The Importance of Motivation in Foreign Language Learning

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Abstract: Motivation is one of the most important factors in foreign language teaching and learning. It can be defined as the driving force that stimulates and sustains an individual's behavior toward a particular goal or objective. Motivation is a complex construct that can be influenced by various factors, such as personality, cultural background, social environment, and personal experiences. It is essential for language teachers to recognize the importance of motivation in language learning and incorporate motivational strategies into their teaching practices. This can lead to more effective and efficient language learning and a greater sense of engagement and ownership over the learning process for learners. In this paper, we will explore the importance and intricate facets of motivation in foreign language teaching and learning, including the diverse motivational models, types and orientations, and how they affect language proficiency.

Keywords: motivation, learning, teaching, foreign language

1. Introduction

Foreign language learning can be a challenging and daunting task for many students, especially those who lack motivation. Motivation represents a central element in foreign language learning, as it can significantly influence students' engagement, perseverance, and overall achievement in the language. Motivation is a complex construct that can be influenced by various factors, such as personality, cultural background, social environment, and personal experiences. In this conceptual paper, we will provide an in-depth epistemological analysis of the multifaceted nature of motivation in language learning, its different models and types, and their impact on

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second language achievement, delving into the intricate nuances of this multifarious construct. It is also the purpose of this paper to explore the importance of motivation in foreign language teaching and learning, including the various motivational factors that can influence language proficiency and the role of teachers in fostering motivation.

Before a second language can be effectively taught in a learning setting, learners must possess a desire to learn the language. Dornyei's (as cited in Kaboody, 2013) assertion that motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the second language and later the driving force to sustain the long and often arduous learning process is widely acknowledged, with all other factors involved in L2 acquisition depending to some extent on motivation. The provision of adequate motivation is essential in enabling even individuals with minimal abilities to achieve long-term goals, with a suitable curriculum and quality instruction further ensuring student achievement. Gass and Selinker (2008) reinforce this perspective, maintaining that learners who exhibit vigilance in seeking comprehensible input and expending significant effort in memorization (even if unconsciously) are more likely to succeed in second language learning environments. While intellectual capacity and language aptitude play vital roles in language acquisition, motivation remains a major contributing factor to success. Xu's (as cited in Anjomshoa and Sadighi, 2015) characterization of motivation as a goal-directed construct, encompassing effort, a desire to achieve language acquisition goals, and favorable attitudes towards language learning, underscores its centrality to the process of second language acquisition.

Motivation remains a complex and multifaceted construct, as noted by Gardner (as cited in Ghamdi, 2014), who views it as an abstract and intricate concept used to describe human behaviour. Its complex nature stems from its dependence on varying situations and conditions, with different students exhibiting varying levels of motivation to communicate with the target language community. Notwithstanding its complexity, motivation remains a crucial factor in second language acquisition, particularly in classroom language learning.

2. Perspectives and Definitions on Motivation
One of the main points of disagreement is the conceptualization of motivation as a uni- or multidimensional construct. Some researchers argue that motivation is a complex and multifaceted construct that encompasses a range of cognitive, affective, and behavioural factors, while others view motivation as a relatively stable and unitary trait. For instance, Gardner and Lambert define motivation as "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes toward learning the language" (Gardner and Lambert, 1972:133). This definition emphasizes the cognitive and affective dimensions of motivation, highlighting the importance of individual goals, attitudes, and beliefs in shaping learners' engagement and persistence in foreign language learning.

In contrast, Dörnyei defines motivation as "the driving force in all learners that initiates learning and sustains progress over time" (Dörnyei, 2001:8). This

definition suggests a more unitary and stable view of motivation, emphasizing its role as a general trait or disposition that influences learners' engagement and achievement across a range of learning contexts and tasks.

