

Attitudes, Orientations, and Motivations in Language Learning: Advances in Theory, Research, and Applications

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This article intends to achieve two purposes: (a) to provide an overview of recent advances in research on motivation to learn a foreign or second language (L2), and (b) to create the theoretical context of the articles selected for this anthology. The past few years have seen a number of comprehensive summaries of relevant research (e.g., Clément & Gardner, 2001; Dörnyei, 2001a, 2001c; MacIntyre, 2002), and the chapters in this volume also offer theoretical overviews. Therefore, rather than reiterating what has been well described before, I will focus on the “big picture” in this review by placing the various themes and directions in a broader framework, highlighting their significance, and identifying their links to other topics and approaches.

The Inherent Social Dimension of Language Learning Motivation

The first important point to emphasize when starting to explore the field of L2 motivation is not new at all, yet I believe it is important to restate that learning an L2 is different in many

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ways from learning other school subjects. While an L2 is a “learnable” school subject in that discrete elements of the communication code (e.g., grammatical rules and lexical items) can be taught explicitly, it is also socially and culturally bound, which makes language learning a deeply social event that requires the incorporation of a wide range of elements of the L2 culture (cf. Gardner, 1979; Williams, 1994). This view has been broadly endorsed by L2 researchers, resulting in the inclusion of a prominent social dimension in most comprehensive constructs of L2 motivation, related to issues such as multiculturalism, language globalization, language contact, and power relations between different ethnolinguistic groups. The significance of this social dimension also explains why the study of L2 motivation was originally initiated by social psychologists. I will start our tour of the field by describing their influential approach. As a preliminary, I would like to note, however, that the social dimension does not constitute the complete picture, and, depending on the actual context in which L2 learning takes place, to achieve a fuller understanding of the motivational tapestry underlying second language acquisition (SLA), a range of other motivational aspects needs also to be considered.

Gardner’s Motivation Theory and the Concept of “Integrativeness”

It is no accident that L2 motivation research was initiated in Canada and that it was dominated by a social psychological emphasis there. The understanding of the unique Canadian situation with the coexistence of the anglophone and francophone communities speaking two of the world’s most vital languages has been an ongoing challenge for researchers in the social sciences, and the Canadian government has actively promoted (and sponsored!) research in this vein. Accordingly, in the first comprehensive summary of L2 motivation research, Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert (1972) viewed L2s as mediating factors between different ethnolinguistic communities

in multicultural settings. They considered the motivation to learn the language of the other community to be a primary force responsible for enhancing or hindering intercultural communication and affiliation.

The most developed and researched facet of Gardner's (1985) motivation theory has been the *integrative* aspect. The significance of this concept is attested to by its appearing in Gardner's theory in three different forms—*integrative orientation*, *integrativeness*, and the *integrative motive*—and Gardner has also emphasized this dimension in his writings (e.g., Gardner, 2001). Yet in spite of the importance attached to it, the notion has remained an enigma: It has no obvious parallels in any areas of mainstream motivational psychology, and its exact nature is difficult to define, which explains Gardner's (2001, p. 1) conclusion that the "term is used frequently in the literature, though close inspection will reveal that it has slightly different meanings to many different individuals." Still, an "integrative" component has consistently emerged in empirical studies even in the most diverse contexts, explaining a significant portion of the variance in language learners' motivational disposition and motivated learning behavior. (For a meta-analysis of some important aspects of Gardner and his colleagues' empirical studies, see Masgoret & Gardner, 2003, in this volume.)

So what does an integrative disposition involve? In broad terms, an "integrative" motivational orientation concerns a positive interpersonal/affective disposition toward the L2 group and the desire to interact with and even become similar to valued members of that community. It implies an openness to, and respect for, other cultural groups and ways of life; in the extreme, it might involve complete identification with the community (and possibly even withdrawal from one's original group). Thus, a core aspect of the integrative disposition is some sort of a psychological and emotional *identification*. According to Gardner (2001), this identification concerns the L2 community (i.e., identifying with the speakers of the target language), but Dörnyei (1990) argued that in the absence of a

salient L2 group in the learners' environment (as is often the case in foreign language learning contexts in which the L2 is primarily learned as a school subject), the identification can be generalized to the cultural and intellectual values associated with the language, as well as to the actual L2 itself. This is why we can detect a powerful integrative motive among, for example, Chinese learners of English in mainland China who may not have met a single native speaker of English in their lives, let alone been to any English-speaking country.

