

# Critical Literature Review on Motivation

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## Abstract

Many believe motivation to learn is the key element in language learning. However, if we take a look at researches in motivation, it is hard to say what motivation is. This paper begins with the definition of motivation and describes types of motivation. Then, it breaks down into parts which consist of motivation. Finally, it addresses how we can motivate students in language learning.

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## Introduction

Language learners learn a language, because they want to acquire, use, and communicate with those who speak the language, or perhaps they want to get to know their culture and learn about the country where the language is spoken. However, what is going to happen if school insists students to learn a second language that school chooses whether they wish to learn it or not. It is obvious that students who don't want to learn the language will not be able to do well in class.

If you take a look at a situation in Japan, English is set to learn as a second language from junior high school, so that means at least three years of compulsory study for all Japanese. If you go onto high school, you will have to learn English for another three years. It is also in the process of implementing in elementary school in the near future. With all the hard work we put into learning English, many of the students will not be able to acquire the skills we need to communicate. I believe motivation to learn has something to do with this situation. Motivation determines the degree of effort you put into foreign or second language learning. The more motivation you may have, the more effort you tend to put into learning the language. It leads to success in learning.

From this point of view, it is quite important to motivate students to learn a second language. In this paper, I would like to review some of the literatures on motivation and provide an overview of what motivation consists of and how we can motivate students on second language learning.

## Motivation definition

Most teachers feel that motivation is a key factor in successful language learning, but what is motivation? According to many researchers, there are so many definitions of what motivation is and what isn't. It seems somehow incomplete. In the field of second language acquisition, the concept of motivation came from social psychology. So the first purpose of this literature review is to discover the types of motivation and define the motivation in this paper.

## Integrative vs Instrumental motivation

Gardner (1979, 1985; Gardner & Lambert 1972) proposed that motivation is influenced by two orientations to language learning. An integrative orientation is typical of someone who identifies with and values the target language and community, and who approaches language study with the intention of entering that community. Such an individual is thought to have an internal, more enduring motivation for language study. Instrumentally motivated learners, on the other hand, are more likely to see language learning as enabling them to do other useful things, but as having no special significance in itself. Such learners will be motivated if they see language learning as having beneficial career prospects or something that will enable them to use transactional language with speakers of the foreign language. Based on Mowrer's suggestion that identification and positive affect toward parents are important for first language acquisition, Gardner and Lambert (1972) suggested that individual with an integrative orientation would demonstrate greater motivational effect in learning L2, and, thus, achieve greater L2 competence. This integrative and instrumental orientation is very famous in the field of motivation, but Ely (1986) argues that it is not always easy to distinguish between integrative and instrumental motivation. A second problem he argues is whether the integrative/instrumental conceptualization captures the full spectrum of student motivation. It may be that, for a given population of second language students, there are reasons for language learning that are unrelated to either of the two motivational orientations. I agree with Ely that it is not always easy to tell one from the other. For example, there are students who don't like to study, but they have to, because they have pressure from their parents, peers, teachers, and so forth. This is also a type of motivation which can't belong to either of the two motivational orientations. Furthermore, Oxford & Shearin's study (1996) on American high school students who was learning Japanese were asked to write an essay explaining their reasons for studying Japanese. Obviously many wanted to learn Japanese for integrative and instrumental reasons, however, more than two thirds of the students had additional reasons for learning Japanese that didn't relate to either of these orientations. Some of the reasons were: receiving intellectual stimulation, seeking personal challenge, enjoying the elitism of taking a difficult language, and so on. Most interestingly, they said they thought that learning Japanese would make them more self-confidence, although that was not the reason they were choosing the language. This opinion guides us to take a look at confidence in relation to motivation in the next section.

Dornyei (1996) claims that most nations in the world are multicultural and the majority of people in the world speak more than one second language. These facts underscore the importance of the social dimension of language learning motivation, however, this social dimension is not the only major constraint of language learning motivation. Motivation to learn a second language is a complex and eclectic psychological construct that involves several non-social factors as well. In Dornyei's study of Hungarian secondary school learners of English (ages 17-18) including scales focusing on some learner traits as well as the learners perception of the classroom environment and the dynamics of the learner group, she came up with the results which was the lack of a major motivational component, namely that of instrumental motivation. She believes instrumental motivation is a central component of motivation where it is relevant, that is, where relatively short-term pragmatic, utilitarian benefits are actually available for the learners. If by such benefits we mean job or salary-related motives, instrumental school students in the study, pragmatic rewards appeared quite remote, and the wish to prepare for a bright career was related to getting higher qualifications, and thus to obtaining knowledge. She contended that "foreign language learning" in a classroom setting could not logically involve attitudes toward the L2 community, because learners have little or no contact with members of the L2 group. Her study showed that instrumental goals indeed played a prominent role in the learning of English up to an intermediate level.

