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CULTURAL CONTRASTS AND COMMONALITIES IN INSPIRING LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

Inspiring teaching is the kind of pedagogy that motivates pupils to study autonomously, in their own time, of their own volition beyond the classroom, and may be particularly important for long-term endeavours such as learning a second language. This study aimed to find out the prevalence and nature of inspiring English language teaching in the state school systems in two Asian contexts, Guangzhou, China and Jakarta, Indonesia, using an online open-item survey which asked learners to nominate and describe inspiring teachers they had had in school. Seven of these teachers were then visited in their schools, interviewed and observed teaching in class. The response to the survey (n = 279) indicated that inspiring teaching was probably not common but when it did occur, learners usually recalled that the teacher had a wide range of qualities, though some systematic differences were noted between Chinese and Indonesian respondents. Cultural differences were even more noticeable in the observed lessons, suggesting that the teachers worked hard to ensure their practice was contextually appropriate. All the teachers evinced an intrinsic motivation to teach, indicating that this factor might underlie inspiring pedagogy wherever it takes place. We argue for more research on inspiring teaching to complement that on motivational strategies.

Keywords

Motivation; motivational strategies; language teaching; inspiring teaching; culture; context; school.

1 Introduction

In the last decade there has been a welcome rise in the number of research studies examining how language teachers can motivate their learners, but in their recent review of this work, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, 136) point out that “there is a critical difference between ‘motivating students’ and ‘developing their motivation’ – that is, between getting learners to do

what is necessary in class, and inspiring them to invest effort in learning the language outside the classroom, in their own time, of their own volition, when the teacher no longer has any direct influence. This distinction is recognized in the world of business leadership, where the term 'inspiration' is used more freely than in the educational domain. Corporate mentor and management writer, Lance H. K. Secretan (2005, p. 14), for example, argues that motivation is something we do to other people using incentives or threats, to achieve our own short-term goals, while 'inspiration is something that is the result of a soulful relationship' that changes a person's emotions and behaviors 'from within' over the long-term. As Bowman (2011) discusses, contemporary education systems tend to load teachers with so many curricular objectives and institutional targets that their priority is usually to motivate their learners to achieve these, using the usual 'sticks' and 'carrots', rather than generating an intrinsic desire to learn the subject matter that will outlast their course.

Of course teachers are not the only possible source of inspiration for language learners; other kinds of critical experience might also trigger a lasting passion for learning. But there is little doubt that teachers have the potential to do so. Reviewing her recent edited volume of international research papers, Ushioda (2013, p. 235) concludes that however prominent English is in discourses of globalization and in national curricula, 'at a fundamental level it is what happens...in each individual classroom, as orchestrated by the teacher, that will have a critical bearing on how students are motivated (or not) to invest effort in learning English'. Teachers are cited as one of the main motivational influences in Shoaib and Dörnyei's (2005) study of lifelong language learning. They often appear as key influences in students' written

language learning histories (e.g. Murphey & Carpenter, 2008). In his own previous research in Indonesia, the first author found that successful learners often remembered a teacher who had inspired them to work hard on their English beyond the classroom (Lamb, 2011).

This paper reports a research project that deliberately targeted the concept of ‘inspiring language teaching’ by trying to find examples of teachers who had changed young people’s feelings about English and persuaded them to invest long-term effort in learning. It sought them in the state school systems of developing countries, both because this is where the great majority of the world’s language learners study, and because arguably teachers might have a more critical influence in contexts where out-of-class exposure to English and opportunities to use it are less frequent – compare Henry’s (2013) description of the situation in Sweden where teenagers routinely use English outside school. We chose China and Indonesia because they are often lumped together as ‘Asian’ yet we suspected, based on our own experiences of teaching there, that learners in the two countries may be motivated and inspired in different ways.

II Literature review

In general, the majority of work on L2 motivation continues to center on what the learner brings to the classroom, not what happens to it there. As Ellis (2012, p. 325) expressed recently, ‘there are remarkably few studies that have specifically examined how motivation affects how learners respond to instruction or how instruction affects learners’ motivation.’ One developing line of enquiry, however, is research on ‘motivational strategies’, which has grown out of

Dörnyei and Csizér's (1998) pioneering study of Hungarian teachers' beliefs about how to motivate their learners of English. Their list of 'commandments' for language teachers was elaborated by Dörnyei (2001; 2007) into an extensive framework for motivational teaching practice, from 'creating the basic motivational conditions' through 'generating initial motivation' and 'maintaining and protecting motivation', to 'encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation'. In recent years this has been subjected to empirical validation from various angles.