Recently, Dörnyei and Csizér (2002) have contended that the actual term *integrativeness* may not do justice to the overall and indisputable importance of the concept, as this factor also appears in situations that are very different from that in Canada in that there is no real or potential "integration" involved (e.g., the Chinese learners of English mentioned above). It might be more forward-looking to assume that the motivation dimension captured by the term is not so much related to any actual, or metaphorical, integration into an L2 community as, in accordance with Gardner's original conceptualization, to some more basic *identification process* within the individual's *self-concept*. This process may be closely related to an important line of research in social psychology that highlights *possible* and *ideal selves* (e.g., Higgins, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986). As Markus and Nurius define them, "possible selves represent individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming, and thus provide a conceptual link between cognition and motivation" (p. 954). One of the most important possible selves has been identified as the "ideal self," representing the attributes that a person would like to possess (e.g., hopes, aspirations, desires), and within this framework "integrativeness" can be seen as the L2-related attributes of the ideal self. Based on this speculation, Dörnyei and Csizér (2002) concluded:

Although further research is needed to justify any alternative interpretation, we believe that rather than viewing 'integrativeness' as a classic and therefore 'untouchable' concept, scholars need to seek potential

new conceptualizations and interpretations that extend or elaborate on the meaning of the term without contradicting the large body of relevant empirical data accumulated during the past four decades. (p. 456)

Alternative Theoretical Approaches

The foundations of Gardner's theory were laid down in the 1960s and were grounded in social psychology. However, during the subsequent decades, as a consequence of the cognitive revolution that took place in psychological research, several influential cognitive motivation theories were proposed in mainstream psychology, and it wasn't long before L2 motivation researchers started to utilize these for a better understanding of L2 motivation. In the following, I will briefly outline three such influential cognitive approaches: *self-determination theory*, *attribution theory*, and *goal theories*.

During the 1990s, psychology started to show signs of yet another major paradigm shift: Cognitive psychology became increasingly augmented with neurobiological research, resulting in a broader field that is often referred to as cognitive neuroscience. Language issues have had a prominent place in this new psychological paradigm, and therefore the application by John Schumann of neuroresearch to the study of SLA and, more specifically, to L2 motivation has been an important research development. Schumann's theory will therefore be presented as the fourth alternative approach.

Motivational Orientations and Self-Determination Theory

Deci and Ryan's (1985, 2002) *self-determination theory* has been one of the most influential approaches in motivational psychology, and during the past 4 years Kim Noels has been championing the application of this theory to L2 motivational issues (Noels, 2001a; 2001b; Noels, Clément, & Pelletier, 1999, 2001; Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2000). This has

been a principled and systematic effort, reflected in Noels's coauthors being Luc Pelletier and Robert Vallerand, two of the best-known international scholars specializing in self-determination theory (Noels et al., 2000, reprinted in this volume). The main terms associated with self-determination theory, *intrinsic* and *extrinsic motivation*, have been frequently used in the L2 field before, without specifying their relationship with established L2 concepts, such as integrative and instrumental orientation. The research of Noels and her colleagues has provided insights into how these concepts fit into the L2 field, as well as a valid and reliable measuring instrument assessing the various components of self-determination theory in L2 learning.

Besides the Noels et al. (2000) study mentioned above, the current anthology contains a second study by Noels (2001b, reprinted in this volume) that applies self-determination theory to the examination of the relationship of student autonomy and the language teacher's communicative style. This article has special significance in that it addresses an area, *student autonomy*, that has been a popular topic in L2 research during the past decade (for a review, see Benson, 2001), and the relationship between learner autonomy and L2 motivation has also been recognized by several scholars (e.g., Spratt, Humphreys, & Chan, 2002; Ushioda, 1996, 2001).

L2 Motivation and Attribution Theory

Attribution theory achieved a unique status among contemporary motivation theories as the first theory that successfully challenged Atkinson's classic achievement motivation theory (for a review, see Dörnyei, 2001a). Subsequently it became the dominant model in research on student motivation in the 1980s. It is also unique because it manages to link people's past experiences with their future achievement efforts by introducing *causal attributions* as the mediating link: As the main proponent of the theory, Bernard Weiner (1992), has argued, the subjective reasons to which we attribute our past successes and failures

considerably shape our motivational disposition. If, for example, we ascribe past failure on a particular task to low ability on our part, the chances are that we will not try the activity ever again, whereas if we believe that the problem lay in the insufficient effort or unsuitable learning strategies that we employed, we are more likely to give it another try. Because of the generally high frequency of language learning failure worldwide, attributional processes are assumed to play an important motivational role in language studies, as confirmed by recent qualitative research by Marion Williams and Bob Burden (1999; Williams, Burden, & Al-Baharna, 2001). This is clearly an important line of investigation with much further scope.

Goal Theories

Goals have always been a central feature of L2 motivation research (see, for example, Belmechri & Hummel, 1998; Clément & Kruidenier, 1983; McClelland, 2000), although their influence may have been veiled by the fact that language learning “goals” have been typically referred to as “orientations.” Yet until Tremblay and Gardner’s (1995) study, orientation studies had not been explicitly linked to various goal theories that had become popular in the psychological literature. In their proposed motivation construct, Tremblay and Gardner introduced the concept of “goal salience” as a central component, conceptualized as a composite of the *specificity* of the learner’s goals and the *frequency* of goal-setting strategies used.

While the recognition of the relevance of goal-setting theory is definitely a welcome development, it needs to be noted that there have hardly been any attempts in L2 studies to adopt the other well-known goal theory in educational psychology, *goal-orientation theory*, even though, as Pintrich and Schunk (2002, p. 242) have recently concluded, “Currently, it is probably the most active area of research on student motivation in classrooms and it has direct implications for students and teachers.”