## Intrinsic vs Extrinsic motivation

In the same line with Gardner, Deci and Ryan (1985) created the intrinsic/extrinsic motivation theory. They claim that learners who are interested in learning tasks and outcomes for their own sake (Intrinsic) rather than for rewards (extrinsic) are likely to become more effective learners. More specifically, according to them, Intrinsic motivation refers to motivation to engage in an activity because that activity is enjoyable and satisfying to do. Extrinsically motivated behaviors are those actions carried out to achieve some instrumental end, such as earning a reward or avoiding a punishment. This type of motivation does not necessarily imply a lack of self-determination in the

behaviors performed. Dickinson (1987) claims that success enhances motivation only in children who are focused on learning goals, that is, who are intrinsically motivated. According to Koestner & McClelland (1990), research on intrinsic motivation has led to the conclusion that intrinsic motivation will be greatest under conditions that foster feelings of challenge, competence, and self-determination. They also claim that if external events enhance feelings of competence, as when someone is told he or she has done a task very well, intrinsic motivation is likely to increase. By contrast, events that lead to feelings of incompetence are likely to undermine intrinsic motivation.

They say in the educational realm, studies indicate teaching style that encourage an intrinsic orientation are associated with superior school adjustment, compared to styles that make extensive use of controlling contingencies.

Clement et al. (1994) defined motivation into three levels that are the language level, the learner level, and the learning situation level. The three levels meets the three basic constituents of the second language learning process (the target language, the language learner, and the language learning environment), and also reflect the three different aspects of language (the social dimension, the personal dimension, and the educational subject matter dimension).

Dornyei also gives a very good insight. She claims that the same learner in the same learning situation might show a strikingly different degree of motivation depending on what the target language is. Similarly, when the target language is the same, the same learner's motivation can show vast differences as the function of the learning situation, that is, the appraisal of the language classroom. In other words, each of the three levels of motivation exert their influence independently of the others and have enough power to nullify the effects of the motives associated with the other two levels.

So one of the key points is to motivate students intrinsically, and this leads to autonomy which I am going to talk about in a later section. However, interesting findings were discovered from Noels, Pelletier, Clement, and Vallerand's study (2000) on students registered in English psychology class at French-English bilingual university. The study showed "To foster sustained learning, it may not be sufficient to convince students that language learning is interesting and enjoyable; they may need to be persuaded that it is also personally important for them." This seems like a common sense, but as a second language learner myself, I strongly agree with this result. If you are adult learner, interesting and enjoyable learning is not enough. They need to feel the importance of learning as well, and then they can vision themselves in terms of future prospect, or job-related salaries and so forth.

Having discussed two different types of motivated theories, namely integrative/instrumental and intrinsic/extrinsic, it seems that if you talk about motivation, you have to set a context where you teach, the environment you are surrounded with, what the target language is, and who the learners are specifically. You can't really tell this is what motivation consists of and this is how it is supposed to be unless you have specific settings. Identifying all the necessary items, teacher could see what has to be done and students also could see where they want to go and what they want to do and what they need to do.

## Confidence, Anxiety

Learner's motivation can vary tremendously according to their confidence and anxiety they have toward the language they are learning and the environment they are in. In this part of the section, I would like to present some of the research and evidence on confidence and anxiety in relation to motivation, and summarize what teacher needs to do about them.

Not only is anxiety related to motivation, but it is also related to proficiency and more so to communication proficiency, as suggested by Clement, Dornyei, and Noels (1994).

Dornyei claims that linguistic self-confidence, including language anxiety, which is a central component in the personal dimension of motivation. Learner who are less anxious have better previous

experiences with using the second language, who evaluate their own proficiency more highly, and who consider the learning tasks less difficult, in short, who are more motivated to learn the second language than those whose motivation is hindered by a lack of self-confidence. She also says that it should be noted that the emergence of self-confidence as a distinct factor was not unexpected. Clement and his colleagues have produced sufficient evidence that self-confidence is a powerful motivational process in multiethnic, multilingual settings, and their study showed that self-confidence is also a major motivational subsystem in foreign language learning situations. In addition, following Gardner and Lambert (1972), Clement argued that attitudinal factors were an important motivational basis for L2 acquisition and behavior. Upon noting the results obtained with groups of students who were in more direct contact with the L2 group, however, he suggested that in such contexts a self-confidence process becomes the most important determinant of attitude and effort expended toward L2 learning.

