China show a more distinct 1.0 difference. This suggests a more balanced motivation between instrumental and integrative factors among UK students, whereas Chinese participants lean more towards instrumental motivation, with integrative motivation playing a smaller role.

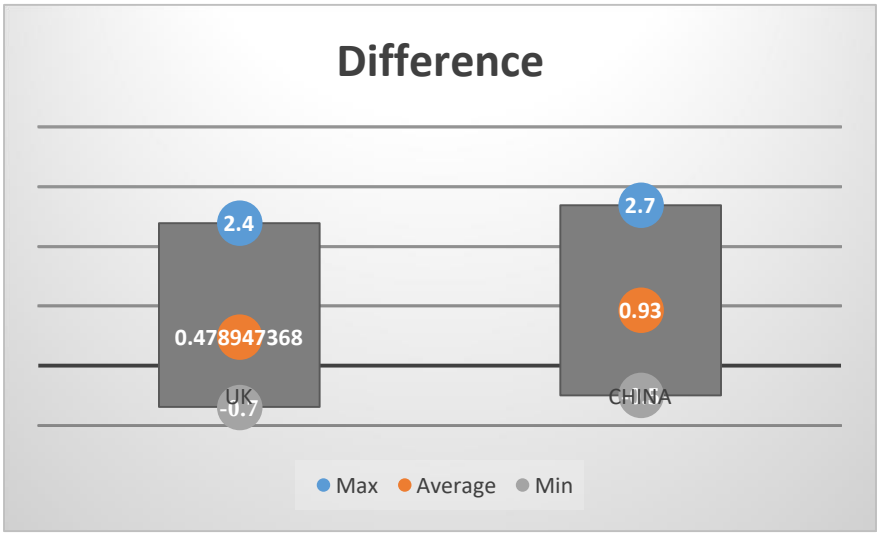

Figure 7. The difference between the two motivations among Chinese students in UK and in China

4.3 Lexical Complexity and motivations

The relationship between two motivations and lexical complexity for Chinese students studying in the UK is shown in Figure 8 and 9. First, according to the dotted trend line in two figures, it can be seen that both charts show an increasing trend. This suggests a positive correlation between both types of motivation and the MATTR value, namely, lexical complexity. In other words, for Chinese students in UK, higher levels of motivation are associated with higher lexical complexity scores.

Secondly, I looked into which motivation has larger effect on the lexical complexity.

The square value of R for the relationship between instrumental motivation and MATTR is 0.358. In comparison, the square value of R for the relationship between integrative motivation and MATTR is 0.686. Given that the square value of R for the relationship with integrative motivation is higher than that for instrumental motivation, it suggests that integrative motivation has a more substantial impact on lexical complexity for Chinese students in UK.

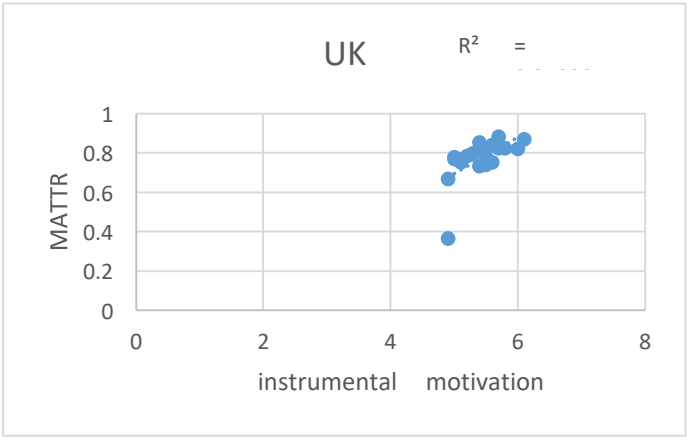

Figure 8. Relationship between lexical complexity and instrumental motivation scores among Chinese students in the UK

