

Motivation for L2 Learning

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Abstract

The main purpose of this research essay was to review existing literature on L2 motivation critically and suggest some of its implications for the Pakistani context. In this study we reviewed the works of scholars (e.g, Usheida 2009, Gardner 2005, Lamb 2004, Akram & Mehmood 2007, Kormos 2011 and Islam) writing on L2 motivation in various international contexts. Primarily we reviewed the role of L2 motivation and different factors affecting motivation for second/foreign language acquisition. The studies conducted in Pakistani context revealed that most of Pakistani learners of English are motivated to learn this language for utilitarian reasons, especially to fulfil their future academic and professional needs.

Key words:

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Introduction

Researchers have, over a long period of time, underlined motivation as an important learner variable in second language acquisition (SLA). It is recognized as the most influential factor in L2 learning (Gardner). The first study on motivation was conducted by Lambert and Gardner in 1956. Later on, Gardner introduced AMTB (Attitudes and Motivation Test Battery) to test integrativeness. Motivation in SLL, according to researchers, consists of effort, desire and attitude. Gardner, however, gave primacy to integrativeness as the single most influential factor in motivating learners to learn the second language. He subsequently revised and modified his work over the next couple of decades. Gardner's integrative motivation theory was criticized by many a scholar. The role of integrative motivation is decidedly low according to Dornyei, Lamb and Chen. Still, Gardner's work is recognized as being pioneering in motivation research. Dornyei (1994) was the first to respond to a demand in change of direction in SLLM. Motivational levels, as defined by Dornyei, are "language level", "learner level" and "learning situation level" (language level = culture, community pragmatic and utilitarian benefits, learner level=distinctive feature of the individual and learning situation = course, teacher and group specific components). Another important theory in SLLM is Self Determination Theory (SDT). SDT is the most influential theory according to Dornyei (2003). SDT and L2 motivation suggest that the old setting of school leads students to have extrinsic motivation. Temporal dimensions: mastery of L2 takes many years which means past learning history *has* an impact on L2 motivation (Dornyei 2001). Researchers such as Usheida (2009) have laid emphasis on the importance of the real individual. Learning L2, according to her, is just one part of identity.

While studying/researching motivation, the problem faced by researchers is abundance rather than lack of theoretic frameworks. Similarities among multiple frameworks create complex situations thus posing hurdles. Dornyei introduced his "L2 motivational self system" (2009) based on the idea of "possible selves". The model has three components: L2 self, Ought to L2 self and L2 learning experience. On the other hand, Clement's Social Context Model of L2 learning has two processes. a) Antagonistic interplay between integrativeness and fear of assimilation and b) the influence of "frequency and quality of contact" on learner confidence.

Some researchers, however, argue that "Ideal self" is better able to explain complex and dynamic nature of L2 learning. In other words, those learners who have clear image of the self and a positive learning experience will be better able to develop abilities in a second or foreign language.

Based on recent literature (Dornyei 2005, 2009), this Ideal L2 self is the topic of our focus. Because intrinsic and extrinsic continuum in motivation is applicable to foreign language classroom (Dornyei 2005, Brown 2007) intrinsic and extrinsic factors could be used to assess learner motivation.

Literature Review

Extrinsic Factors

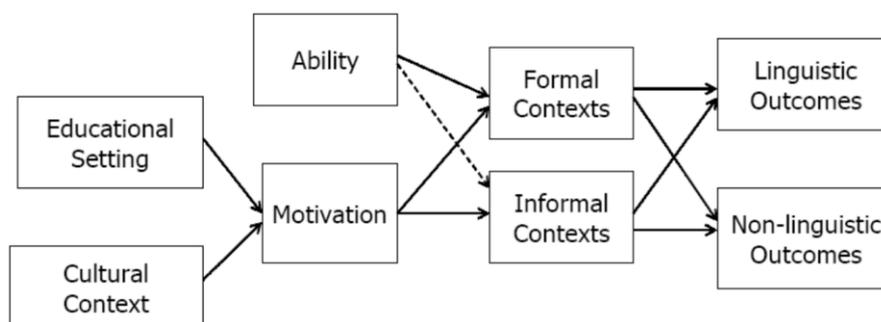
A number of factors are said to shape/influence motivation for L2 learning. Those could be: Motivation for learning L2 for international relations, international communication, cultural exchanges, cultural identification, self projection, self recognition, self derivation, self adjustment, self determination, future concern, self regulation etc (Norton & Kamal). Norton contends that when language learners begin a program of instruction, they may be invested in communities that extend beyond the four walls of the classroom. A learner's imagined community (where a learner imagines himself to be in the future) invites an imagined identity. So, a learner's investment in the target language must be understood within this context.

Deconstructing Motivation

Gardener 2005

“Motivation is a very broad based construct. It has cognitive, affective and conative characteristics. Which means it is not simply a reason; without any association with other attributes that characterize the motivated individual, a reason is just a reason, not a motive”

The socio educational model presented in 2007 seeks to explain how individual factors and general features of society interact in L2 learning and affect motivation. Each of the factors described in the model has been measured through the instrument he has developed, called the AMTB.