The Neurobiology of L2 Motivation

In the 1990s, John Schumann (for reviews, see Schumann, 1998, 1999) introduced a novel line of research into L2 studies—neurobiological investigations of the brain mechanisms involved in SLA—that has the potential to “revolutionarize” the field. As he has argued (Schumann, 2001a), recent technological developments in brain scanning and neuroimaging have made the brain increasingly amenable to direct psychological investigation. This means that the various mental processes that have been by and large unobservable in the past might receive direct empirical validation in neurobiological studies. What is particularly important from our perspective is that the first area of SLA that Schumann has examined from a neurobiological point of view has been L2 motivation, and the result of this examination has been an intriguing motivation theory.

The key constituent of Schumann’s theory is *stimulus appraisal*, which occurs in the brain along five dimensions: *novelty* (degree of unexpectedness/familiarity), *pleasantness* (attractiveness), *goal/need significance* (whether the stimulus is instrumental in satisfying needs or achieving goals), *coping potential* (whether the individual expects to be able to cope with the event), and *self- and social image* (whether the event is compatible with social norms and the individual’s self-concept). As Schumann has demonstrated, stimulus appraisals become part of the person’s overall value system through a special “memory for value” module, and thus they are largely responsible for providing the affective foundation of human action. Recently Schumann (2001b) has broadened his theory by outlining a conception of learning as a form of *mental foraging* (i.e., foraging for knowledge), which engages the same neural systems as the ones used by organisms when foraging to feed or mate and which is generated by an incentive motive and potentiated by the stimulus appraisal system.

A More Situated Conception of L2 Motivation

By emphasizing the sociocultural dimension of L2 motivation, Gardner's (1985) approach offered a *macro perspective* that allowed researchers to characterize and compare the motivational pattern of whole learning communities and then to draw inferences about intercultural communication and affiliation. As argued earlier, this approach is appropriate for examining a wide range of important sociocultural issues, such as multiculturalism, language globalization, language contact, and power relations among different ethnolinguistic groups. However, the macro perspective is less adequate for providing a fine-tuned analysis of instructed SLA, which takes place primarily in language classrooms. This recognition led a new generation of (mainly non-Canadian) motivation researchers in the 1990s to start expanding the Canadian paradigm so that it could accommodate a variety of educational issues.

Much has been written about the "educational shift" and the subsequent "motivational renaissance" (Gardner & Tremblay, 1994) that took place in the 1990s (for a review, see Dörnyei, 2001b), so let me only reiterate here the common theme underlying the publications written in this vein. The key assumption that energized this boom in research was that the classroom environment—and, more generally, the contextual surroundings of action—had a much stronger motivational influence than had been proposed before. Researchers therefore started to examine the motivational impact of the various aspects of the learning context, for example, *course-specific motivational components* (e.g., relevance of the teaching materials, interest in the tasks, appropriateness of the teaching method), *teacher-specific motivational components* (e.g., the motivational impact of the teacher's personality, behavior, and teaching style/practice), and *group-specific motivational components* (e.g., various characteristics of the learner group such as cohesiveness, goal-orientedness, and group norms).

While the educational implications of the motivation research conducted in the past decade have clearly been

important, this work has also been significant from a purely theoretical point of view in that it introduced a *situated approach* characterized by a *micro perspective*, in contrast to the macro perspective of the social psychological approach. In a thought-provoking paper on the links between individual and social influences on learning, McGroarty (2001) explained that this “contextualization” of L2 motivation did not happen in isolation but coincided with a parallel situated shift in psychology that highlighted the role of the social context in any learning activity. The situated approach appears to be a particularly fruitful direction for future L2 motivation research, and to illustrate this I will describe below three recent research directions that have adopted this perspective: the study of (a) the *willingness to communicate* (WTC), (b) *task motivation*, and (c) the relationship between motivation and the use of language learning strategies.

Willingness to Communicate

A recent extension of motivation research that has considerable theoretical and practical potential involves the study of the L2 speakers’ *willingness* to engage in the act of L2 communication. As MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, and Donovan (2002, reprinted in this volume) explain, individuals display consistent tendencies in their predisposition toward or away from communicating, given the choice. In one’s first language, WTC is a fairly stable personality trait, developed over the years, but the situation is more complex with regard to L2 use, because here the level of one’s L2 proficiency, and particularly that of the individual’s L2 communicative competence, is an additional powerful modifying variable. What is important, though, is that WTC and communicative competence are *not* the same: There are many L2 learners who are very competent L2 speakers yet tend to avoid L2 communication situations, whereas some other, less proficient learners actively seek opportunities to engage in L2 talk. Thus, MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and

Noels (1998) have argued that there is a need to examine WTC in the L2, defining the concept as the individual's "readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (p. 547).