The boldest approach has been to test whether the strategies actually work in practice. Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) measured the motivational impact of various teaching strategies in Korean school classrooms, using a specially designed observation instrument in tandem with a learner questionnaire; they found that learners in classrooms where teachers used motivational strategies, such as connecting lesson content to pupils' lives and using pair or groupwork, tended to have more positive attitudes and to display more motivational learning behaviour (e.g. they volunteered more in class). Papi and Abdollahzadeh (2012) replicated the study with similar results in Iranian classrooms, while Moskovsky et al. (2012) went a step further by setting up a quasi-experiment in Saudi Arabian schools, exposing multiple classes of learners to 10 pre-selected motivational strategies and then comparing their motivation at the end of the 8-week course to that of learners in regular classes. The significant difference in the post-course motivational states of experimental and control groups 'provides compelling evidence', they claim, 'for the causal influence of teachers' motivational practices on learners' motivated behaviours' (p. 24).

Other studies have relied on teachers' self-reported use of motivational strategies. Thus Sugita and Takeuchi (2010) found a positive relationship between some (but not all) strategies used by Japanese teachers and the motivational state of their school pupils, while Bernaus and Gardner (2008) found that Spanish learners' *perceptions* of their teachers' strategy use was what affected their L2 motivation and achievement, rather than the actual use of the strategies. The value of all these studies however is their varied range of contexts, for this has produced important evidence about the universality of motivational strategies. Some strategies appear to work across cultures. Studies in Hungary (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998), Taiwan (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007), the USA (Ruesch et al., 2012) and Korea (Guilloteaux, 2013) have all demonstrated that 'appropriate teacher behaviour' is perceived by teachers as the most important motivational strategy, though not frequently used, perhaps because teachers 'are themselves experiencing ebbs and flows in their job motivation' (Guilloteaux, *op. cit.*, p. 12). Encouraging students to try harder, and building up their self-confidence, are examples of strategies that appear to be universal *and* commonly used. By contrast, some strategies are less valued by teachers in certain cultures; for instance, both Taiwanese and Koreans put less emphasis on 'developing learner autonomy' while the Korean teachers in Guilloteaux's recent study (2013) downgrade the value of stimulation and enjoyment in the learning process. Of course, we must remain cautious in interpreting the results of studies that rely on teacher self-reports, since the realization of these strategies in the classroom may differ widely. Indeed Elliot, Hufton, Willis and Ilyushin (2005, p. 79), in their large-scale study of motivation and engagement in the UK, USA and Russia, found that

teachers across all three milieux coincided in their views about what were the key variables affecting student motivation to learn in school. What they could not be aware of was that the parameters of these variables were strongly influenced by contextualised school practices and cultural pre-suppositions and values.

A separate strand of research into motivational teaching has been based on Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Noels and colleagues (1999, 2000) showed that adult learners' perceptions of their teacher's style affected their motivation; in line with the tenets of SDT, a more informative and less controlling style of language teaching tended to boost their sense of autonomy and competence. Subsequent research has demonstrated that various types of pedagogic intervention can enhance learners' intrinsic motivation to learn language, including a 'guided-autonomy' syllabus (e.g. Fukuda et al., 2011), communicative teaching methodology (Pae & Shin, 2011) and stimulating learning tasks (Jones et al., 2009) in Japanese, Korean and US universities respectively.

While all these studies contribute to our growing understanding of the motivational dimension of language teaching, they share one limitation: we cannot be certain that any effects found lasted beyond the particular course under study. Indeed, because 'within the context of institutionalized learning especially, the common experience would seem to be motivational flux rather than stability' (Ushioda, 1996, p. 240), studies reporting positive outcomes should perhaps issue the disclaimer that motivation can fall as well as rise, even within days of finishing a course. Ushioda (2008, 2013) in fact is sceptical about the search for universal motivational strategies, not only because the complexity and diversity of local pedagogic

contexts make it very difficult to generalize but because learners who become dependent on a particularly motivating teacher may never develop the inner motivation and self-regulatory capacity necessary for long-term independent learning.

Without longitudinal evidence, we can only assert that certain teachers or teaching strategies motivate; we do not know whether they triggered longer-term changes in learners' attitudes, feelings and behaviour in relation to studying the L2 – the kind of teaching that might be called 'inspiring'. Producing such evidence about particular pedagogic interventions would involve following learners for years after a course has ended, demanding time and resources which many researchers cannot afford. An alternative approach is to retrospect, by finding successful language learners who can ascribe their long-term endeavours to particularly inspiring teachers. While memories are obviously susceptible to post-hoc rationalization or decay, learners' personal accounts might be verified by meeting and observing the teachers themselves, if available. This is the approach we adopted in this research, with the aim of addressing these questions:

1. What are the qualities of English teachers that learners regard as 'inspiring'?
2. What effect have the inspiring teachers had, according to the learners, on their feelings about English, and what they do to learn it?
3. What similarities and differences are apparent in the qualities of nominated Chinese and Indonesian teachers?

The rest of this paper will describe the research methodology in more detail, briefly present quantitative findings related to the first two questions, and then discuss more fully our triangulated data on the final question.

