

Motivating and demotivating factors for Chinese as a foreign language learners in a British CLIL program

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The Challenge

Research has shown that Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) programs can improve and sustain learners' motivation. However, most CLIL studies focus on the teaching and learning of English as a second/foreign language. Can the implementation of CLIL pedagogy be as effective and motivating in a program where the target language is Mandarin Chinese?

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Abstract

This study investigates Mandarin Chinese learners' motivation in a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) program in a British secondary school from the perspective of learning environment, learner engagement, and learner identities. Fifteen pupils who are learning Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) have been interviewed individually or in a focus group. The results indicate that the context of L2 learning and pupils' learning experience contribute to their sustained motivation. More specifically, the nature of the CLIL subjects, teachers and their teaching methods, peers, tasks, and examinations all play an important role in motivating or demotivating students. Pedagogical implications have been discussed with suggestions for maintaining students' motivation in CLIL

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programs. This article fills the gap in the field of motivational study by bridging the learning of CFL and the CLIL context.

KEYWORDS

CFL, CLIL, motivation, L2 learning experience

1 | INTRODUCTION

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has been burgeoning in many European countries over the last 25 years. It is defined as “a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language” (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 1).¹ Aiming to develop proficiency in both the content of the subject and the language of instruction, CLIL has been acclaimed as “an innovative methodological approach” (Eurydice, 2006, p. 7) and a lever for change and success in language learning (Cañado & Padilla, 2015). Lorenzo (2014) claims that “CLIL is a communicative, integrated and interactive approach to language learning and as such is a motivational booster” (p. 142). Van de Craen and Surmont (2017) consider CLIL innovative not only to language education but also to education in general due to its impact on the learning process itself, which, due partly to increased learner motivation, is expected to lead to both linguistic and content knowledge gains. Although its contribution to promoting linguistic achievements is yet to be ascertained (Dalton-Puffer, 2011), research has shown that one of the major benefits of CLIL programs is the improved and sustained motivation of learners (e.g., Coyle, 2006; Doiz et al., 2014a; Lasagabaster, 2011; Seikkula-Leino, 2007). In his comprehensive review on the impact of CLIL on motivation based on studies conducted in the past 15 years in European countries, Lasagabaster (2019) points out that motivation in CLIL contexts was an under-researched field, particularly in CLIL programs in which languages other than English (LOTEs) are used as means of instruction. Following Ushioda and Dörnyei's (2017) call for more research into the motivation of learning LOTEs, Lasagabaster (2019) also highlighted the need to shift the focus onto CLIL programs for LOTEs.

With Chinese being recognized as one of the most needed strategic foreign languages to post-Brexit UK (British Council, 2017; Tinsley & Board, 2017), more Chinese programs, such as the Mandarin Excellence Programme (MEP), have been launched in the United Kingdom and an increasing number of students are taking Mandarin Chinese at primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Zhang & Li, 2020). Coupled with the growing number of students, there is growing interest in researching students who are taking Chinese as a modern foreign languages (MFL) and their teachers (Lu et al., 2019; Mayumi & Zheng, 2021). Since 2016, there are now around 8000 students enrolled in the MEP program and on track to achieve fluency in the language in 76 secondary schools in the United Kingdom (Nicoletti & Culligan, 2021). However, to our knowledge, there is very limited number of schools that have adopted Chinese CLIL in the United Kingdom, and there is no research looking at the interface between learning of Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) in UK School contexts and in the CLIL context. This study looks at a particular secondary school in the south of England that participates in the MEP program and also adopts Chinese CLIL. The aim of the project is to identify the

motivating and demotivating factors for CFL learners in this context, and to provide research-based recommendations for language instructors and school authorities in relation to the successful implementation of Chinese CLIL programs.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, we adopt Gardner's (1985) seminal definition of motivation, which has been researched extensively in various contexts, that is, motivation is "the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" (p. 10). While there has been abundant research on language learner motivation, in this study, we explore the much less researched interface between CLIL and the learning of CFL. In this section, we first provide a brief review of research on learner motivation in the CLIL context in English-speaking countries, followed by a succinct review of research into motivation in the CFL context. This section ends with a review of the relevant theoretical framework and the research question that guided the study.

2.1 | Motivation research in the CLIL context in English-speaking countries

CLIL originated in the European Union in the 1990s as a response to the demand for multilingualism and integration within European countries (Marsh, 2002). Due to support from national governments, CLIL programs have burgeoned in the last few decades in many European countries (Lasagabaster, 2019). With the recent expansion of CLIL throughout the world in South America, Asia, and the Middle East, English has been established as the main language of CLIL instruction in those areas as well as the European continent (Bower, Cross, et al., 2020). In English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom, where a foreign language other than English is learned in a CLIL program, the context presents unique challenges. Although no foreign language in the United Kingdom has a standing with the public, parents, the media, policymakers, and school managers comparable with that enjoyed by English in nonanglophone countries, there is growing interest and fragmented development in CLIL programs in the United Kingdom (Dobson, 2020). One of the concerning issues is learner demotivation due to the British government's policies on foreign language education (Bower, 2014, 2020; Dobson, 2020). Can the implementation of CLIL pedagogy, which has been found to have the potential to bring an increased degree of motivation among learners, be as effective and motivating in a program where the target language is a lesser taught foreign language?