The notion of WTC is situated in many ways at the intersection of motivation and communicative competence research. The construct comprises several layers and subsumes a range of linguistic and psychological variables, including linguistic self-confidence (both state and trait); the desire to affiliate with a person; interpersonal motivation; intergroup attitudes, motivation, and climate; parameters of the social situation; communicative competence and experience; and various personality traits (see Figure 1). Thus, the WTC model attempts to draw together a host of learner variables that have been well established as

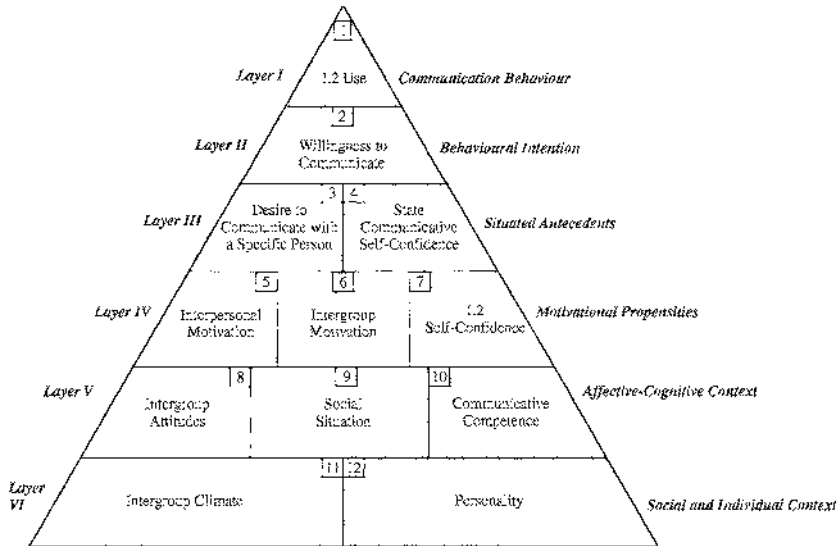


Figure 1. Schematic representation of the variables influencing WTC. From "Conceptualizing Willingness to Communicate in a L2: A Situated Model of Confidence and Affiliation," by P. D. MacIntyre, R. Clément, Z. Dörnyei, and K. Noels, 1998, *Modern Language Journal*, 82, p. 547. Copyright 1998 by The Modern Language Journal. Reprinted with permission.

influences on second language acquisition and use, resulting in a construct in which psychological and linguistic factors are integrated in an organic manner.

Because of its situated nature, the WTC construct lends itself to being used to examine specific learning contents. Baker and MacIntyre (2000, reprinted in this volume), for example, have applied it to compare the nonlinguistic outcomes of an immersion and a nonimmersion program in Canada, and Yashima (2002) has successfully used the WTC model to investigate the relations between L2 learning and L2 communication variables among Japanese learners of English. WTC has also been integrated as a predictor variable in research studies focusing on the motivational basis of L2 learners' communicative performance, accounting for a significant proportion of the variance (Dörnyei, 2002; Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000).

Task Motivation

Interest in the motivational basis of language learning tasks can be seen as the culmination of the situated approach in L2 motivation research. SLA researchers have been attracted to tasks because by focusing on them, they are able to break down the complex and prolonged L2 learning process into discrete segments with well-defined boundaries, thereby creating researchable behavioral units. Thus, from this perspective, tasks constitute the basic building blocks of classroom learning, and accordingly, L2 motivation can hardly be examined in a more situated manner than within a task-based framework (Dörnyei, 2002). In addition, recognizing the significance of tasks in shaping learners' interest and enthusiasm coincides with practicing classroom teachers' perceptions that the quality of the activities used in language classes and the way these activities are presented and administered make an enormous difference in students' attitudes toward learning; therefore, the study of task motivation is fully in line with the "educational shift."

Tasks were first highlighted in the L2 motivation literature by Kyösti Julkunen (1989), and in a recent theoretical discussion of task motivation, Julkunen (2001) has revisited this issue and contended that students' task behavior is fueled by a combination of generalized and situation-specific motives according to the specific task characteristics. This conception is in accordance with Tremblay, Goldberg, and Gardner's (1995) distinction between *state* and *trait motivation*, the former involving stable and enduring dispositions, the latter transitory and temporary responses or conditions. While I agree that it is useful to distinguish between more generalized and more situation-specific aspects of L2 motivation, I suspect that the picture is even more complex than the state/trait dichotomy. Rather than conceiving task motivation as the sum of various sources of motivational influences (which the state/trait distinction suggests), I would propose a more dynamic *task processing system* to describe how task motivation is negotiated and finalized in the learner. This system consists of three interrelated mechanisms: *task execution*, *appraisal*, and *action control* (see Figure 2).