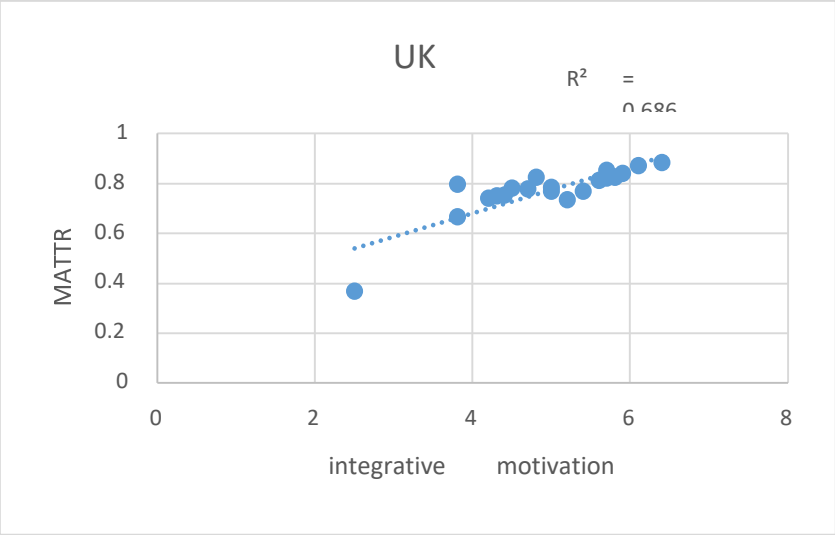

Figure 9. Relationship between lexical complexity and integrative motivation among Chinese students in the UK

For university students studying in China, Figures 10 and 11 illustrate the relationship between motivation and lexical complexity. The dotted trend line in Figure 10 shows a slight downward trend, indicating a negative correlation between instrumental motivation and lexical complexity. In contrast, Figure 11 exhibits an upward trend, suggesting a positive correlation between integrative motivation and the MATTR value (lexical complexity). Therefore, while integrative motivation has a positive proportional effect on lexical complexity for students in China, instrumental motivation has a negative effect.

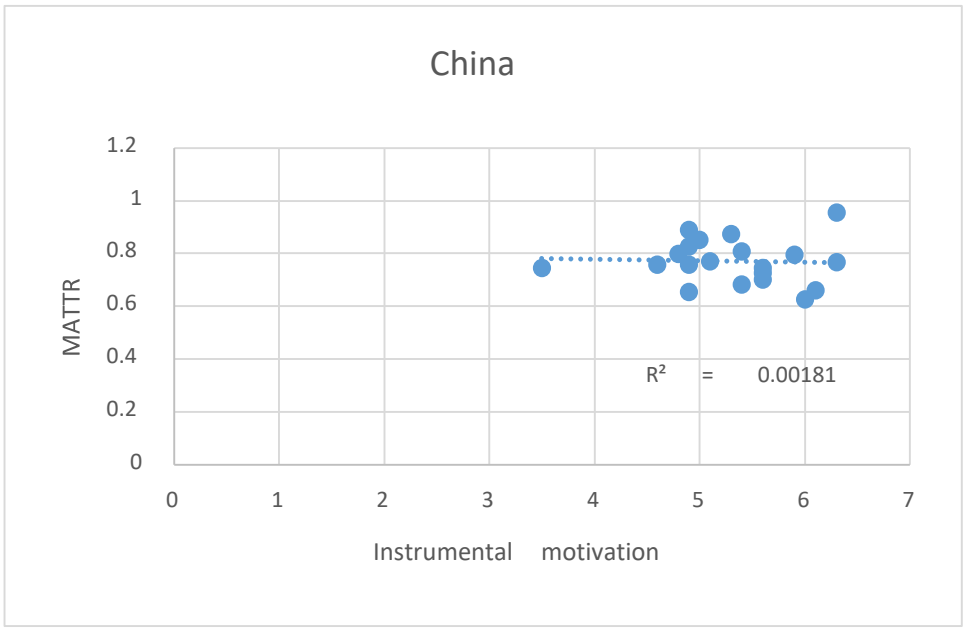

Figure 10. Relationship between lexical complexity and instrumental motivation among Chinese students in China