III Research Methodology

The study employed a two-phase design, starting with an online survey of English language learners asking them to nominate an inspiring teacher, followed up by visits to some of the nominated teachers. We wanted to solicit the views of as large a number of English learners as possible, but were aware from initial piloting in China that reaching them through their teachers risked biasing the responses – there would be an inevitable tendency for pupils to nominate their current teacher, even if the teacher themselves did not intend that outcome. We therefore decided that our main research tool should be an online survey hosted by our institutional website using licensed BOS software. Because we intended to visit teachers, we decided to try to limit the geographical range of the survey by explicitly targeting learners in the cities of Guangzhou, China and Jakarta, Indonesia, where our local research assistants were based. We also addressed the survey to learners aged 14-22 currently studying in or having recently completed their study in state schools. We chose this age range since we felt that they would have enough experience as learners to recognize the influence of the teacher on their learning, while being young enough for their nominated teachers to still be active in junior high or secondary state schools.

The survey began with a very brief welcome in English, Bahasa Indonesia and Chinese introducing the idea of being ‘inspired’ by a teacher and inviting participation. There followed a small number of closed questions designed to enable us to identify the nominated teacher for phase two follow-up (e.g. name, school, current age of learner, age at which ‘inspired’). The main data on which we would draw to answer questions 1 and 2 above was generated by three open items:

1. *What was it about the teacher that inspired you?*
2. *How did your thoughts or feelings about English change?*
3. *What extra effort do you make to learn English (now or in the past)?*

These could be answered using English, Chinese or Indonesian.

IV Results

1 Response rate

Despite the best efforts of our research assistants to publicize the survey in local schools and online, the response to our online survey was slow. After three months a total of 380 responses had been received, of which 238 were included in the data analysis, as we decided to exclude those respondents who were the same age as when they were inspired. We wanted to be sure that the motivational effect of the teacher was long-lasting rather than just temporary, and also do our best to avoid the possibility that pupils had been coerced into nominating their current teacher. As detailed in Table 1, the average age of respondents was 16-17, and the vast majority had been inspired while in Years 7 to 9. There were as many different schools

mentioned as teachers (i.e. no school had more than one teacher nominated) and according to our research assistants, these represented a rough cross-section of the state system, from the elite (e.g. 'key' schools in China, or 'candidate international' schools in Indonesia) to the relatively low status.

There were two possible reasons for the poor return rate. Either we had not managed to spread word of the survey to sufficient numbers of learners, or fewer than expected learners were choosing to respond to it, presumably because they had not had an inspiring state school English teacher. In order to test this latter hypothesis, we produced an additional paper version of the questionnaire for distribution in Indonesia, which had thus far produced far fewer valid responses. This was given to 1st to 3rd year students at the English Departments in Faculties of Education at four prestigious Higher Education Institutions in Jakarta. 228 paper questionnaires were distributed, and 41 (18%) of the respondents nominated an inspiring teacher. These responses were then added to the online responses, producing final totals as displayed in Table 1.

[TABLE 1 NEAR HERE]

The lack of response to the online survey suggested that inspiring teaching is not very common in state schools in Guangzhou and Jakarta. The paper survey in Indonesia reinforced such an interpretation. Of any group of learners, it might be expected that English teachers-in-training,

at elite institutions in the capital city, would be able to think of school English teachers who had inspired them – but only 18% of them could.

2 Qualities of the inspiring teachers

Learner responses to the survey open items were first translated into English where necessary and then entered into two Excel databases. The two researchers first analysed the comments independently then collaboratively to develop an agreed coding framework for each of the three open items. Responses often contained more than one 'idea unit' and these were coded separately; occasionally the ideas in an item response related more closely to one of the other two items, and were then given the appropriate code i.e. a comment about teacher quality in an answer to question #3 would be coded accordingly and added to the data for question #1. All codings were double-checked by the other researcher to ensure consistency.

Table 2 shows the breakdown of responses to open item #1 – *What was it about the teacher that inspired you?*

[TABLE 2 NEAR HERE]

Interestingly the tri-partite division corresponds roughly to that proposed 35 years ago by Girard (1977, p12) as the 'ideal English teacher' on the basis of a survey of French school pupils: they have to be a 'good technician of language teaching' (A), they have to offer a good model,

both personal and professional (B), and they need to be 'a good psychologist' (C). There is also a clear overlap with several of the key motivational strategies prioritised by teachers in recent research. For example, the number one strategy for both Hungarian, Taiwanese and Korean teachers – 'setting a personal example with your behaviour' (Dörnyei & Csizér 1998; Cheng & Dörnyei 2007; Guilloteaux 2013) – is reflected in our respondents' praise for their teacher's professionalism; many of the comments related to methodology correspond to other recognised motivational strategies (e.g. present the tasks properly, make the learning tasks stimulating); and the importance of a positive relationship between teacher and learners reflects the importance of 'classroom dynamics', 'group cohesion' and other qualities which Dörnyei (2001) sees as creating the basic conditions for motivation.