Task execution refers to the learner's engagement in task-supportive learning behaviors, following the action plan that was either provided by the teacher (via the task instructions) or drawn up by the student or the task team. *Appraisal* refers to the learner's continuous processing of the multitude of stimuli coming from the environment and of the progress made toward the action outcome, comparing actual performances

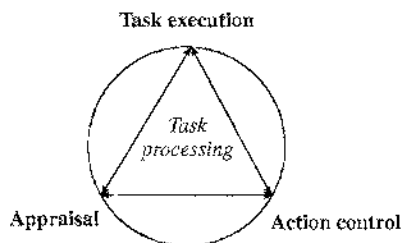


Figure 2. Schematic representation of the three mechanisms making up the proposed task-processing system.

with predicted ones or with ones that alternative action sequences would offer. This importance attached to the appraisal process coincides with Schumann's (1998) emphasis on "stimulus appraisal" (discussed above). Finally, *action control* processes denote self-regulatory mechanisms that are called into force in order to enhance, scaffold, or protect learning-specific action. Thus, task processing can be seen as the interplay of the three mechanisms: While learners are engaged in *executing* a task, they continuously *appraise* the process, and when the ongoing monitoring reveals that progress is slowing, halting, or backsliding, they activate the *action control* system to "save" or enhance the action.

Task-based research is an active area in SLA (e.g., Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001; Skehan, in press), and the study of task motivation complements ongoing research efforts in an organic manner. The concept is also useful in pulling together diverse approaches within the L2 motivation field (e.g., even Schumann's neurobiological approach), and if I add the undisputed educational potential of this line of investigation, I may conclude that the study of task motivation is certainly one of the most fruitful directions for future research.

Motivation and Learning Strategy Use

Learning strategies are techniques that students apply of their own free will to enhance the effectiveness of their learning. In this sense, strategy use—by definition—constitutes instances of motivated learning behavior (cf. Cohen, 1998; Cohen & Dörnyei, 2002). The systematic study of the interrelationship between L2 motivation and language learning strategy use was initiated in the mid-1990s by Richard Schmidt, Peter MacIntyre, and their colleagues (e.g., MacIntyre & Noels, 1996; Schmidt, Boraie, & Kassabgy, 1996). Building on the results of these early studies, Schmidt and Watanabe (2001) have recently further investigated the topic by obtaining data from over 2,000 university students in Hawaii. The main drive behind this research effort is similar to

the one underlying the task-based direction, namely, to link learners' motivational disposition with their actual learning behaviors. As part of a bigger study, Williams, Burden, and Lanvers (2002) have recently examined British schoolchildren's strategy use and concluded that "most participants appeared to have great difficulty in discussing different aspects of their metacognitive strategy use and conveyed a lack of sense of control over their learning. . . . Very little evidence was found of planning behavior" (p. 519). This summary fits perfectly with the proposed approach to the study of task motivation discussed above.

However, a word of caution about the investigation of motivation and strategies is that strategy research faces serious theoretical difficulties surrounding the specific definition of the concept of "learning strategies" (cf. Skehan & Dörnyei, in press) and their measurement (cf. Dörnyei, 2003). In fact, during the past decade educational psychology has moved toward abandoning the term "learning strategy" altogether, and learners' strategic contribution to their own learning has increasingly been discussed under the label of *self-regulatory learning* instead.

A. Process-Oriented Approach to L2 Motivation Research

The situated approach to motivation research soon drew attention to another, rather neglected aspect of motivation: its *dynamic character* and *temporal variation*. The former was already indicated above when discussing task motivation, but so far we have not touched upon the time element in motivation. When motivation is examined in relation to specific learner behaviors and classroom processes, the lack of stability of the construct becomes obvious: Learners tend to demonstrate a fluctuating level of commitment even within a single lesson, and the variation in their motivation over a longer period (e.g., a whole academic term) can be dramatic. In order to capture this variation, we need to adopt a *process-oriented approach* that can account for the "ups and downs" of motivation, that is, the

ongoing changes of motivation over time. This is an area that I have been interested in over the past 5 years (Dörnyei, 2000, 2001a; Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998), and I have now come to believe that many of the controversies and disagreements in L2 motivation research go back to an insufficient temporal awareness. For example, as shown below, it is an established premise in the process-oriented paradigm that motivation shows different characteristics depending on what stage the individual has reached in pursuing a goal. This would, however, mean that different—or even contradicting—theories do not necessarily exclude one another but may simply be related to different phases of the motivated behavioral process.¹

As with all other motivational issues addressed in this overview article, I can only summarize the central tenets of the process-oriented approach. In developing these tenets, I have drawn on the inspiring work of German psychologists Heinz Heckhausen and Julius Kuhl (e.g., Heckhausen, 1991; Heckhausen & Kuhl, 1985; Kuhl & Beckmann, 1994) and have also benefited from the valuable insights of a Hungarian friend and colleague, István Ottó (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998). To summarize the essence of the approach in one (long) sentence, a process model of L2 motivation breaks down the overall motivational process into several discrete temporal segments organized along the progression that describes how initial wishes and desires are first transformed into goals and then into operationalized intentions, and how these intentions are enacted, leading (hopefully) to the accomplishment of the goal and concluded by the final evaluation of the process. In this process, at least three distinct phases can be discerned (see Figure 3, for more details):

1. *Preactional stage*: First, motivation needs to be *generated*. The motivational dimension related to this initial phase can be referred to as *choice motivation*, because the generated motivation leads to the selection of the goal or task that the individual will pursue.