Another contrasting definition comes from Deci and Ryan, who define motivation as "the energization and direction of behavior" (Deci and Ryan, 1985:2), emphasizing the behavioural aspect of motivation, focusing on the activation and orientation of learners' actions and goals in foreign language learning. Furthermore, MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1998:11), define motivation as "a complex of variables that influence the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of behavior", suggesting a multidimensional view of motivation, encompassing a range of cognitive, affective, and situational factors that interact and influence learners' engagement and persistence in foreign language learning. In comparison to the definitions by Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Dörnyei (2001), MacIntyre et al.'s definition highlights the complexity and dynamic nature of motivation, acknowledging the influence of a range of internal and external factors on learners' engagement and achievement. The definition also expands the scope of motivation beyond the cognitive and affective dimensions to include situational and contextual factors, such as the role of social and cultural context in shaping learners' motivation and engagement in foreign language learning.

In an attempt to underscore the dynamic and context-dependent nature of motivation in foreign language teaching and learning, Liuoliene and Metiuniene (2016) describe motivation as:

> a dynamic and multifaceted construct that reflects the learners' willingness and ability to engage in foreign language learning activities, which is shaped by their individual characteristics, social context, and the pedagogical practices that guide their learning experiences. (Liuoliene and Metiuniene, 2016:36)

The authors accentuate the complex nature of motivation and its dependence on various factors, including personal goals, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and identity, also placing importance on social and cultural factors, such as the influence of family, peers, and the wider community, in shaping learners' motivation and language learning outcomes.

A new take on motivation focuses on the role of teacher support and feedback in fostering motivation. According to this notion, "motivation is a complex set of factors that includes learners' goals, expectations, and perceptions of the task, as well as the ways in which the task is structured and the support that the teacher provides" (Ushioda, 2013:5). The author suggests that motivation is influenced not only by a learner's internal attitudes and beliefs, but also by the ways in which the task is structured and the support that the teacher provides. What makes this view on motivation distinct from the others is the fact that it brings forth the importance of the teacher-student interaction in shaping learners' attitudes and beliefs about language learning.

Overall, all these notions regarding motivation mirroring the diverse theoretical and methodological frameworks used in research on foreign language learning motivation. While some definitions emphasize the cognitive and affective dimensions of motivation, others highlight its behavioural, dispositional, and situational aspects, reflecting the complex and multifaceted nature of motivation as a construct. By acknowledging and integrating different theoretical perspectives and research traditions, scholars can gain a more comprehensive understanding of motivation in foreign language learning and develop effective strategies for promoting learners' engagement and achievement.

3. The Gardner's Socio-Educational Model of Motivation

The Socio-Educational Model of Motivation was developed by Canadian psychologist Robert Gardner in the 1980s. According to the author, this model posits that motivation in second language learning is not just a product of individual attributes or external factors, but it is the result of the interaction between the two. Gardner's model emphasizes the importance of examining the learning context and the social environment in which the learning takes place:

> The model suggests that motivation is an interactional and complex phenomenon that is influenced by both the personal and the social contexts of learning, including the attitudes and beliefs of the learners, their perceptions of the learning environment, and the educational and social support available to them. (Gardner, 1985:10).

The Socio-Educational Model of Motivation consists of three main components: the individual, the environment, and the relationship between the individual and the environment. The individual component includes personal attributes such as attitudes, beliefs, and motivation, while the environmental component encompasses institutional, social, and cultural factors that can influence motivation. The relationship component emphasizes the interaction between the individual and the environment, which can either enhance or inhibit motivation. According to Gardner's model, several individual factors contribute to motivation, including language aptitude, attitudes toward the target language and its speakers, and the learner's sense of self-efficacy. Environmental factors, on the other hand, include the quality of instruction, the relevance of the learning material, the amount of social support, and the learner's exposure to the target language and culture. The relationship between the individual and the environment is a crucial aspect of Gardner's model, as it emphasizes that the learner's motivation is influenced by the interaction between their personal attributes and the environmental factors that surround them. Thus, for Gardner, it is essential to provide learners with positive social support and an encouraging environment that can enhance their motivation and lead to successful language learning outcomes. (Zareian and Jodaei, 2015)

Gardner's Socio-Educational Model of Motivation is a useful framework for understanding the complex nature of motivation in second language learning. It highlights the importance of examining the interaction between individual and

environmental factors and provides insight into the role of social support and institutional context in language learning motivation. His theory relies heavily on the integrative part of motivation which is considered to be the most important factor in language learning and that it is influenced by a range of social and psychological variables, such as the learner's social identity and attitudes towards the target language culture.

4. Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System

Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System is a more recent model of motivation that focuses on the role of the self-concept in driving motivation. The author claims that:

> The L2MSS is a dynamic system that operates on three levels - the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience - and the strength and coherence of these three components determine the level of motivation, effort, and persistence the learner will invest in the learning task. (Dörnyei, 2009:214)

The ideal L2 self refers to the image of oneself as a fluent speaker of the target language. Learners who have a strong ideal L2 self tend to be highly motivated to learn the language, as they have a clear and compelling goal to work towards.

The ought-to L2 self, on the other hand, refers to the self that learners feel they ought to become in order to meet external expectations or avoid negative outcomes, such as disappointing others or failing to achieve their goals. This component of the L2MSS can be a source of motivation, but it can also lead to anxiety or feelings of obligation that can undermine motivation.

Finally, the L2 learning experience component of the L2MSS involves the learner's perceptions of the language learning process and their sense of progress and achievement. If learners feel that they are making progress and that their efforts are being rewarded, they are more likely to stay motivated and engaged in the learning process.

The L2MSS has been widely used in research on motivation in second language learning, and it has been shown to be a useful framework for understanding the complex interplay of individual, social, and contextual factors that influence learners' motivation.

5. The Self-Determination Theory: Understanding the Complexities of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a broad motivational framework that has been applied to language learning contexts, distinguishing between two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic, yet placing more importance on intrinsic motivation and the satisfaction of basic psychological needs. Intrinsic motivation refers to the inner drive to learn a language for the joy of learning or the satisfaction of achieving a personal goal. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, refers to external factors that motivate students, such as grades, rewards, or social pressure (Dornyei, 2014). Intrinsic motivation is considered to be more powerful and long-

lasting than extrinsic motivation because it comes from within the student and is not dependent on external factors (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Intrinsic motivation is associated with positive emotions, higher self-esteem, and a sense of autonomy and control over the learning process, all of which contribute to more effective and enjoyable language learning experiences (Dornyei, 2009b).

According to SDT, motivation is driven by three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to the need for learners to feel in control of their learning and to have a sense of choice and agency. Competence refers to the need for learners to feel capable and effective in their learning. Relatedness refers to the need for learners to feel connected to others and to have a sense of belonging in the learning environment. SDT suggests that teachers can foster motivation by creating a learning environment that supports these three needs. The fulfilment of these needs is crucial for individuals to be intrinsically motivated to engage in an activity. Ryan and Deci (2000) state that "Intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence" (2000:56). SDT also identifies "different types of extrinsic motivation that can influence behaviour, including language learning, ranging from amotivation to fully autonomous extrinsic motivation" (Deci and Ryan, 2008:70). Amotivation refers to a lack of motivation or a disinterest in language learning. It occurs when an individual sees no connection between the task and its outcomes or when they have no control over the situation. This type of motivation is unlikely to result in effective learning outcomes because learners are not actively engaged in the process.