What is perhaps most striking about the responses though is their sheer diversity; individual learners usually praised several different aspects of their nominated teacher, and different learners mentioned different qualities. Moreover, some systematic differences can be observed between Chinese and Indonesian learners. Chi-square tests for independence (with Yates Continuity Correction) revealed some significant differences in the frequency of responses from Chinese and Indonesian learners, though effect size was small (Phi coefficient of .10) to moderate (.30). For example, Indonesian learners valued novelty in methodology while Chinese learners valued effective use of traditional methods; Indonesians praised their teacher for providing fun classes while Chinese appreciated lessons that made the language interesting; Indonesians valued classes that were clear and comprehensible while Chinese valued the advice

teachers gave them on how to learn. We will return to these differences later when discussing individual teachers.

3 Effects of inspiring teaching on the learner

Comments in response to open items #2 & #3 provide strong evidence that individual teachers can have long-lasting effects on learners, both on their attitude and feelings toward the subject and on their learning behaviour. There are clear links between the changes that learners report and well-known constructs in the L2 motivation literature: The most popular response to item #2, given by nearly one third of the sample ('English became interesting') and the 5th most common response ('Enjoyed learning more') signal an increase in intrinsic motivation to study (Ryan & Deci, 2000); The second most popular response ('Gained a sense of progress'), the third ('Felt greater confidence') and 7th ('English felt easier to learn') signal an increase in learners' sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993), and the 4th most popular ('Became more aware of the importance of English') and 8th ('Changed aspirations') may signal the development of Ideal L2 selves (Dörnyei, 2009).

Some subtle differences are apparent in the two population groups. Chi-square tests for independence show that a disproportionate number of Chinese learners felt that English had become more interesting (just as they valued the teacher for making lessons interesting, see above), while significantly more Indonesians changed their view of the importance of English (both $p < .005$). There were far more references to exams and tests in the Chinese data – for

example, 16 of those learners who felt that they had made progress in English made reference to their improved assessment scores, while only 4 Indonesians did. Likewise, in response to item #3, an overall trend was for the Chinese learners to report more effort and more strategies than the Indonesian learners. This is particularly true in activities related to classwork, for example 'reciting texts' (no Indonesians mentioned this) and the out-of-class practice of listening, reading and writing skills ($p < .005$).

4 Examples of inspiring teachers: Cai and Lestari

The second phase of the research project involved us selecting eight teachers from among the 20 who had received at least two nominations, visiting them in their schools, observing and video-recording a 'typical' English lesson, and interviewing them about how they had developed their teaching practice and beliefs. The teachers were chosen mainly on the basis of their availability and accessibility, and to represent a range of state school levels. One of the Chinese teachers was ill on the day of our visit, and therefore her data was excluded from further analysis, leaving seven teachers, three in Guangzhou (2 junior middle school, 1 senior middle school), four in Jakarta (2 junior high school, 2 senior high school). The visits were made by one of the authors along with the local research assistant. Interviews were transcribed and the observed lessons were described in narrative form using our field notes and video-recordings. Portraits of four of the 'inspiring teachers' are presented in Wedell and Lamb (2013). In this paper, for the sake of economy we will focus on just one Chinese teacher and one Indonesian teacher, both teaching learners of age 12-14 in high status city state schools. As explained

below, each has much in common with the other cases from their country and so they serve to illuminate our answers to the third research question on the similarities and differences between 'inspiring teaching' in the two national contexts.

'Cai' (a pseudonym), who received the largest number of nominations of all the Chinese teachers (21), had graduated in English from a city level university, which in the Chinese context was not particularly high status. She was now in her late 20s and had four years of teaching experience, all at the 'key' junior middle school in the centre of Guangzhou where she now worked. Her only experience of professional development so far was an online course which she had opted to take but not found satisfying. 'Lestari' was several years older and had graduated in English from the prestigious University of Indonesia in Jakarta. She received 7 nominations. She had taught for 14 years, first in a private school, then in her current junior high school in south Jakarta, which she herself had attended as a teenager. This school was a 'candidate international standard school' and had recently become selective. In her early career she had won a 6-month Fulbright scholarship to study language pedagogy in the USA, and had recently attended a series of training workshops at the American Regional English Language Office.

In their comments about the teachers, learners praised them for a very wide range of qualities: for their novel methods of teaching, which made lessons fun, for their good relations with the students and for their good subject knowledge. In fact there were several comments about the teachers which seemed to mirror each other and suggest they were alike.