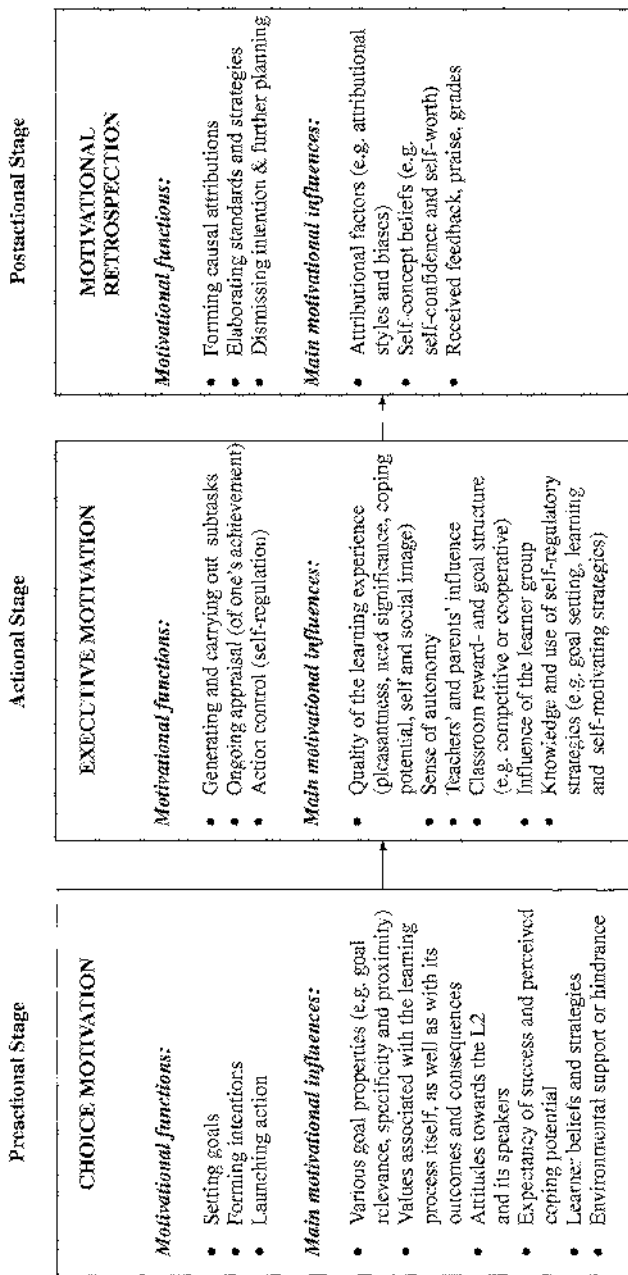


Figure 3. Process model of L2 motivation. From *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom* (p. 22), by Z. Dörnyei, 2001, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. Copyright 2001 by Cambridge University Press. Reprinted with permission.

2. *Actional stage*: Second, the generated motivation needs to be actively *maintained* and *protected* while the particular action lasts. This motivational dimension has been referred to as *executive motivation*, and it is particularly relevant to sustained activities such as studying an L2 and to learning in classroom settings, where students are exposed to a great number of distracting influences, such as off-task thoughts, irrelevant comments from others, anxiety about the tasks, or physical conditions that make it difficult to complete the task.

3. *Postactional stage*: Finally, there is a third phase following the completion of the action—termed *motivational retrospection*—which concerns the learners' *retrospective evaluation* of how things went. The way students process their past experiences in this retrospective phase will determine the kind of activities they will be motivated to pursue in the future.

It is worth reiterating that a key tenet of the approach is that these three phases are associated with largely different motives. That is, people will be influenced, while they are still contemplating an action, by factors different from those that influence them once they have embarked on the activity. And similarly, when they look back at what they have achieved and evaluate it, again a new set of motivational components will become relevant.

A recent study by MacIntyre, MacMaster, and Baker (2001) has provided empirical confirmation of the salience of the process aspect of L2 motivation. The researchers employed factor analysis to examine the overlap among a long list (23 scales) of motivational components and found that the scales could be adequately summarized by a three-factor solution. The first two factors, labeled *attitudinal motivation* and *self-confidence*, were related to established aspects of L2 motivation. However, the third factor, labeled *action motivation*, was largely associated with Kuhl's process-oriented *action control* approach,

and the fact that it has emerged as an independent factor indicates the unique nature of the process orientation.

L2 Motivation Research Versus SLA Research

The Canadian social psychological approach energized the field of L2 motivation research for over 2 decades, and it generated a substantial amount of empirical research both in and outside Canada, making the study of L2 motivation one of the most developed areas within the study of SLA. Yet in spite of this research vigor, we find that motivation research failed to develop any enduring links with other research traditions in SLA, resulting in an almost total lack of integration into the traditional domain of applied linguistics. For example, the most extensive survey of SLA research to date, Ellis (1994), devoted fewer than 10 pages out of nearly 700 to discussing motivational issues, even though the author acknowledges that motivation is a "key factor in L2 learning" (p. 508). What is the reason for this puzzling isolation? One obvious cause may be the different scholarly backgrounds of the researchers working in the two areas. L2 motivation research had been initiated and spearheaded by *social psychologists* interested in L2s, whereas the scholars pursuing the mainstream directions of SLA research have been predominantly *linguists* by training. I suspect, however, that this is only part of the answer, and that motivation research itself is also "responsible" to some extent for the lack of integration.