The most extensive CLIL study done in the United Kingdom is probably the interacting for teaching and learning in CLIL project headed by Do Coyle, which involved over 650 learners in 11 secondary schools in England and Scotland. Coyle (2011) explored learners' perceptions of their motivation and gains in CLIL lessons taught in French, German, or Spanish to learn subjects such as History, Geography, Art, and Maths. The results show that most learners reported positive attitudes toward their CLIL experiences, with 63% reporting highly motivated and 84% intending to continue taking CLIL classes. A number of gains have been identified, including language gains, subject/content gains, learning gains, and motivating classroom experiences. However, the report also highlighted the necessity for effective CLIL pedagogies

because 36.6% of the respondents found the lessons “boring and difficult” and reported “difficulties, disinterest or unrealistic expectations” (Coyle, 2011, p. 3). It is concluded that “CLIL must not be seen as a ‘solution’ to modern languages motivation—it raises as many issues as it solves” (p. 5).

Mearns (2012) reported on an action research study that explored the impact of a 6-week CLIL course on pupils’ motivation and attainment in a British secondary school, teaching personal, social, and health education (PSHE) through German. Together with increased enjoyment of German lessons, some evidence of pupils’ lack of confidence was also observed. Mearns concluded that the majority of pupils appeared to be motivated by the opportunity to learn a foreign language in a different context and that their overall higher attainment did not seem to give them the same level of confidence.

Bower (2014) conducted a study into the motivating effect of CLIL programs on the learning of foreign languages (French and German) in three secondary schools in England and reported the results as three case studies. She concluded that CLIL had a positive impact on attainment, engagement, and motivation where teaching was effective. More specifically, the cognitive challenges involved in CLIL were found to raise levels of engagement and motivation; pupils also demonstrated a deeper understanding and appreciation of intercultural awareness, made good and often exceptional progress, and showed high levels of concentration, and effort (Bower, 2014).

The target languages that are most commonly used in CLIL programs in English-speaking countries are French, German, and Spanish. Very few studies on other foreign languages in CLIL programs have been published. Among them, Smala (2020) examined CLIL pedagogy in a Japanese bilingual program in the Australian context and explored how cultural materials might be transferred across national boundaries. Fielding and Harbon (2022) investigated CLIL programs in either Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, or Korean at four Australian primary schools, focusing on the literacy achievement of pupils by comparing their results in a national standardized test with those of pupils in standard classes. However, neither of these studies is related to motivation.

The authors of this article are all native speakers of Chinese, with two working in UK higher education institutions in the field of foreign language teaching, learning, and assessment, and the other working as a secondary school teacher delivering Chinese CLIL teaching in the school. We are curious in knowing more about the situation of Chinese CLIL programs out of both research and pedagogical interests. How are such programs implemented? Are pupils in Chinese CLIL programs as motivated as they are in other CLIL or CFL programs?

2.2 | Motivation research in the CFL context

Coupled with the rapid increase in Chinese language programs and enrolment globally, there is a growing body of Chinese L2 motivation research and but little focused on the CLIL context (Wen, 2018). Among the published studies on CFL motivation, many are conducted in the higher education context. For example, Wen (2011) compared the attitudes and motivation of heritage and nonheritage CFL learners in three US universities. She found that “positive learning attitudes and experience” contributed most significantly to the “motivational magnitude (intended learning efforts)” (p. 41) for both heritage and nonheritage CFL learners. She concluded that learners became engaged in the learning process when they perceived the task as challenging but fun and personally meaningful to their goals. Ruan et al. (2015) studied

CFL learners' motivation in a task-based teaching and learning environment in a Danish university. They found that motivating tasks tended to provide enjoyment, challenge, and a sense of satisfaction, to support learner autonomy, increase learner self-efficacy, promote social interaction, and cooperative learning in group work, and integrate cultural elements into language tasks.

In the United Kingdom, L. Li (2013) examined the teaching and learning of CFL in four British primary schools (five cases) and investigated motivation as one of the four foci of her doctoral project. She reported on various stakeholders' perspectives of motivation, including those of head teachers, language teachers, and pupils. Based on data collected from questionnaire surveys and focus group interviews, she found clear distinctions across the five cases, which were attributed to the unique features of each case. Li suggested that the pupils who associated their Chinese learning with "fun" had the highest motivation for and interest in learning Chinese, whereas pupils from the school where Chinese was a compulsory course and from the class where a temporary teacher was teaching Chinese reported the lowest motivation and interest. Li also pointed out that many pupils liked learning Chinese because of their non-Chinese teacher who could appreciate the difficulties of learning the language and would learn together with them. Li observed that "in learning Chinese, pupils' interest may not only depend on the language itself, but also in teachers' backgrounds and teaching, as there are huge differences between the cases in this study" (Li, 2013, p. 249).

J. Li (2019) explored the implementation and impact of Chinese CLIL programs in a British secondary school where CLIL Chinese teaching was conducted by Chinese native speakers or one Chinese native speaker and one English teacher. She looked at how the CLIL approach empowers students in learning Mandarin holistically. Her findings indicate that students are likely to benefit more from heavier exposure to natural vocabulary in subject contents, which led to greater academic progression than in non-CLIL cohorts. The CLIL approach has helped to develop a target-language-speaking environment. However, she cautioned that the extent of target language use depended on the abilities of the students. Some more able students could take up the challenge of making presentations in Chinese, whereas some students, particularly those with low self-esteem, would refuse to learn and even became disruptive, if their anxiety level increased due to incomprehensible input. Thus, she proposed that bilingual scaffolding would be necessary for creating a positive and motivating learning atmosphere.