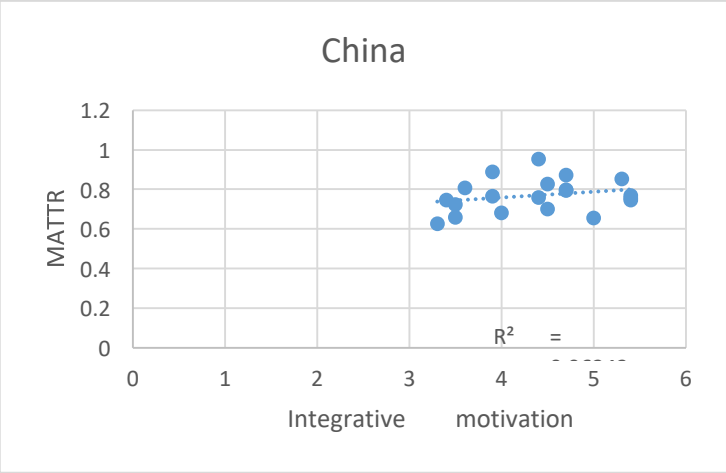

Figure 11. Relationship between lexical complexity and integrative motivation among Chinese students in China

Overall, in terms of lexical complexity, the findings demonstrated a positive correlation between integrative motivation and lexical complexity scores for both groups of Chinese students, those studying in the UK and those in China. For the students in the UK, integrative motivation exhibited a larger positive effect than instrumental motivation. Notably, for the students in China, while integrative motivation had a positive influence on lexical complexity, instrumental motivation showed a slight negative effect.

4.4 Syntactic complexity and motivations

Regarding the relationship between syntactic complexity, represented by mean length of T-unit, and two motivations for the UK students, according to the trend line,

Figures 12 and 13 display an upward trend for both integrative and instrumental motivation, which means both motivations has positive correlation with syntactic complexity. However, the square value of R for integrative motivation is larger than that for instrumental motivation. Therefore, among the influencing factors for syntactic complexity scores, participants' integrative motivation plays a more influential role.

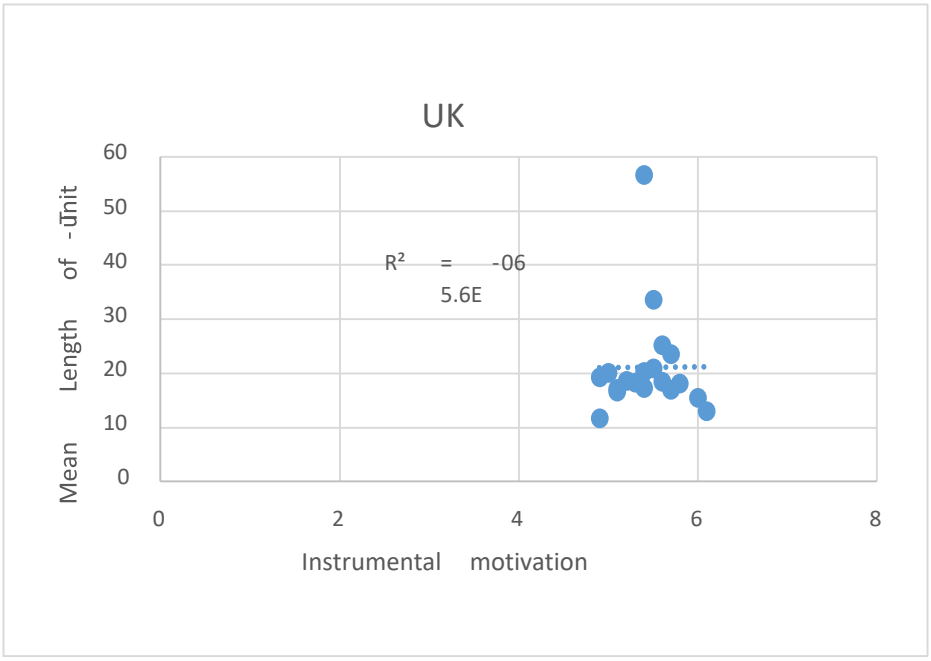

Figure 12. Relationship between Syntactic complexity and instrumental motivation among Chinese students in the UK

