

## Motivation for On-going Language Learning after Full-time Language Study

Educators tell us that adults tend to be more motivated when effectively learning something they value. Successful mastery of Chinese is very rewarding. And when we sense progress and real accomplishment, we are usually motivated to continue on in our efforts. Competence builds confidence, confidence in turn brings competence, which gives us the motivation to press on. And our goal should be to become lifelong learners. The key to all this is what is called 'intrinsic motivation'. Intrinsic motivation is the pleasure or value that is associated with the activity itself. The 'doing' of the activity for its own sake is the main reason for that activity, e.g. reading a book purely for pleasure. Contrast this with 'extrinsic motivation' which emphasizes the value a person places on the end result of the action – the goal rather than simply the doing of the task, e.g. reading a particular book in order to pass an exam. As people who are trying to become competent at living and working in China, what we want to encourage is intrinsic motivation. Factors which enhance intrinsic motivation are: choice, positive feedback, and optimum challenge.

**Choice:** up to now in your Chinese studies, you have had to follow a rigid curriculum. Now, in line with your particular work, you choose the topics most relevant to your communicative needs.

As you consider what topics you should now be studying, here are some questions which will help clarify your objectives:

- a. which of my living and working communicative needs have not yet been covered in the textbooks I've already studied?
- b. what will be my future status and role?
- c. with what types of people will I need to communicate?
- d. in what sorts of situations will I need to function? (e.g. university, neighborhood, government offices).
- e. what tasks will I have to be able to carry out in Chinese? (e.g. teach, lead meetings, entertain friends).

- f. what levels of proficiency will I need to reach in the four skills – listening, speaking, reading, writing?

**Positive feedback:** Seek positive feedback by deliberately talking with your Chinese friends about what you are studying, and note their interested, positive reactions! They are finding you an increasingly more interesting person to be with!

**Optimally challenging:** choose topics and materials which are moderately difficult to achieve – not too easy so that you become bored and disinterested, and not too difficult so that you lose heart and give up.

To summarize, the learning situations that develop intrinsic motivation are ones that provide positive feedback to people who are engaged in an optimally challenging, self-determined activity.

Those who are likely to continue enthusiastically learning Chinese after full-time language study is over are those who have already developed the mindset that in the local community are lots of people who are very happy to help me broaden my Chinese. So in your early days, establish relationships with local people in a way that will give you this mindset, so that the transition from full-time language study to ongoing learning in the community will be natural rather than traumatic.