Motivational research in both CLIL and in CFL has received much attention in recent years, but separately. CLIL studies have focused on non-Anglophone contexts, and CFL studies have investigated learner motivation in general. How the Chinese CLIL context in the United Kingdom motivates and demotivates students in their Chinese language learning still remains underexplored. Therefore, this current study attempts to examine the motivation of CFL learners in a CLIL program to bridge the gap in these research fields and to tease out the motivating and demotivating factors for CFL learners in a UK secondary school CLIL context so as to shed light on the effective implementation of CLIL programs.

2.3 | Theoretical framework

Various theoretical frameworks for describing language learner motivation have been produced, examined, and validated by researchers in the past decades. At the expense of oversimplification, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) have outlined four phases regarding the progression of studies of motivation in second language acquisition: the sociopsychological

period, the cognitive-situated period, the process-oriented period, and the sociodynamic period. The sociodynamic period, which we are currently in, is “characterised by a concern with the situated complexity of the L2 motivation process and its organic development in dynamic interaction with a multiplicity of internal, social and contextual factors” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 72). Such studies examine the interactions between individual learners and their social learning environment. Building on the preceding models, such as the Markus and Nurius (1986) concept of the “possible self” and Gardner’s socioeducational model of motivation (1985), Dörnyei’s (2005, 2009) model of L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) includes a triple helix that drives learner motivation: L2 Learning Experience, the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self. According to Dörnyei (2009), the L2 Learning Experience refers to the learning environment and experience that a learner is engaged in, which may include the curriculum, the teacher, and the peer group. Despite its significance in predicting learners’ motivated behavior or learning achievement, the L2 Learning Experience has been largely neglected in motivational studies. Dörnyei (2019) reconceptualizes this construct as “the perceived quality of the learner’s engagement with various aspects of the language learning process” (pp. 25–26) and suggests that important facets of L2 Learning Experience include, but are not limited to, school context, teaching materials, learning tasks, peers, and teacher. He calls for more research on this construct with “an engagement-specific perspective” (p. 24).

Taking into consideration the specificities of language experiences in CLIL classrooms, Coyle (2011) proposes a process model for the investigation of motivation specifically in CLIL settings (see Figure 1). This model incorporates three aspects of motivation: learning

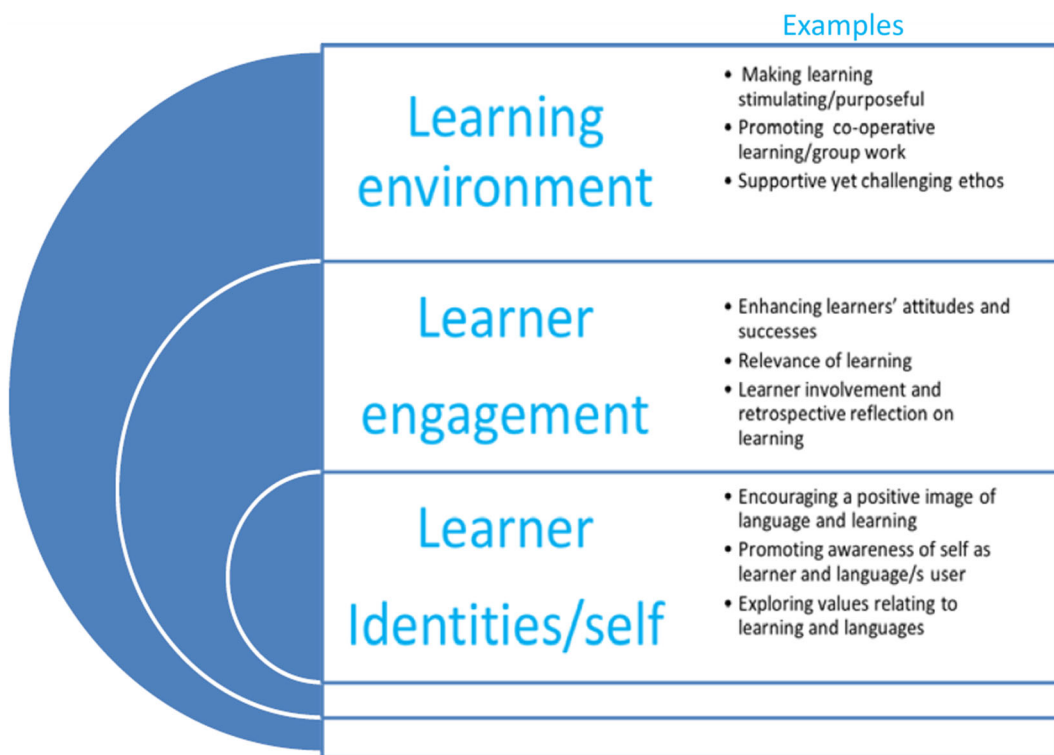


FIGURE 1 A Process Model for investigating motivation in CLIL settings (Coyle, 2011, p. 17). [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

environment, learner engagement, and learner identity/self. A positive learning environment is stimulating and purposeful, supportive, and safe, and promotes group work and co-operative learning; positive learner engagement enhances learners' attitudes and successes, ownership, and autonomy, and promotes learner involvement; and positive learner identity encourages a positive image of self as language learner and user and future communicator (Coyle, 2013). All these have been identified as conducive to successful learning.