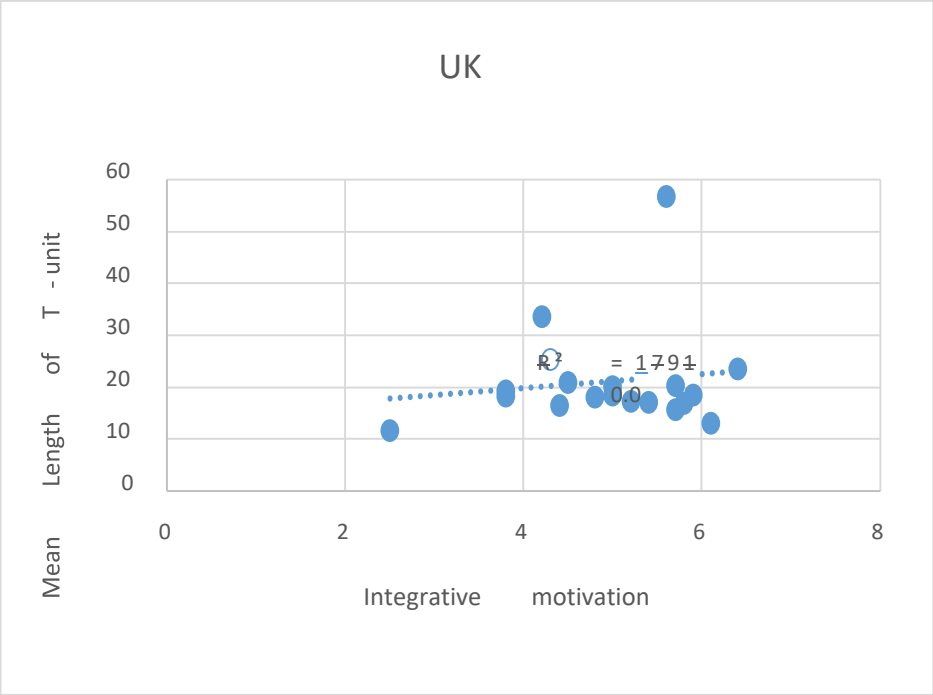

Figure 13. Relationship between syntactic complexity and integrative motivation among Chinese students in the UK

For participants studying in China, Figure 14 shows that their integrative motivation is positively correlated with syntactic complexity, exhibiting an upward trend. Higher integrative motivation is associated with higher syntactic complexity scores. In contrast, instrumental motivation is negatively correlated, as depicted in Figure 15, where greater instrumental motivation corresponds to lower syntactic complexity scores.