[TABLE 3 NEAR HERE]

Other clusters of comments point to possible differences between the two teachers. For instance four learners made the point that Cai's lessons were interesting and another six said they had become more interested in English after attending her course. By contrast the adjective 'interesting' was not used about Lestari's lessons. Six said Cai was patient or kind, while none of Lestari's learners used these terms. By contrast three of the seven learners who nominated Lestari stated that she had supported their learning through her understanding and attention; 'support' was not a term used by Cai's learners. In summary, the survey data was slightly ambiguous as regards the comparability of the two teachers' pedagogy.

Our observation data was far more clear-cut: their two lessons could hardly have been more different. In brief, Cai taught a standard 45-minute lesson to a class of 57 Year 8 students, seated in 4 double rows across the classroom. The lesson was presented almost entirely through a series of powerpoint slides, and was a revision lesson of the language in Unit 4 of the standard Middle school textbook, *Historical Scenes*. The teacher wore a microphone and stood at the front of the class throughout. She radiated enthusiasm and spoke English almost all the time, using Chinese briefly when explaining grammatical points and giving homework. The lesson consisted of a rapid sequence of 8 short activities, sometimes whole class (e.g. recitation of a text), sometimes individual work (e.g. grammar exercises), sometimes pairwork (e.g. retelling a story from the textbook), sometimes groupwork (e.g. a game where groups choose a

present box on a powerpoint slide, the teacher 'opens' it and gives them the grammar question inside). Learners were attentive and participative throughout; when a learner answered a teacher question correctly, his/her group scored a point which was recorded on the blackboard – at the end of the class, the group with the largest number of points was declared the winner (a brief video extract from Cai's lesson is available to view in Wedell & Lamb, 2013).

Lestari taught a standard 90-minute lesson to approximately 30 Year 9 pupils, seated in paired tables in four rows across the room. The entire lesson was taken up with student group presentations in English, apart from the first few minutes where she reminded students of the protocol for this kind of lesson (which they had had before) i.e. moving into pre-arranged groups, listening quietly to the group who is presenting, preparing questions for the presenters, and finally giving some constructive feedback to the presenters (again, mainly in English). Each group presentation lasted 15-25 minutes, and was on topics such as 'healthy eating habits', 'handphones in school' and 'dating among high school pupils'. Each of the four group members presented a part of the whole, using powerpoint slides as support. The presentations included 'data' from surveys or interviews that the students had carried out with other school pupils or with family members; they also all contained information on the topic gleaned from the internet. Learners evidently enjoyed the lesson, though at times the noise level rose among the listeners and the teacher had to remind them to give full attention to the speakers.

A summary of the key differences between the lessons is set out in Table 4.

[TABLE 4 NEAR HERE]

Although we asked to see 'typical' lessons, we obviously cannot be sure that they teach like this normally. However, all the teachers were well aware of the purpose of our research so we can be fairly sure that the lessons they chose to show us were ones they considered potentially motivating for students. What is more, Cai and Lestari's lessons corresponded broadly to the principles they espoused in their interview, which in turn match many of the comments made in the survey. For example, Cai expressed the enthusiasm for teaching that was evident from watching her: 'Each lesson is important for me to improve. I enjoy classes every day. When I go into class I feel energetic...' She said that making classes interesting for students is extremely important for their learning, and she felt glad to be an English teacher rather than a teacher of other subjects who has to 'speak and write on the blackboard all the time and the students listen, think and take notes.' Having a close relationship with students plays an important role in making students interested in learning a subject, she believes: 'my students always say "because I love you and want to be your good friend I love English"'. The intensely competitive nature of her class, focussed on mastering the content of the textbook, was also characteristic of her teaching: 'it's very important for the exam, because we have to compete with others, other schools, other teachers so we have the pressure'.

In her interview Lestari also emphasised the importance of the teacher-student relationship: 'Indonesian students tend to like the teachers first, rather than the subject first... so it's like, how to get them to like English, and also like me?' But her following comments are revealing:

'the second thing is I also have to think very carefully about what kind of task, what kind of assignment should I give that also makes them get interested. If they're critical enough, if they're close enough to me they will tell me if they don't like one of them.' Unlike Cai, who determines lesson content herself (with the help of the standard textbook), Lestari clearly expects her learners to make their own contribution to the syllabus. Many pupils enter the school having had bad experiences learning English at primary school, thinking "'oh English is so difficult" and they block themselves, so it's my job in the beginning to open the gate first, to make them motivated.' This underlies her emphasis on developing learners' oral skills. At first, she says, 'most of them are reluctant to say something in English because they are afraid of making mistakes, and they're afraid their language is not good.' By giving them interactive speaking activities, they begin to feel a sense of progress; 'if we focus on the grammar first... they're reluctant to do anything.' She does not believe her lessons are just about language, but also about learning how to find and process information, using the internet and doing their own research.