Bower (2017a, 2017b, 2020) further elaborated Coyle's model into a comprehensive process motivation model (PMM) with more detailed subcategories and examples in each of the three components. More specifically, Bower divides the Learning Environment into three subcategories: Teacher Specific, Course Specific, and Group Specific; Learner Engagement includes learners' perceived value of activities, their attitude toward and perception of their learning, and their engagement in learning tasks; Learner identities include learners' self-concept as learners and language users. The PMM lists further details of motivation and provides a structure for identifying key features of motivation for research.

This study uses the PMM as the main theoretical framework and adopts an engagement-specific perspective, investigating the impact of students' learning experience on motivation from the following three perspectives: *learning environment*, *learner engagement*, and *learner identity*. The research question we attempt to answer is as follows: What are the motivating and demotivating factors for CFL learners in a Chinese CLIL program in a British secondary school in terms of learning environment, learner engagement, and learner identity?

3 | METHODOLOGY

3.1 | The school context

This study was conducted in a British secondary school located in Hampshire, in southeast England. The school is a state secondary school with 1858 students enrolled in the 2018–2019 academic year (when the study took place). It is a Specialist Language School that started a pioneering CLIL French program in 2010 followed by a CLIL Spanish program in 2011. It was the first secondary school in the United Kingdom to embrace the CLIL curriculum and the school was rated “outstanding” by Ofsted in 2013. The school started to participate in the MEP program from 2016 and is the first state secondary school to offer Mandarin Chinese courses using the CLIL approach. These courses have been available to pupils from Year 7 (age 11) through to Year 11 (age 15) since 2013.

During the 2018–2019 academic year, there was one CLIL Mandarin group per year group from Years 7 to 11, and each group had around 27 pupils. Before joining the school, students who are interested in the CLIL program need to apply for it. They are selected based on their self-reported interests and motivation for learning Chinese in their applications. Once they are selected, they will be assigned to a CLIL Mandarin group from Years 7 to 11. The whole CLIL Mandarin group has many lessons together as a whole group, which includes six Mandarin lessons, one CLIL Drama, Art, physical education (PE), and PSRE (Personal, Social and Religious Education) lesson per week in Years 7 and 8 and three Chinese lessons in Year 9, whereas their non-CLIL peers have only two Chinese lessons from Years 7 to 8, and three Chinese lessons from Years 9 to 11 each week. Appendix A presents more details of the respective curricula.

Although Drama, Art, PE, and PSRE are compulsory for both CLIL and non-CLIL groups in Years 7 and 8, these lessons are delivered in different ways. CLIL PSRE is only taught by a Chinese

teacher in both English and Mandarin, and CLIL Drama, Art, and PE are jointly taught by a Chinese teacher and a relevant subject teacher, respectively. During those lessons, the Chinese teacher delivers the key vocabulary and sentence patterns, and the subject teacher teaches the content knowledge and demonstrates the skills. Students use the vocabulary and sentences to describe what they are doing and interact with each other. Students are encouraged to use Chinese as much as possible and keep the use of English to a minimum. Their knowledge and understanding of Chinese in the respective subjects are assessed at the end of each term. Non-CLIL groups have the normal Drama, Art, PE, and PSRE lessons without Mandarin input.

In terms of national and international examinations, CLIL students take their general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) Chinese exam in Year 9, and their non-CLIL counterparts take the exam in Year 11. After completing their GCSE Chinese exams, the CLIL groups carry on their Mandarin learning and take the International Chinese Proficiency Test (Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi [HSK]) Level 3 in Year 10 and Level 4 in Year 11, which enables them to obtain international Chinese qualifications as well as the capacity to apply to universities or exchange programs in China in the near future.

3.2 | Data collection procedure and participants' profile

Lasagabaster (2019) pointed out that most of the studies in his comprehensive review relied on questionnaire and statistical analysis. Such quantitative studies tend to be “concerned more with the general than the particular, with statistical averages and relations rather than rich descriptive analysis” (Ushioda, 2011, p. 11) and consequently, the learners' individual characteristics and their learning context have been overlooked. Following Ushioda (2011) and Lasagabaster (2019), the current study intends to focus on individuals' learning experiences to explore the impact of the L2 learning context on learners' motivation, therefore, a qualitative research methodology, more specifically, individual interviewing, has been adopted in this study (see Appendix B for interview guide). The research team approached the school authorities in November 2018 for permission to undertake the project. All the pupils taking Chinese in both the CLIL and non-CLIL courses were invited to participate in the research on a voluntary basis. A total of eight CLIL students participated in the study. Appendix C present a profile of the participants.

The participants range from Years 7 to 12, with their length of studying Chinese ranging from 3 months to 5 years and 3 months at the time of data collection. Among the eight students, two are from Year 7, two from Year 8, and two from Year 11; of the remainder, there is one each from Years 9 and 12. The researchers interviewed the participants individually which lasted for 30–45 min each. All interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. All data collection instruments used in the present study can be freely downloaded on the IRIS Database; iris-database.org.

4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interview data were analyzed using bottom-up content coding to develop the initial themes, and the three authors discussed the emerging themes in comparison to the PMM model for investigating motivation in CLIL settings (Coyle, 2011). In addition to the three aspects delineated in the PMM model, an emerging theme on motivational change was also captured from the

interview data. The results are presented and discussed in the following four sections: *CLIL subjects as one aspect of Learning Environment*, *Students' perception of their learning experience as Learner Engagement*, *Students' self-concept as Learner Identities*, and *Motivational change*.