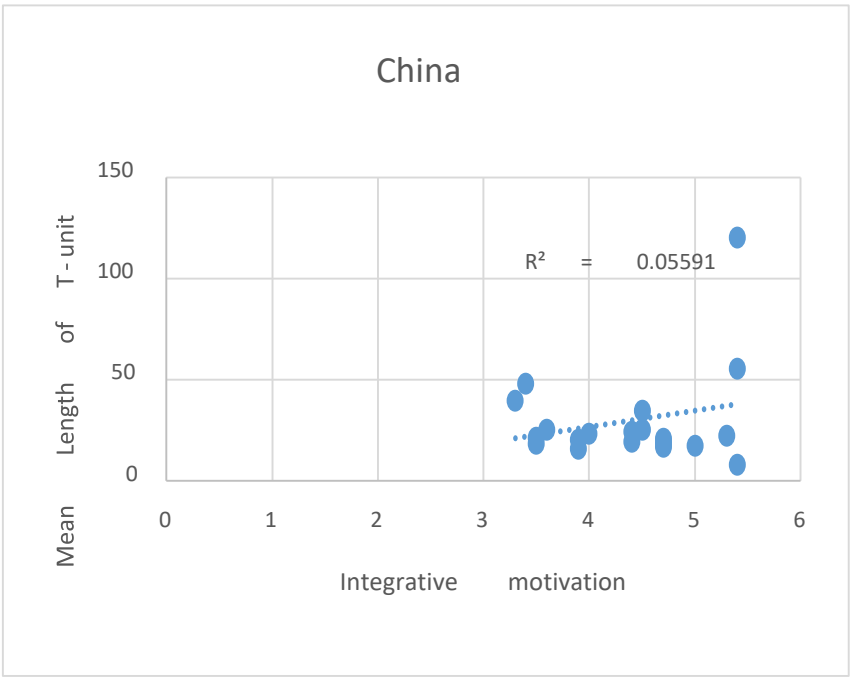

Figure 14. Relationship between Syntactic complexity and integrative motivation among Chinese students in China

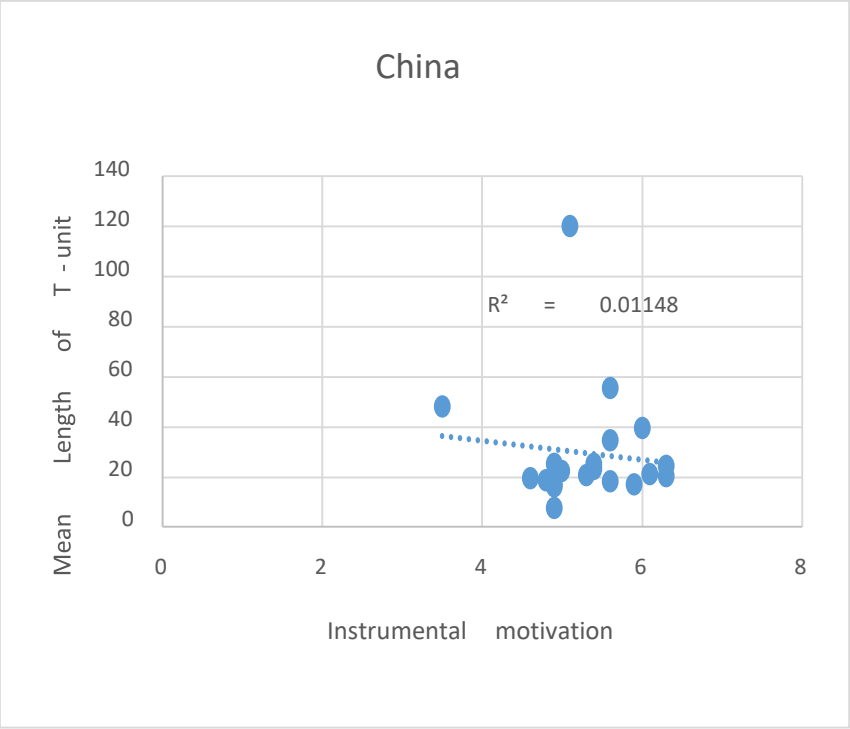

Figure 15. Relationship between Syntactic complexity and instrumental motivation among Chinese students in China

Overall, for participants studying in China, the primary factor influencing syntactic complexity was the level of integrative motivation. For participants in UK, integrative motivation has a positive effect on syntactic complexity while instrumental motivation negative.

In combination with the analysis of the relationship between lexical complexity (MATTR) and syntactic complexity (mean length of T-unit) with participants' motivations, it is evident that, in both groups, learners exhibited stronger integrative motivation, their writing displayed greater lexical and syntactical complexity. For Chinese students in UK, while both motivations have positive correlation with both comple has a larger positiveIn addition, for the Chinese students in China, the instrumental motivation have negative effects on both lexical and syntactic complexity.