On the contrary, Geen (1994) proposed social anxiety might serve as a warning signal that social disapproval would occur unless an ongoing course of action is modified. Any behavior that might make the person seem unattractive or useless to the group could invite social exclusion and thereby elicit the warning signal. Anxiety therefore interrupts behavior, focuses attention on what is being done wrong, and motivates the person to seek an alternative course of action. It is suggested, for example, that certain types of classroom activities may promote language anxiety, particularly those that expose the students to negative evaluations by the teacher or by peers.

Clement, Dornyei and Noels (1994) concluded from their study that on the one hand, good classroom atmosphere promotes students involvement and activity while moderating anxiety and promoting self-confidence. On the other hand, the students bring into the classroom a level of self-confidence and anxiety related to extracurricular experiences with the language, the quality and quantity of which would then influence classroom behavior, achievement and anxiety. Accordingly, being active in class means believing that one is able to use English outside the classroom.

It is very true that if one is confident enough to speak up and have no hesitation to ask a question in class, one will get a lot of chances to use one's language skill, and that leads to more improvement. If one is too anxious to speak up in class, one can't have any opportunities to practice and improve one's oral skills. It may also be true that even if one is anxious of a second language, one can improve reading or writing skill, but listening skill and speaking skill cannot be improved unless used through interaction.

But Oxford & Shearin (1996) says even the best learners have experienced failures in communication. Teachers need to make learners feel comfortable even when communication is not perfect. What they said is very important. In Japan, students are afraid of making mistakes in class and even in writing test, so they tend to speak less or write less. This overall tendency is leading worse situation. It is a teacher's job to emphasize that everyone make mistakes including the teacher himself/herself and it is no problem to make mistakes. Crucial thing is to teach them to learn from their mistakes.

## Autonomy

Autonomy is linked with more learning is often expressed more strongly. In general, autonomous learners become more highly motivated and that autonomy leads to better, more effective work. In this section, I would like to present evidence and research that learning autonomy increases motivation and consequently increases learning effectiveness.

According to Knowles (1995), "there is convincing evidence that people who take the initiative in learning (proactive learners) learn things and learn better than do people who sit at the feet of teachers, passively waiting to be taught (reactive learners). They enter into learning more purposefully and with great motivation." Wang and Peverly (1986), for example, review findings of strategy research (in subjects other than language learning) and conclude that independent or autonomous learners are those who have the capacity for being active and independent in the learning process; they can identify goals, formulate their own learning strategies, and to monitor their own learning. Dickinson (1987) describes advantages of autonomy in three points.

- 1) Because Learner sets the agenda, learning should be more focused and more purposeful, and thus more effective both immediately and in the longer term.
- 2) Because responsibility for the learning lies with the learner, the barriers between learning and living that are often found in traditional teacher-led educational structures should not arise.
- 3) If there are no barriers between learning and living, learners should have little difficulty in transferring their capacity for autonomous behavior to all other areas of their lives, and this should make them more useful members of society and more effective participants in the democratic process.

Being autonomous learner shows better learning effectiveness.

Autonomous learner, in other words, self-motivated learner learns without a push from teacher, parents, peers and so on. They get into studying whatever they desire to learn. I think this is one of the best parts of motivation, and at the same time, it is one of the most difficult things to teach.

## Summary

Lack of motivation to learn is very striking thing in almost all of the schools in Japan. I believe some of the schools in other countries also face the same problem. One of the things I found through this literature review is that if we, as teachers, can't motivate students to learn directly, we should look at different ways to try to motivate them indirectly. For example, we should encourage them to be autonomous learner, increase their confidence, and try to get rid of anxiety they have in learning. That will lead to great motivation eventually, and thus lead to success in learning. One of the strategies we can use is need analysis. We must find out which aspects of L2 learning are personally valuable to students and must design tasks that support those aspects. For example, if students will go abroad, they will need to communicate with people in English, so the classroom activities must encourage development of this skill and must have positive results.

I presented motivation theory, confidence, anxiety, and autonomy related motivation in language learning. They all are linked to each other in various ways, however, as you can see, there are not enough evidence and research on confidence, anxiety, and autonomy. This is something we should pay more attention to in SLA field. Revealing facts and secrets of them will contribute a lot to motivation research and to millions of students who are learning a foreign or second language.

This literature review also made me realize that all the points discussed are from teacher's perspective. Learning is two-way communication. I experienced being a student and a teacher myself, I remember I had great time in learning when I met teachers who are competent, knows exactly what he/she is doing. This, student's perspective, so to speak, is one of the things we should look into when we talk about motivation. "What kinds of teachers motivate students more or what kind of elements do you want for teachers for motivation?" Not only looking at students how to motivate them, but also reviewing what teachers should be. I believe this will open new doors to the research of motivation.

## About the Author

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