The other types of extrinsic motivation identified by SDT include external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation. External regulation is the least autonomous form of extrinsic motivation, in which individuals engage in a behaviour solely to obtain an external reward or avoid punishment. Introjected regulation is characterized by behaviour that is motivated by internal pressures or a desire to avoid guilt or anxiety. Identified regulation involves behaviour that is personally valued, even if it is not inherently enjoyable. Finally, integrated regulation occurs when individuals fully integrate the value and importance of a behaviour into their sense of self and personal goals. The degree to which extrinsic motivation is autonomous influences the extent to which it can lead to effective language learning outcomes. Autonomous extrinsic motivation, such as identified and integrated regulation, can be a powerful driver of behaviour because it is driven by an individual's personal values and goals. In contrast, extrinsic motivation that is less autonomous, such as external regulation and introjected regulation, may not be as effective in promoting sustained effort or positive emotions related to language learning. (Deci & Ryan, 2008)

According to Bernard (2010), in line with the self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation can be further categorized into three distinct types, namely intrinsic motivation for knowledge, for accomplishment, and for stimulation. Intrinsic motivation for knowledge pertains to the inherent pleasure that arises from exploring new ideas and acquiring knowledge. Intrinsic motivation for accomplishment refers to

the sense of satisfaction one feels upon mastering a task or achieving a goal. Finally, intrinsic motivation for stimulation involves the positive emotions one experiences, such as pleasure and excitement, while engaging in an activity. Noels et al. (2000) similarly categorize intrinsic motivation, identifying the same three subtypes: intrinsic motivation for knowledge, intrinsic motivation for accomplishment, and intrinsic motivation for stimulation.

In contrast to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation falls on a continuum ranging from non-self-determination to self-determination. Zareian and Jodaei (2015) suggest that motivation can be classified into three categories along this continuum: unwillingness, passive compliance, and active personal commitment. Extrinsic motivation arises from external factors, such as social pressure or rewards, that compel individuals to engage in an activity. Extrinsic motivation often serves as a means to an end, where individuals undertake a task to achieve a certain target or outcome, such as gaining recognition, admiration, or avoiding punishment.

However, the nature of external motivation is such that it entails some degree of external pressure, and once that pressure is removed, individuals may lose interest in pursuing the task or activity (Noels, Clement, & Pelletier, 2001). In contrast, intrinsic motivation, especially intrinsic motivation for knowledge, is more likely to be self-sustaining and enduring, as it arises from within the individual and is not contingent upon external factors. Overall, understanding the different types of motivation can help educators create learning environments that are more conducive to students' learning and achievement. (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

6. The Dichotomy between Instrumental and Integrative Motivation
The interest of second language learners lies in acquiring proficiency in the target language and comprehending the underlying purpose of communicating in that language. The level of motivation of such learners plays a crucial role in their eagerness to acquire more knowledge and skills in reading, writing, and speaking the second language (Engin, 2009).

A common approach in language learning is to differentiate between integrative and instrumental motivation (Gardner & Lambert as cited in Chalak and Kassaian, 2010). Instrumental motivation is driven by the aim of achieving external goals such as employment, academic requirements, or reading technical documents. On the other hand, integrative motivation is related to the desire to be accepted by a particular community (Loewen and Reinders as cited in Ghamdi, 2014). Integrative motivation can be defined as a learner's eagerness to integrate with the second language community and culture (Zareian and Jodaei, 2015). It characterizes students who are interested in understanding the values and cultural issues of the target community. Integrative motivated learners aspire to learn the target language to better appreciate and assimilate with the native speakers and their culture (Gardner and Masgoret as cited in Rehman et al., 2014). In contrast, instrumental motivation is based on the perception of tangible benefits that may arise from learning the second language and is associated with motivation towards external goals such as financial

rewards, career advancement, or fulfilling school requirements (Williams and Burden, 1997).

Integrative motivation has been widely considered as a significant predictor of second language learning achievement (Hedge; Lightbown and Spada; Lins; Loewen and Reinders as cited in Ghamdi, 2014). Dornyei's motivational model emphasizes the role of integrative motivation in second language acquisition, which is viewed as a positive affective disposition towards the second language community and the desire to interact with and become like valued members of that community (Dornyei, 2005). This perspective highlights the respect for other cultural societies, their values, identities, and way of life. Dornyei's model also suggests that integrative motivation involves the learner's level of language proficiency, individual characteristics, and the learning situation that includes the classroom environment, teacher, learning context, teaching methods, classmates, and teacher personality (Kaboody, 2013). Furthermore, Horwitz (as cited in Engin, 2009) suggested that integrative motivation stems from a personal endeavour to understand the native speakers of the target language, and student learning activities are directed towards this objective.