5. Discussion

The findings revealed that instrumental motivation plays a more significant role than integrative motivation among Chinese students studying in the UK and China. This result aligns with Nguyen's study, which found that Vietnamese students exhibited stronger instrumental motivation for learning English [18].

A possible explanation for the predominance of instrumental motivation is that many Chinese students is under a competitive academic environment, where the English is treated as one of the major subject. Also, under a competitive job market, Chinese students notice that acquiring English proficiency as an important element to secure better job opportunities and improve career prospect. Additionally, as English is a global language, gaining proficiency in English can open up more global opportunities in many fields, particularly in scientific, technological, economic, and academic fields.

Interestingly, though instrumental motivation overdressed the integrative motivation, the later two experiments showed that learners with higher integrative motivation demonstrated greater lexical and syntactic complexity. For Chinese students in UK, the instrumental motivation even has a slight negative effect on the writing performance. This contrast may result from the differing mechanisms by which motivations operate and the learning outcomes they promote.

Instrumental motivation may lead learners to prioritize aspects most frequently tested, as their goal is to maximize scores. For Chinese students, this could mean focusing more on vocabulary and grammatical structures, as both are heavily emphasized in exams crucial for university admission or employment. Consequently, they may become accustomed to a study pattern that concentrates on increasing accuracy in smaller linguistic units, potentially limiting their exploration of a broader, richer range of lexical and syntactic forms.

Conversely, learners with integrative motivation, driven by a desire to deeply understand and immerse themselves in the language and culture, are more likely to engage in extensive reading or communication with native speakers. Such activities expose them to a wider vocabulary range, expressions, and syntactic structures, facilitating lexical and syntactic complexity development. Their interest in the target language and culture can foster a willingness to experiment with more complex language forms as they strive to fully communicate their thoughts and ideas. Moreover, integrative motivated learners may derive satisfaction from language learning and communication, further motivating exploration of words' and syntax's richness and complexity. Activities like reading original language books or writing in the foreign language can facilitate contact with diverse linguistic forms, gradually expanding their vocabulary and grammar knowledge.

Compared to previous studies, this study also focuses on students studying domestically and internationally. Since participants come from different cultural and educational backgrounds, it may influence their motivation orientation and how these motivations affect their learning outcomes. This represents a step further compared to previous studies that solely focused on students within the same school.

In the UK, students exhibit a more balanced distribution of integrative and instrumental motivation, and only they showed a negative correlation between instrumental motivation and learning performance. This can be explained by the necessity for UK students to engage with foreign culture and communicate with native speakers, leading to a higher integrative motivation to meet these needs. However, relying solely on instrumental motivation proves insufficient in such contexts. Moreover, their high instrumental motivation may slightly hinder the development of lexical and syntactic complexity. For instance, a focus on grammatical correctness may lead to hesitancy in language output, hindering communication.

On the other hand, students in China do not face the same pressure of living in a foreign culture. Thus, the hindering effect of instrumental motivation is less apparent among domestically studying students, as they lack frequent English output situations. Additionally, instrumental motivation aligns well with their goals of completing English examinations for academic and career purposes. In other words, the tension between instrumental and integrative motivation is less pronounced for these students.

The findings of this study offer invaluable insights to educators, aiding them not only in refining the teaching of writing skills but also in enhancing overall English instruction. Educators have the opportunity to bolster learners' motivation by cultivating a more conducive and inclusive environment for language acquisition. This entails striking a balance between instrumental and integrative motivations, where educators can design class activities that not only improve accuracy of L2, but also foster a deeper engagement with the culture of the second language.

Furthermore, educators can diversify their teaching approaches by incorporating practical language usage into their curriculum. This involves designing exercises that emphasise the everyday utility of the language, such as oral English practice for daily conversations and writing tasks tailored to various formats and contexts, rather than solely focusing on academic materials. Additionally, assessments of English proficiency should transcend traditional test papers and fixed structures. Educators can adopt a more holistic approach by evaluating not only grammatical knowledge but also students' ability to express ideas and adapt their language use to different contexts.