V Discussion

Clearly some of the stark contrasts evident in the teaching of Cai and Lestari could be ascribed to individual differences; Cai is younger and much less experienced, for example, which may help to explain the very energetic style of teaching; Lestari has been exposed to western pedagogy, both experientially and academically, and this might well have influenced her thinking on the importance of learner feedback and student-led lessons. Yet their lessons

shared many features with those of the other Chinese and Indonesian teachers we observed; the contrasts in Table 4 applied to all three Chinese lessons, and to three of the four Indonesian classes. Further, there is some correspondence between the observed lessons and the significant differences noted in the survey responses of Chinese and Indonesian learners; in the way, for example, that Chinese learners appear to value more traditional methods, applied effectively, whereas Indonesian learners favour novelty. Chinese learners tend to praise teachers who make the lesson content 'interesting', whereas Indonesian learners tend to seek 'fun' and 'humour'.

The differences therefore may partly reflect systemic differences in the respective national contexts and their 'cultures of learning' (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). China is an ethnically more homogenous nation than Indonesia and the Chinese education system remains more centralized, constraining the ability or desire of teachers to innovate with methods or materials. Moreover as a country where most urban dwellers have only one child, Chinese parents have high aspirations, and competition among learners is intense. This competition is played out above all in the frequent local and high stakes national examinations which govern progress through the system, and teachers and learners alike understand that exam success is the true yardstick of educational achievement. So despite national curriculum reforms which promote task-based approaches to the teaching of English at secondary level, and the provision of supporting textbooks, most teaching is still focussed on the reading comprehension skills, grammar and vocabulary knowledge that feature most frequently in the exams (Qi, 2005). By contrast, the recent decentralization of the Indonesian education system (Björk, 2004) has

handed greater autonomy to schools, and those Indonesian teachers who are confident of their headteacher's approval feel free to innovate with new methods, including passing on more autonomy to learners. National exams are important, but so are the school grades assigned by teachers. Further, Indonesia's historic openness to outside influence, young urban Indonesians' eagerness to connect with other Asian and global youth cultures, and the pervasive use of English in the business and commercial life of big cities means the ability to use English in communication is valued just as highly as academic success, and is a key marker of social class (Lamb, 2004; 2012). Finally, on a practical level, the difference in pace between the Indonesian and Chinese lessons might be partly attributed to the timing: the standard 90-minute lesson format in Indonesia, combined with the stifling heat in many classrooms, mitigates against a very energetic style of pedagogy.

However, we suggest that what makes these teachers inspiring is the way they respect local norms but go *beyond* them. In the 1990s, the research of Cortazzi and Jin (e.g. 1996) suggested that Chinese learners valued 'deep knowledge' in a teacher far above all other qualities. This was not reflected in our survey responses where 'skill/knowledge in English' was less prominent, and Chinese learners appeared to put more emphasis on the ability to make lessons 'interesting'. Cai and the other two Chinese teachers we observed understand their learners' need and desire to master the language knowledge contained in the textbook and exams, which requires that they understand grammar rules, memorize vocabulary, and read set texts intensively; but they also recognise their appreciation of a fast-paced lesson, their liking for variety in mode of interaction, their enjoyment of inter-group competition. We would speculate

that they are responding to subtle changes in the local 'culture of learning', as learners now experience slightly more playful kinds of learning in primary school, and the widespread use of IT at home and in school raises expectations for stimulating forms of presentation and practice (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006).

A recent large-scale research study in Indonesia (Maulana et al., 2011, p. 45) reported that 'Indonesian teachers still seem to maintain dominant behaviour', 'maintain distance, physically and psychologically with their learners' and 'are used to teaching the whole class in a frontal way with a great emphasis on the transmission of knowledge'. Clearly Lestari and the other observed teachers were offering something quite different from their learners' regular fare. They are aware that these Jakartan learners, while still according the teacher much respect, appreciate a much more democratic pedagogy, and value a close relationship which allows for genuine two-way communication: as Lestari said in her interview, "you [the learners] cannot talk to other teachers because they cannot accept what you said, but you are free to talk to me, and I can be your secret friend." This was true even of the 4th Indonesian teacher observed, who although evidently preferring a more traditional teacher-fronted style of lesson, stressed the importance of being psychologically close to learners, which she achieved through using humour in the class and opening up channels of communication with learners online. Moreover all the observed Indonesian teachers saw their role as facilitating the development of active skills in English, rather than just transmitting knowledge. Even though there is no speaking component in the national examination system, they see that their learners are excited by oral

communication in English, being a chance to enact imagined identities as sophisticated, well-educated, globally-connected citizens.