4.1 | CLIL subjects and (de)motivation

The CLIL subjects offered at this British secondary school include Art, Drama, PE, PSRE, and information communication technology (ICT). Most students were taking or had taken the first four, which are still on offer; only one student who was in Year 12 at the time of the interview mentioned ICT. Five out of the eight (62.5%) CLIL students named PE as the subject they enjoyed most, two voted for Drama and one for Art.

When asked for reasons, two students found it easy to learn the language while doing PE: “easy to pick up the terminology while doing it at the same time” (S10²); two students really liked PE and found it “different and fun doing PE in Mandarin” (S7); one student commented that “it adds a different dimension” because “if you don’t like a bit of PE you can focus on Chinese” (S1). For the two whose favorite CLIL subject was Drama, they found it fun to do Drama in Chinese: “using Mandarin when doing drama gives you a purpose for learning the language, not learning it for the sake of learning” (S2). For the one who favored Art, she found it “nice to learn a lot of vocabulary” (S9).

Among the least enjoyable subjects, PSRE was mentioned by four students (50%), Art by three students, Drama by one, and PE by one (one student listed both Art and Drama). Apparently, PSRE topped the list since the subject itself was the most difficult and there were too many different words and terms to learn. Two of the students specifically pointed out that the subject itself was boring, not Mandarin. Those who disliked Art were either not good at Art or not keen on Art.

It seems reasonable to conclude that the nature of the content subject is likely to be an important motivating or demotivating factor in a CLIL program. Subjects such as PE, Drama, and Art may appeal to some students but not necessarily to all. Overall, these subjects involve more hands-on experiences for students and are more likely to engage students in class activities and thus create a more motivating environment for the learning of both the content and the language. In contrast, half of the participants have rated PSRE as their least favorite because the subject itself is by nature more theoretical and involves the learning of more abstract concepts; thus, it is more cognitively challenging and more difficult to arouse students’ interest in the learning of the content itself, let alone learning it in a foreign language. In fact, ICT is no longer offered as a Chinese CLIL subject, both because of its relative difficulty and a lack of teachers capable of teaching the course (personal communication with a Chinese teacher in that school).

This seems to corroborate Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar’s (2010) argument for using a second language to teach subjects that are “cognitively less demanding and context-embedded” such as PE (p. 101). The same recommendation has been proposed by Doiz et al. (2014b), who investigated Spanish secondary school students in English CLIL programs. They reported that their participants felt it important to choose CLIL courses carefully, as some subjects (e.g., social sciences) were already too difficult in their native languages, let alone in English.

Another reason for CLIL in PE/Art/Drama to be more appealing to students may lie in the fact that lessons in these subjects involve multimodality, that is, their different ways of meaning making. Research has shown that a multimodal approach is conducive to language learning in general and language comprehension, in particular (e.g., Gilakjani et al., 2011; Guichon & McLornan, 2008). Duff (2008) points out that successful ways of improving the teaching of

foreign languages to young children “requires creative, multimodal strategies involving music, art, dance, drama, games, and cooperative learning” (p. 31). It seems viable that the multimodal nature of PE/Art/Drama lessons could enable more context-embedded language to be introduced in various modes, thus assisting comprehension and engagement and making the learning more fun and accessible.

4.2 | L2 learning experience and (de)motivation

When asked what the most important factor in their Chinese learning was, five students mentioned the teacher, three mentioned fun tasks and activities such as games and competitions, one mentioned friends/peers, and one mentioned practice (some students mentioned more than one factor).

It is worth noting that when students considered “the teacher” to be the most important factor in their learning, they valued different aspects. Some students focused on the teacher’s attitude: “the teacher is very encouraging” (S7), while other students cared more about the teaching style. They expected their Chinese teacher to explain clearly (S3) and to design fun and interactive tasks to help with their learning (S3). One student specifically pointed out that the most essential factor was “the teacher actually speaking Chinese to you and not explaining everything in English” (S4). One student liked her Chinese teacher in that “he links some Chinese characters to other Chinese characters ... he connects all the like points together” (S9). Another student seemed to enjoy the whole process as she detailed how they had the PE in Chinese:

As we start each lesson, we go through the words ... as we go along, he [the teacher] carries on encouraging us as we do the move to say the word, and then at the end before he leaves the lesson, he always makes us give him three words and the meanings. (S1)

Those who considered peers important believed that peers could help each other in their learning: “because we are in the same boat, and if you find something tricky, they can help me” (S9). Those who preferred fun tasks argued that it was important to have fun while learning the language (S3, S6) and that they could remember words better through playing games and using the words simultaneously (S2).

On the other hand, some students mentioned that they did not like being made to repeatedly learn words or copy Chinese characters. Others reported that they did not want to learn when they were given lots of new words. One student found Art less enjoyable compared to Drama and PE because

the class work is not as exciting as last year ... we don’t really go through it as much as we are doing in the Drama and the PE lessons, so we don’t properly learn some of the words. (S6)

It is evident that students consider “the teacher,” “peers,” and “fun tasks” as important factors in their Chinese learning. These elements constitute what Dörnyei postulates as “the L2 Learning Experience,” which is a significant but neglected motivational factor (Dörnyei, 2019). They are also elements that could determine learner engagement. From the interview data, it can be seen that the characteristics of students’ favorite teachers, peers, and activities are all

associated with engagement. Students like teachers who are caring and encouraging and enthusiastic about teaching. They prefer teachers who use the target language, explain the content clearly and engage them with fun and interactive tasks to help them learn. Students also value peers and fun activities such as games and competitions because peers could facilitate collaborative learning and fun activities are stimulating and engaging.