7. Conclusions

Each of the researched models offers a unique perspective on the factors that influence motivation, ranging from extrinsic rewards and punishments to intrinsic interest and personal goals, helping all teachers better understand the complex processes underlying language learning. By examining these models, teachers and researchers can better design interventions and strategies to promote motivation and engagement in foreign language learning. According to Stoian, it is imperative for teachers to prioritize the development of motivation in their pedagogical practice and recognize its fundamental importance in the broader context of education and society as a whole: "Education is one of the most important factors that define a society. It represents the starting engine for all the activities that run within each society" (Stoian, 2019:126).

The roles that teachers play may very well represent a decisive factor in motivating learners to learn a foreign language. Teachers can act as facilitators, mentors, counsellors, and evaluators to enhance motivation and foster language learning. Adopting an empathetic teacher behaviour can contribute to creating a positive classroom atmosphere, reducing anxiety, and enhancing students' self-confidence. This, in turn, can lead to higher levels of motivation and engagement, resulting in better learning outcomes for the students: "The foreign students of different nationalities may prove to be more vulnerable and insecure, which triggers the need to adopt an empathic teacher behaviour" (Burtea-Cioroianu, 2020:149). Along the same lines, the teacher as a mentor serves as a guide and source of support for the mentee, helping them to navigate the challenges of the learning process and stay motivated towards their goals: "In the academic environment the role of mentor

is crucial, in order to channel the protégé on the right path to goal achievement" (Bărbuceanu, 2021:46).

Motivational orientations can also be influenced by individual factors such as learning styles: "Learning styles are a valuable contribution to the psychoeducational diagnosis" (Scorțan, 2021:150). Thus, learning styles can affect how students approach language learning, and educators must also consider these factors when designing instructional materials and activities, as it is possible that a student's learning style preferences could be influenced by their level of integrative or instrumental motivation. Boncea also highlights the importance of keeping up with the latest teaching methods and technologies, and by tailoring their lessons to meet the individual learning needs of students, teachers can help students to feel more confident and engaged in the learning process, which can in turn enhance their motivation to learn: "contemporary teachers are able to produce and enjoy the teaching results that are noticeable in the contemporary tech-savvy generation of students" (Boncea, 2021:132).

As language teachers, we need to create a learning environment that fosters students' motivation and encourages them to engage actively in the learning process. We need to foster both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in our students, but we need to prioritize intrinsic motivation, which is more effective and long-lasting in promoting language learning. We need to take into account several factors that influence students' motivation, including the relevance and meaningfulness of the learning materials and activities, the learning environment and the teacher's instructional style, and the teacher's attitude and expectations. By taking these factors into account and creating a positive and supportive learning environment, we can help our students become motivated language learners who are more likely to succeed in their language learning journey.

The importance of motivation in foreign language learning cannot be overstated. Motivation plays a vital role in determining the success of language learners, and its influence extends beyond the acquisition of language skills to shape learners' attitudes and dispositions towards the target language and culture. Language teachers, therefore, have a significant responsibility in cultivating motivation among their students, and they must adopt various strategies to achieve this end.
Given the complex nature of motivation, it is essential that language teachers stay informed of the latest research in the field and remain open to experimenting with new approaches and techniques. Only by constantly adapting and refining their instructional practices can they effectively foster motivation among their students and create an optimal learning environment for all. In this way, they will not only enhance their students' linguistic proficiency but also contribute to their overall personal and professional development. Ultimately, the importance of motivation in foreign language learning lies in the fact that it is the key to unlocking learners' potential and empowering them to succeed in an increasingly interconnected and multilingual world.

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