The question remains: what distinguishes inspiring language teaching from the merely motivational? As stated earlier, many of the qualities mentioned by learners in the survey, as well as those which we observed in the lessons, match the 'motivational strategies' described by Dörnyei (2001, 2007) and indeed the characteristics of effective teachers found in previous research over the decades (e.g. Girard 1977; Brown 2009). As Dörnyei comments (2007, p. 731), no teacher can be all things to all pupils; to motivate successfully they only need 'a few well-selected basic techniques'. We suspect however that where there is regular contact between teacher and learners, the key to inspiration is the consistent application of these techniques over the long-term, fostering personal change in the learners and the growth of autonomous motivation and personal agency (Ushioda, 2011). This in turn demands a high level of dedication on the part of the teacher.

In that regard, it is highly significant that all of the teachers we met and observed made clear how much they cared about their work, that is, about their subject English, about their learners, and about finding effective ways to convey their subject to their learners. There were differences in how they had arrived at this happy condition: all three Chinese teachers said their love of teaching had begun early, when their own teachers, recognising their above average competence in English, had asked them to tutor their peers; by contrast three of the Indonesians explicitly stated that they had never intended to become teachers: one of them

had been drawn into the profession by her love for English, another had been 'pushed' into teaching by her husband but soon realized how important English was for her pupils, while a third stressed how much she loved working in the school ('the surroundings, the people, the support'). Lestari herself enjoyed being a pioneer in new teaching approaches.

Csikzentmihalyi (1997, p. 79) has written

those [teachers] who are remembered, who made a difference in the way we see ourselves and the world, who stirred us in new directions, and who revealed unexpected strengths in us or made us aware of our limitations....were usually the ones who loved what they were doing, who showed by their dedication and their passion that there was nothing else on earth they would rather be doing.

It should therefore not be surprising that the 'inspiring teachers' nominated in our survey turned out themselves to be inspired, to have a passion to teach which expressed itself in diverse ways in each individual teacher but which was strong enough to sometimes ignite a passion in the learners too. We should note though that in the same chapter Csikzentmihalyi implies that the passion for a subject and for doing it well is necessary and sufficient to inspire university students. In our study, focusing on school-age learners in traditionally authoritarian education systems, this is emphatically not the case: all the teachers exhibit a strong empathy for their learners in their interviews, and clearly had a good rapport with their classes when observed. Klassen, Perry and Frenzel (2012) point out how teachers are unique among the

professions for the length of time that they spend with their 'clients' (i.e. students) and consequently the nature of their long-term relationship is all the more important to their own as well as their learners' motivation. We would speculate that over time a positive feedback loop is established whereby their love of teaching generates enthusiasm in their learners, fomenting healthy relationships in class which in turn energize the teachers to constantly fine-tune their lessons to learners' interests and needs, maximizing the chances of their being inspired.

VI Conclusion

This research study cannot and was not intended to produce a new set of 'motivational strategies' for teachers to adopt. First of all 'inspiration' is always partly a matter of chance, of the serendipitous meeting of minds; all teachers can do is try to create the optimum conditions for it to occur. Secondly, the small scale nature of the study means we cannot claim the experiences that learners relate in the survey are representative of all inspired learners in the two contexts, and we are certainly not arguing that Cai, Lestari and the five other teachers we observed are somehow representative of inspiring teachers. Thirdly even though we excluded respondents who were still being taught by the teacher, a large number were very recent pupils, and so we cannot be certain that the motivational effects they report lasted many years.

The study's contribution is in increasing our awareness of this important aspect of motivating pedagogy. Inspiration does occur in the state schools of China and Indonesia, prompting

profound changes in learners' interest levels, their confidence and their study behavior, though it may not be very common. When it does occur, learners often cite a range of teacher attributes, mostly relating to their methodology, but also to their personality or professionalism, and to the good relations they had with their students. Some subtle differences were found in the characteristics cited by Chinese and Indonesian learners, and when we observed inspiring teachers in action in the two contexts, there were stark contrasts between the lessons. We argued that these cultural contrasts, though reflecting genuine differences in Indonesian and Chinese views of effective education, disguised an essential human commonality among all the inspiring teachers – that they themselves had an intrinsic motivation to teach English and it was probably this that enabled them to provide a consistently motivating, and thus inspiring, form of teaching.

For education authorities, there are implications here for teacher training and development. While subject knowledge and methodological competence are important foundations for good teaching, truly inspiring teaching – the kind that imbues learners with a love for the subject – probably has its roots in the teacher's own love of the subject and her desire to help others master it. Training courses should aim to foster these qualities first of all. Pre-service training might usefully devote more time to developing the personal and interpersonal skills, such as sensitivity to and ability to respond appropriately to learners' feelings, that underpin most non-teachers' perceptions of 'good teachers' (Malderez & Wedell, 2007); for those mid-career teachers whose passion might be waning, context-appropriate, in-service training which provides opportunities to share positive professional experiences with others, may help to

reignite it. Systems of accountability can also drain serving teachers of their intrinsic motivation by demanding tight adherence to syllabi, materials and externally-set standards; just like learners, teachers need a sense of autonomy in their work or their motivation will become steadily more extrinsic, promoting the kind of 'going through the motions' work ethic which sadly pervades many state education systems.