These results corroborate the findings of Li (2013), who interviewed pupils about what they enjoyed in their Chinese lessons and found that the most common answer was “fun.” Many mentioned the teacher and the way that Chinese lessons were conducted, for example, working with partners, speaking characters with actions, singing Chinese songs, Chinese New Year decorations, and handicraft activities. Among the things that they enjoyed least, “repeated learning” and “hard words and sounds” were most frequently mentioned by interviewees. As Li (2013) reported, some interviewees suggested that they did not like learning Chinese because their teacher talked too much, took mistakes too seriously, or made them learn or practise words they already knew. These results are echoed by Wingate and Andon (2018) who reports that a majority of the activities used in the MFL lessons are still teacher-led and controlled. Although the teachers realize the importance of the principles of Communicative Language Teaching, and “games” or “competitive” elements are incorporated in the classroom activities, limited opportunities for students to produce, practice, and communicate in the language could still be a demotivating factor in those foreign language classrooms.

Therefore, it may be concluded that to motivate students, teachers need to design meaningful content to meet the clear purpose of communication and encourage students’ cognitive development, as well as designing tasks that provide positive learning experiences such as enjoyment and engagement, social interaction, and cooperative learning (Ruan et al., 2015). They also need to be aware of learners’ linguistic needs and cognitive abilities and to adopt effective strategies such as introducing “comprehensible input” (Krashen, 1982), designing challenging but fun activities to engage students (Wen, 2011), and making learning stimulating and enjoyable (Coyle, 2011; Dörnyei, 2001). As D. Li and Duff (2014) recommend, “Chinese language learning experiences need to become more rewarding” (p. 235).

4.3 | Self-identity and (de)motivation

As Coyle (2011, p. 13) states, “motivation and learner identity are closely connected.” Regarding the identity or self-perception associated with being able to speak Chinese, we examined the adjectives used by the students to describe their feelings when speaking Chinese. The findings reveal that most students feel speaking Chinese or being able to speak Chinese makes them “different,” “unique,” “happy,” “proud,” “more confident,” “cleverer,” or “more knowledgeable.” Most students reported that Chinese was challenging and that they would like to meet the extra challenge. One student reported that he felt happy when speaking Chinese because it gave him a sense of “accomplishment” (S9).

Apart from the sense of achievement, students can also derive a sense of uniqueness by challenging themselves with the learning of a new, different, and difficult language. When asked what they enjoyed most in learning Chinese, six out of the eight CLIL students mentioned “writing” and “characters.” The most common reasons given were that the writing of characters was “different,” “interesting,” and “fun.” S1 considered it “a completely new way of learning.” S4 compared Chinese characters to art and S3 were fascinated by the way the characters were made and the stories behind them.

When asked about the importance of gaining high marks, all the interviewees thought achieving high marks was important. Three students considered high marks as proof of their hard work. S7 and S9 both believed that if they got good marks their hard work “paid off”; S6 would take pride in obtaining high marks because it shows “you personally have learned all of that stuff.” S10 would become more motivated after the success in a test “because it shows my work is really good. That makes me work hard and I can get a better result.” The results seem to corroborate Wen’s (1997) findings. It seems that obtaining high marks or such a desire enhances students’ self-efficacy and willingness to work harder.

In addition to the sense of uniqueness and competence they could gain from learning Chinese, students also saw themselves as Chinese speaker for their future endeavors. Several students expected that learning Chinese would be helpful for their future:

I think that if I do learn Chinese ... it will get me a good career and future because not many people know Chinese. (S6)

I hope to get a job that uses Mandarin ... something to connect the Great Britain to China. (S9)

One student reported that he had already benefited from participating in the MEP—meeting the then Prime Minister David Cameron in person in Year 7. Thus, students believe that Chinese is an important language that could bring opportunities and that being able to speak and write Chinese would give them an edge in the future job market. One student has already experienced the opportunities, or rather, in his own words, “miracles” (S4), that had been brought to him by learning Chinese. If students can visualize the point of learning the language in their immediate learning environment and link it to their future endeavors, they tend to learn with higher engagement and stronger motivation.

In summary, most students commented that learning Chinese was enjoyable because although it was a difficult task, it was fun and challenging, and they could feel a sense of uniqueness in learning this different language. They found that Chinese characters were indeed difficult to learn, yet they could enjoy a sense of satisfaction when they learned to master them or obtained high grades. Many of them envisaged themselves as Chinese users in their future career. In terms of challenges presented and issues encountered, Chinese CLIL is not that different from those identified in other language CLIL contexts, except that Chinese, being considered the second most distant language from English following Japanese (Chiswick & Miller, 2004), adds a layer of challenges in teaching the language itself and delivering content using that language. We agree with Coyle (2011) that CLIL must not be seen as a solution to increasing motivation in modern language learning; it does, however, provide an alternative way of teaching and researching how modern languages may be better integrated with content teaching thereby offering a positive learning environment, promoting better learner engagement, and fostering more dynamic learner identity.

4.4 | Motivational change

Participants were asked to rate the degree of their motivation to learn Chinese both at the start of their learning and at the time of the interview. Three out of seven CLIL students who were asked this question expressed a positive increase in their ratings, one reported the same level of

motivation, whereas three reported a drop in their ratings. On a continuum of 1–10, the lowest rating given was 5 and the highest 10. Most of their ratings went up or down two to three levels (e.g., from 7 or 8 to 10, or from 10 to 7 or 8).