The crux of the problem is that SLA research, naturally, focuses on the *development* of language knowledge and skills and therefore analyzes various language processes from a *micro perspective*, which is incompatible with the *macro perspective* adopted by traditional motivation research. If we are interested in inter-language development, learning about the attitudinal orientations of ethnolinguistic communities is rather unhelpful, and similarly, if we are interested in the social processes underlying intercultural communication and affiliation, the developmental order

of various morphological features of the L2, to give only one example, might seem completely irrelevant. That is, the different research perspectives have prevented any real communication between the two “camps.” The situated approach in L2 motivation research that emerged during the 1990s did create some common ground with mainstream SLA by relating motivation research to specific learning environments, but it did not result in a real breakthrough: L2 motivation research by and large maintained a *product-oriented* focus whereby researchers examined the relationship between learner characteristics and learning outcome measures, and this approach remained irreconcilable with the inherent process-orientedness of SLA.

Recently, however, the prospects for some real integration have significantly improved for at least two reasons. First, there has been a changing climate in applied linguistics that has been characterized by an increasing openness to the inclusion of psychological factors and processes in research paradigms, and indeed, several psychological theories have recently acquired “mainstream” status in SLA research (e.g., Richard Schmidt’s [1995] “noticing hypothesis” or Peter Skehan’s [1998] work on cognitive processing).

Second, the process-oriented approach to motivation research has created a research perspective that is similar to the general approach of SLA research, and scholars coming from the two traditions can now look at their targets through the same lenses. This potential interface still does not automatically guarantee integration. For real integration to take place, L2 motivation research needs to meet a final criterion, namely, that it should focus on specific *language behaviors* rather than general learning outcomes as the criterion measure. To put this in concrete terms, instead of looking, for instance, at how learners’ various motivational attributes correlate with language proficiency measures in an L2 course (which would be a typical traditional design), researchers need to look at how motivational features affect learners’ various learning behaviors during a course, such as their increased WTC in the L2, their engagement

in learning tasks, or their use of learning strategies. Thus, relating various motivational characteristics to actual learning processes makes it possible to link L2 motivation research more closely to a range of SLA issues, as is well illustrated by Markoe's (2001) groundbreaking study, in which he related conversation-analytical moves in interlanguage discourse to underlying motivational themes.

Educational Implications

Research on L2 motivation that is grounded in concrete classroom situations and focuses on actual learning processes has considerable educational potential, particularly in two areas: (a) the systematic development of *motivational strategies* that can be applied to generate and maintain motivation in learners, and (b) the formulation of *self-motivating strategies* that enable L2 learners themselves to take personal control of the affective conditions and experiences that shape their subjective involvement in learning.

Devising Motivational Strategies

The growing awareness of motivational issues in language classrooms has highlighted the need to translate research results into practical terms: Language instructors are less interested in *what* motivation is than in *how* they can motivate their students. In a recent summary of the available practical knowledge on motivating language learners (Dörnyei, 2001b), I have provided a comprehensive framework of a motivational teaching practice consisting of four main dimensions (Figure 4):

1. Creating the basic motivational conditions
2. Generating initial student motivation
3. Maintaining and protecting motivation
4. Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation

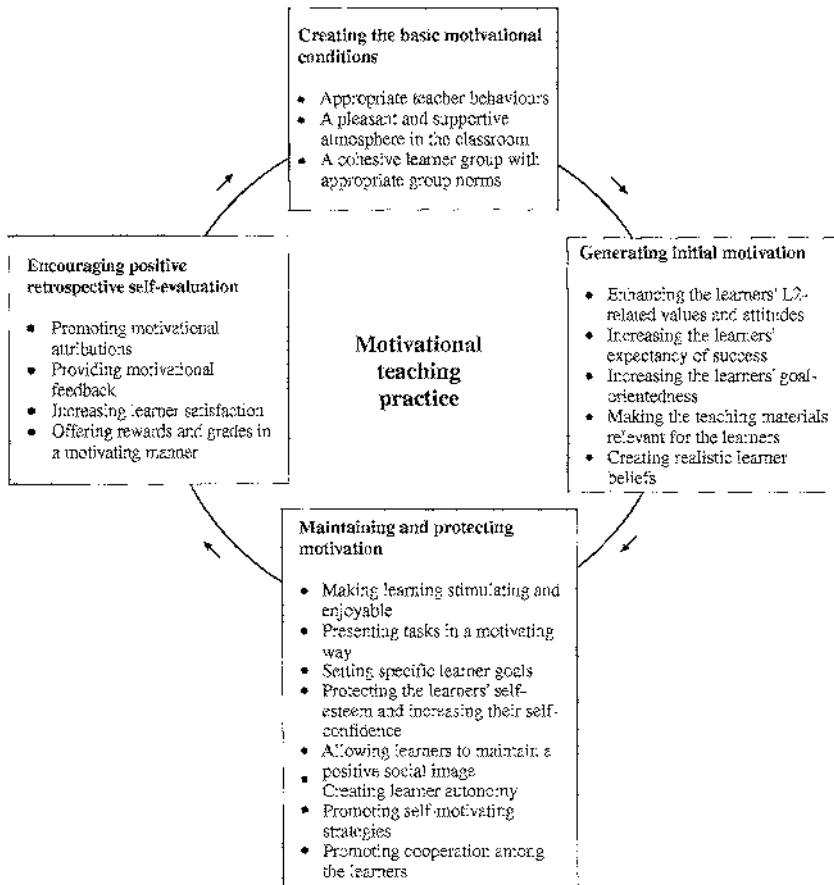


Figure 4. Components of motivational teaching practice in the L2 classroom. From *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom* (p. 29), by Z. Dörnyöi, 2001, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. Copyright 2001 by Cambridge University Press. Reprinted with permission.

These motivational facets, which are a logical extension of the process model outlined in Figure 3, are further broken down into concrete motivational strategies and techniques, covering a wide range of areas from “making the teaching materials relevant to the learners” through “setting specific learner goals” to “increasing learner satisfaction” (see Figure 4 for details).

Formulating Action Control/Self-Motivating Strategies

Besides providing a comprehensive framework to guide practical work on devising motivational strategies, a process-oriented approach has a further, somewhat related feature that makes it beneficial for promoting effective self-regulated learning: its emphasis on *action control mechanisms*. These mechanisms, as conceptualized originally by Kuhl (1985), can be seen as a subclass of *self-regulatory strategies* concerning learners' *self-motivating* function (for a review of self-regulation, see Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000). Based on Corno (1993), Corno and Kanfer (1993), and Kuhl (1987), self-motivating strategies can be divided into five main classes (Dörnyei, 2001b):

1. *Commitment control strategies* for helping to preserve or increase learners' original goal commitment (e.g., keeping in mind favorable expectations or positive incentives and rewards; focusing on what would happen if the original intention failed)
2. *Metacognitive control strategies* for monitoring and controlling concentration and for curtailing unnecessary procrastination (e.g., identifying recurring distractions and developing defensive routines; focusing on the first steps to take)
3. *Satiation control strategies* for eliminating boredom and adding extra attraction or interest to the task (e.g., adding a twist to the task; using one's fantasy to liven up the task)
4. *Emotion control strategies* for managing disruptive emotional states or moods and for generating emotions that will be conducive to implementing one's intentions (e.g., self-encouragement; using relaxation and meditation techniques)
5. *Environmental control strategies* for eliminating negative environmental influences and exploiting positive environmental influences by making the environment an ally in

the pursuit of a difficult goal (e.g., eliminating distractions; asking friends to help one not to allow oneself to do something)

Teacher Motivation and How to Motivate Teachers

Finally, an increased awareness of classroom realities has drawn attention to an overlooked motivational area, the *motivational characteristics of the language teacher*. There is no doubt that teacher motivation is an important factor in understanding the affective basis of instructed SLA, since the teacher's motivation has significant bearings on students' motivational disposition and, more generally, on their learning achievement. The amount of L2 research on this issue is meager, and, quite surprisingly, teacher motivation is also a relatively uncharted area in educational psychology. This, of course, makes the topic an attractive research area, particularly if one considers the vast practical implications of such a line of investigation. The foundations have already been laid (cf. Dörnyei, 2001a; Doyle & Kim, 1999; Jacques, 2001; Kassabgy, Boraie, & Schmidt, 2001; Pennington, 1992, 1995; Pennington & Ho, 1995), but the details still need to be worked out; for example, there have been no attempts in the field to compile a list of "ways to motivate language teachers," even though a scientifically validated list of this sort would predictably be very useful and much sought after.

Conclusion

As this review has demonstrated, there is a lot of interesting work going on in L2 motivation research. The articles selected for this volume present some of the most stimulating recent data-based investigations, and these studies, accompanied by some other lines of ongoing research reviewed in this article, will hopefully take L2 motivation research to a new

level of maturity. I anticipate that the next decade will bring about a consolidation of the wide range of new themes and theoretical orientations that have emerged in the past 10–15 years, and that the often speculative theorizing will be grounded in solid research findings, from both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms. I also look forward to the time when the existing gap between linguistic and psychological approaches to the study of SLA has disappeared and the two research traditions can coexist in a complementary and integrative manner.

Notes

¹In fact, as a reviewer of the manuscript for this article has pointed out, contradiction of this sort is a hallmark of motivation itself, with its inherently competing approach and avoidance tendencies. That is, different motivational systems are associated with increases in effort that are due to the desire to achieve a goal/reward and to avoid some failure/punishment.

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