If inspiring teaching in urban China looks quite different from that in urban Indonesia, we cannot predict with certainty what it may look like elsewhere; the only way of discovering this is through empirical investigation in different contexts. Since any teacher can in theory inspire any learner, the challenge for researchers is to identify those who do so more regularly, and then to describe their practice. Our experience here suggests that learners' retrospective accounts are an effective means of identifying such teachers, but we would recommend stipulating that they were taught at least two years in the past, so that we know the effects are long-term. We would also advise that future researchers invest less in survey data, which is reliant on learners' fading memories and their capacity to articulate pedagogic ideas, and more in repeated observational data, which combined with teacher interviews can offer a more accurate and trustworthy account of the teachers' actual practice. Such a research program, focused on long-term motivational effects, would neatly complement the necessarily short-term focus of motivational strategies research.

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	No. of valid responses	Av. age of respondents	Av. age when inspired	No. of teachers nominated	No. of teachers nominated more than once
China	155	16.4	13.5	82	12
Indonesia	83	17.1	13.9	81	8
Indonesia paper	41				
Overall	279	16.7	13.7	163	20

Table 1. Responses to online and paper surveys

MAIN CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORIES	CHINESE	INDON	TOTAL	Significant differences	Phi coefficient	
A <i>What the teacher did</i>	General methodology – effective teaching	3	3	6			
	Use of novel methods	6	27	33	I > C**	.27	
	Effective use of traditional methods	16	1	17	C > I**	.20	
	Fun/humorous/lively classes	11	38	49	I > C**	.31	
	Interesting classes	19	1	20	C > I**	.22	
	Strict/firm/serious classes	11	17	28			
	Comprehensible lessons/clear explanations	7	23	30	I > C**	.22	
	Paid attention to learner strengths/weaknesses	10	13	23			
	Gave advice on learning	39	14	53	C > I**	.18	
	Gave advice on life generally	14	18	32			
	Encouraged learners to take particular actions	30	13	43			
	SUBTOTALS	166	168	334			
B <i>What the teacher was like...As a person</i>	Nice/kind	10	11	21			
	Patient	16	11	27			
	Humorous	11	8	19			
	Smart (i.e. intelligent)	0	5	5	I > C*	.15	
	Other (e.g. easy-going, young, beautiful)	10	14	24			
	...As a professional	Dedicated to job/hard-worker	28	8	36	C > I*	.17
		Treated work & students in an ethical way	4	7	11		
		Showed passion for English	10	3	13		
		Had a good knowledge or skill in English	17	17	34		
		Had good cultural knowledge/understanding	8	5	13		
		SUBTOTALS	114	89	203		
C <i>Teacher's relationship with learners</i>	Good relationship with class as a whole	12	11	23			
	Had a personally close relationship	18	4	22	C > I*	.15	
	Offered reassurance, praise & encouragement	12	21	33	I > C*	.15	
		SUBTOTALS	42	36	78		
		TOTALS	322	293	615		

Significance levels: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .005$

Table 2. Analysis of responses to open item #1: Qualities of the inspiring teacher

CAI	LESTARI
<i>Just like a wonderful elder sister</i>	<i>Our mom at school</i>
<i>She helped me realize that English was full of fun</i>	<i>Her teaching methods are the most fun and memorable</i>
<i>She is very kind, she seldom angry with us, all the students in our class like her</i>	<i>The teacher has a very good relationship with the students</i>
<i>She really loved the teaching job.</i>	<i>After I saw her, I became convinced to be a teacher which is loved by the kids.</i>
<i>She] helped expand my vision and develop better toward the world</i>	<i>She told us her experiences there [in USA], made us feel 'wow!'</i>
<i>Her beautiful and standard pronunciation</i>	<i>[She] knows lots of vocabulary, plenty of grammar too, her accent is very like an American, not a British</i>

Table 3. Examples of learners' comments about the two teachers

CAI	LESTARI
<i>Revision of previous grammar content - multiple short stages - rapid pace</i>	<i>Learner presentations throughout, interspersed with questions from other groups – very relaxed pace</i>
<i>Teacher initiates all activities and use of language, learners respond</i>	<i>Teacher does no ‘teaching’ – all inputs from the learners</i>
<i>Focus on language throughout and there is always a ‘right answer’</i>	<i>Focus on content of group presentation</i>
<i>Emphasis on competition between groups</i>	<i>Emphasis on whole class collaboration</i>
<i>Materials/activities based completely around the language from textbook</i>	<i>Materials are designed by the learners, content derived from internet and own ‘research’ with peers</i>

Table 4. Summary of differences between Cai and Lestari’s lessons

[8,838 words, including abstract, references and tables]