Looking at these results in more detail, we examined the reasons for the change in the students' ratings. Among the three students who rated their motivation higher over time, two of them (in Year 7) reported that they found it not as difficult as they had expected. The third (in Year 11) said that she was motivated because she was preparing for HSK (the International Chinese Proficiency Test). It might be worth reporting that among the 14 interviewees (including non-CLIL Chinese learners) who were asked this question, nine (64%) gave a higher rating. What is more interesting is that all the Year 7 students (two CLIL and four non-CLIL) rated their motivation levels higher. They started learning Chinese three months before. Probably they were still in the “honeymoon” period.

For the one whose rating remained the same, the reason given was that “I found it interesting when started; it's harder now, slightly a bit more boring, but I still wanna do well” *because it will help my future, I can find a better job.* (S3, in Year 9). Previous research also shows that if a student could visualize the use of the language in their future life, their motivation to learn the language could be strengthened; however, it does not last in the long term (Wang & Liu, 2020). Of the three students who reported lower ratings, two (in Year 8) also admitted that the language became more difficult, which is perhaps to be expected because, as Ushioda (2014) argues, the initial motivation is unlikely to be sufficient to sustain learning “as the cognitive and linguistic challenges of L2 learning increase in difficulty and complexity” (p. 45). The third student (in Year 11) blamed pressure from GCSE examinations in other subjects. Interestingly, she continued to explain that she was not doing Chinese right now (she took her GCSE Chinese in Year 9 and obtained a grade of A*) and that her rating would go back to 10 if she stopped doing GCSE. It seems that preparation for exams exerts excessive pressure on students and demotivates them in their learning, which is in tandem with the findings of Papaja and Rojczyk (2013), who reported that enthusiasm in a CLIL program waned among the third-year students who were faced with high school examinations. The researchers explained that “[d]ouble amount of work, high expectations and a lot of pressure put on the CLIL learners led to the decrease of motivation” (p. 248). This result is also in agreement with Wang and Liu (2020), who concluded from their longitudinal study that when students' desire to fulfil the course expectation becomes less influential in language learning, they will become less motivated to put effort into it.

5 | CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study investigated CFL learners' motivation in a British CLIL program using the PMM devised by Coyle (2011) and elaborated by Bower (2017a, 2017b, 2020). Analysis of the interview data revealed that the subject taught in a CLIL program could be a significant motivating/demotivating factor, depending on a student's like/dislike of a certain subject as well as the nature of the subject itself. The teacher and the tasks he/she designs for the CLIL classroom also play an essential role in making the learning more or less motivating. Achieving good grades could be a motivating goal, but the pressure of examinations might demotivate pupils. As Doiz et al. (2014b) have cautioned, what is felt as motivating or demotivating could vary from one student to another; therefore, it would be crucial for teachers to adopt differentiated instruction to meet every student's need.

The implications drawn from the discussion are two-fold. For CLIL program directors and school authorities, it is advisable to select CLIL subjects carefully. Some cognitively demanding subjects (e.g., politics, religion, and social sciences) may not be suitable for CLIL programs, while subjects which are less linguistically demanding yet multimodal in nature due to their richness in kinaesthetic learning, such as PE, Drama, and Art, are likely to be much better choices as CLIL courses.

For language teachers, it is advisable to understand students first to determine their reasons for choosing this language before embarking on designing fun, stimulating, and interactive tasks to engage the students and promote cooperative learning. It is also advisable to make learning the language a challenge rather than a burden. Motivation may fade due to various demotivating factors such as difficult materials, boring lessons, or pressure from examinations. To maintain students' motivation, teachers should present tasks in a motivating way and make lessons stimulating and enjoyable (Coyle, 2011; Dörnyei, 2001) and the learning experience more rewarding (Ruan et al., 2015). As Ushioda (2014) postulates, when learners' sense of personal agency and control is activated, they will be motivated to "develop their will and skill to engage with cognitive and linguistic challenges in their learning" (p. 46).

The results of this study need to be interpreted with caution due to its small sample size. Only 15 students were interviewed and among them only eight students were in the Chinese CLIL program. The limited sample size cannot provide generalizable results for all Chinese learners, but as an exploratory qualitative study, it provides a starting point in filling the gap in the research of motivation within a Chinese CLIL program. Future research could be conducted with a larger sample size using a mixed methodology. It would also be interesting to examine CLIL courses in other subjects such as Mathematics and Science. Teachers' perspectives could also be investigated by interviewing both the content and the language teachers involved in such programs. Differences in the levels of motivation and its change over time among CLIL and non-CLIL students could also be compared to investigate the efficacy of CLIL programs.

This study supports Dobson's (2020) statement that given lack of support in UK national policy, CLIL needs to be developed from the bottom up by drawing upon and sharing successful practices. To our knowledge, the school we researched is the first and maybe the only state school that has been implementing a school-initiated Chinese CLIL program that offers their students a unique edge when compared to their counterparts. Given the government's recent investment, in Chinese in-state schools (e.g., the MEP), further research into the long-term effects of these programs would benefit not only learners, but also teachers' pedagogical development. "Soft CLIL" (Dobson, 2020) focusing mainly on the development of learners' language competence with the development of content knowledge as an important secondary aim, could be a sensible way forward in developing students' foreign language skills and at the same time making the teaching goal attainable and sustainable.

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ENDNOTES

¹ It is worth noting that different terms have been adopted in different regions for similar educational practices as CLIL, for example, immersion or bilingual education, and content-based language instruction in North American and Southeast Asian countries.