Tailoring teaching methods to suit individual students' needs is another crucial aspect of effective instruction. For students driven by interactive motivation, educators can integrate teaching materials that reflect real-life situations. Moreover, educators play a pivotal role in fostering a growth mindset

among students, nurturing their confidence in writing abilities through constructive feedback and goal-setting. By embracing these strategies, educators can empower students to become proficient writers while nurturing a positive and dynamic learning environment.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the motivations influencing Chinese students to learn English and whether different motivational orientations affect their English writing skills. The findings reveal that Chinese students' primary motivation for learning English is instrumental, meaning they learn the language primarily to achieve academic success, graduate, and enhance future job prospects. Distinct motivational orientations were found to impact students' English writing proficiency, particularly in terms of lexical and syntactic complexity. Learners with an integrative motivation, driven by a genuine interest in the English language and culture, exhibited more sophisticated and richer lexical and syntactic complexity in their writing compared to those with an instrumental motivation.

Consistent with previous research, the current study reinforces the crucial role motivation plays in influencing language proficiency. Additionally, it extends prior work by exploring different motivational orientations specifically impact lexical and syntactic complexity in writing and by discussing, for domestic and foreign students, how their motivation orientations can differ. Overall, integratively motivated learners demonstrated superior proficiency in both lexical and syntactical complexities. Also, the instrumental motivation can even slightly hinder the development of writing abilities for Chinese students studying in UK.

The insights gained from this study offer valuable implications for educators. Understanding the relationship between motivation and writing skills can help teachers better comprehend their students' learning processes. Educators can tailor instructional methods based on different motivational profiles to enhance the effectiveness of writing skill development.

Limitations stemming from time constraints led to a smaller participant pool, which may potentially impact the generalizability of the findings. Future research can increase the participant pool to improve data analysis accuracy and mitigate the risk of unusable data occurrences. A larger sample size would facilitate more in-depth exploration of learner motivation and yield more robust results.

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Appendix –Questionnaire questions

Instrumental motivation

Learning E is important because it help me get a good job in multinational corporations.

I mainly focus on using E for class assignments & exams.

I focus more on getting a good job than on learning E Language.
I am interested in reading only E-textbooks in my university study.
Learning E is important because it will help me to learn new things.
I focus more on earning a university degree than on learning E language.
Learning E helps me become an educated and skillful person.
Being proficient in E can lead to being more successful and achievable in my life.
Being proficient in E makes other people respect me more.
I focus more on furthering my higher education than on learning E language
Integrative motivation
Learning E is important because it help me when traveling abroad.
Studying E enables me to understand E books, movies, pop music etc.
Learning E makes me better understand and appreciate the ways of life of E speakers.
Learning E enables me to keep in touch with foreign friends.
Studying E enables me to discuss interesting topics in E with the people from other national backgrounds.
Learning E helps me participate freely in academic, social, and professional activities among other cultural groups.
Studying E enables me to transfer my knowledge to other people e.g giving directions to tourists.
I am determined to study English as best as I can to achieve maximum proficiency.
Learning E helps me be more confident and comfortable
Learning E helps me enjoy traveling to foreign countries.

Appendix Two- Consent form

Consent Form
Information about the research
This study will focus on the issues of English attitudes and English proficiency of
Chinese international students in the UK and students in local Chinese universities. English attitude here is mainly the students' motivation or reason for learning English, and English proficiency is the students' writing level. For example, whether students' different motivations for learning English affect their English writing skills.
The data collected will be used in writing an assessed assignment for the module Language Investigation, which is part of my degree programme at the University of Birmingham. It will not be used for any other purposes.
Please, read the following information and make your choice below
I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study and can withdraw during the survey by closing the browser but will not be able to withdraw once my response has been submitted.
I understand that the survey is anonymous.
I understand that information I provide will be used for the student's project report.
Yes. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.
No. I don't want to join.