² S stands for student participant. S10 refers to the student with Participant ID Number 10.

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APPENDIX A

(Table A1)

TABLE A1 Curricula differences between CLIL and non-CLIL groups.

Lessons per week					
Groups	Mandarin	CLIL drama	CLIL PE	CLIL ART	CLIL PSRE
CLIL Y7	6	1	1	1	1
CLIL Y8	6	1	1	1	1
CLIL Y9	3	0	1	0	1
CLIL Y10	3	0	0	0	0
CLIL Y11	3	0	0	0	0
Non-CLIL Y7–Y8	2	0	0	0	0
Non-CLIL Y9–Y11	3	0	0	0	0

Note: CLIL Years 7–8 students have their Drama, PE, Art, and PSRE delivered in the CLIL approach, whereas their non-CLIL peers have these lessons delivered in English only. When CLIL students enter Year 9, Drama and Art become optional courses because not every single Year 9 CLIL student chooses Drama or Art for GCSE. Therefore, the school does not provide CLIL teaching in these two subjects, and CLIL students only have CLIL PE and CLIL PSRE lessons.

Abbreviations: CLIL, Content and Language Integrated Learning; PSRE, Personal, Social and Religious Education.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. You have been studying Chinese for _____ months/years so far. Why did you choose the Chinese CLIL program?

Follow-up questions depending on his/her answer:

(e.g.) So when your parents suggested that you should choose this program, do you remember what they said to you?

2. (Following Q 1) Do you think you have made the right choice? Why or why not?

Follow-up questions (e.g.)

- If you had not chosen Chinese, which foreign language would you have chosen?
 - Would you recommend to your friends to learn Chinese if they are wondering which foreign language they should learn? Why or why not?
3. Do you enjoy learning Chinese? What do you enjoy the most?
 4. What are the difficulties you have encountered in learning Chinese? Have you done anything to get over that issue?
 5. What do you think is the most important factor in learning Chinese in the classroom?

Follow-up questions:

- Why do you think ... is important?
- Did the factor you mentioned affect your motivation to learn Chinese?

6. What subjects do you study in Chinese? (PSRE, Art, Drama, and PE)

- Which subject do you enjoy the most among those taught in Chinese? Why?
- Which subject do you enjoy the least? Why?
- Do you think learning some subjects in Chinese has helped you improve your Chinese?

7. When do you feel like wanting to learn Chinese more?

When do you not feel that you want to learn Chinese?

8. How important is it to you to get high marks in the exam? Why?

◦ **Year 11 students**

- Are you satisfied with your result of GCSE Chinese?
- Have you taken HSK 2/3?

(if yes) How did it go?

9. If you do not study hard, do you think you will encounter a problem? Why/why not?

10. Questions about the changes in their motivation

◦ **Year 7 students (learning Chinese for 3 months)**

- Let us say you have to score your motivation in the scale from 1 to 10.
- What was your score when you started to learn Chinese?
- What score is it now?
- Why do you think now you are more/less motivated than before?

◦ **Years 8–11 students**

- Let us say you have to score your motivation in the scale from 1 to 10.
- What was your score when you started to learn Chinese?
- What score is it now?
- Do you think your motivation has fluctuated at any point since you started learning Chinese?
- If there was a fluctuation (a time when you felt demotivated/more motivated), why do you think it happened?

11. How do you picture yourself as a learner of Chinese after you finish the secondary school?

*If students cannot answer, give them some tips so that they can imagine their future selves.

12. Question about a trip/visit/stay in China

◦ **For students who have never visited China**

- Would you like to visit China in the future? When did you start wanting to visit China?

◦ **For students who have visited China**

- Did you attend the summer camp?
- How did you enjoy your stay in China? Did you manage to speak to local people?
- Did your visit to China make you feel more positive about learning Chinese?

13. Have you ever felt that you are different when you speak Chinese?

*If students cannot answer the question/understand the question, give an example based on your own experience.

Year 11 students

14. Do you think you would like to keep learning Chinese at sixth form?

◦ If the answer is yes:

Why? Is it because you did well in GCSE or you are planning to use Chinese in your future job/mastering Chinese will provide you with more opportunities for your future jobs? How can you imagine yourself using Chinese in the future?

◦ If the answer is no:

Why? Would you like to learn a different foreign language?

Optional questions

15. As your parent(s) speaks Chinese, do you sometimes use Chinese at home?

16. Do you do anything extra to improve your Chinese outside the classroom?

(If yes) Do you think it has helped you improve your Chinese or increase your motivation to learn Chinese?

APPENDIX C

(Table C1)

TABLE C1 Profile summary of participants

Participant ID ^a	Interview type	School year	Age	Length of studying Mandarin (years)	CLIL subjects
1	Individual	7	11	0.25 (=3 months)	Art, Drama, PE, PSRE
2	Individual	8	12	1.25	Art, Drama, PE, PSRE
3	Individual	9	13	2.25	Art, Drama, PE
4	Individual	12	16	5.25	ICT, PE, PSRE
6	Individual	8	12	1.25	Art, Drama, PE, PSRE
7	Individual	7	11	0.25	Art, Drama, PE, PSRE
9	Individual	11	15	4.25	Art, Drama, PE, PSRE
10	Individual	11	15	4.25	Art, Drama, PE, PSRE

Abbreviations: CLIL, Content and Language Integrated Learning; PSRE, Personal, Social and Religious Education.

^aParticipants 5 and 8 are non-CLIL students.