This model has generated many predictions related to SLA. It has been observed that over the course of an academic year a student's level of motivation and attitude tends to decline. Hence conceptualization of the motivation to learn L2 could greatly improve movements to identify ways of motivating students.

Lamb 2004

Lamb Studied motivation in Indonesia. The results of his research reflect a tilt towards integrativeness. From what he gathered in Indonesia, the west is perceived as source of globalization. And the social, economic and cultural effects of English will be felt inside Indonesia in times to come. The perception of the students Lamb interviewed is that English is one of the many skills that needs to be acquired.

Apart from various other findings and his own take on motivation, Lamb endorses Gardner's point that language learning involves taking on the behavioral characteristics of another (target) cultural group of people.

But the study fails to provide any explicit references to the identification process. However, based on empirical evidence, it suggests that students are exposed to a powerful L2 discourse channeled through parents, schools and media. This has encouraged them to develop a vision of English speaking "globally-involved" but "nationally-responsible" future self.

Here, once again, two factors have been identified that underlie motivation: integrativeness and attitude towards the learning situation. Classroom behavior, persistence, cultural contact and language retention are all shaped by motivation. These factors when combined together shape the language achievement and its use.

Akram & Mehmood

Akram and Mehmood carried out their research in Pakistan. Here English being a colonial inheritance, a Pakistani's inadequate grasp of this language would keep reminding him of his inferior status. English, therefore, enjoys a high status in Pakistan. The teaching of English in Pakistan has been text based because the British policy was to create a class who would act not only as a buffer between the ruler and the ruled but also as a link between the two. After the creation of Pakistan, English not only retained its status but gained in on it. In Pakistan it serves as a gateway to success. Socially, the adoption of English as a second language has had a significant impact both economically and educationally and it continues to play an important role. (Ghani)

Kormos 2011

There is a long standing tradition of motivation research in educational psychology. Motivation explains why people select a particular activity, how long they are willing to persist in it and what efforts they invest in it. These three components of motivation correspond to goal(s) initiation and maintenance of learning effort. Goals are effective motivators only if they become internalized to some extent. Intrinsic language learning goals, as identified by Noels (2001) are related to feelings of enjoyment and enhancement one feels being in a L2 classroom.

In addition, goals exert their motivational influence through emotional arousal also. Another relevant factor affecting motivation is attitude. Attitudes have been identified as emotional pre-cursors of the initiation of learning behaviour. Additional key elements of motivation which regulate goal setting are personal agency believes.

Here it must be kept in mind that no model of motivation is complete without considering the final outcome of the motivational processes, which is called volition in educational psychology and “motivated learning behavior” in SLA.

Motivation is also strongly influence by social and contextual factors. Immediate environment, family and friends play an important role in goal-setting and attitude-formation.

Relevance in Pakistani Context

It is important to study the motivation(s) behind the incremental trend in L2 (English) learning in Pakistan because English has a significant impact on the economy and education of Pakistan. English words and phrases have gone deeper into the blood stream of bilingual and/or multilingual speakers. The bilinguals/multilinguals use the English equivalent for the sake of appropriateness and to make their statements more effective. Politicians want English because of inter and intra communicational needs with different linguistic regions of the country as well as with the world outside it. The younger generation is all for L2 learning for goals ranging from self-realization to self-development; national interest and for intrinsic as well as extrinsic reasons.

A potentially important motivation construct in Pakistan is international posture. On a broad level, learner interest in L2 learning is for international interaction and for identification with a particular culture (integrativeness). On an individual level, however, pursuit of intercultural affiliation *could* be the motivation for learning English. In addition, people’s attitudes towards their own country (patriotism) and fellow citizens may also be a significant component for their L2 learning motivation.

Based on recent data, it could be assumed that motivation to learn English is linked to national identification processes.

Implications

Although no one would doubt that an increasing understanding of student motivation can have significant practical implications, it is questionable whether motivation research in general has reached a level of sophistication that would allow scholars to translate research results into straightforward educational recommendations. The crux of the problem is that while there are many effective motivational principles and guidelines that can help practitioners, these principles do not add up to a coherent theory. Moreover, there is growing recognition across mainstream motivational psychology and the L2 motivation field that processes of motivation cannot be divorced from complex socio-contextual factors. In practical terms, this means that any pedagogical recommendations deriving from empirical research are not directly generalisable to all classroom situations and, as with other aspects of instructional methodology, need to be adapted in ways that are appropriate to the local learning context. (Holliday, 1994).

However, such researches play a fundamental role in helping teachers identify factors affecting student motivation in order to make teaching more effective/result-oriented by focusing on things such as:

- Generating initial motivation
- Increasing the learners' expectancy of success
- Increasing the learners' 'goal-orientedness'
- Creating realistic learner self beliefs.

Since research is an ongoing process and new factors are bound to be discovered but the work done so far *has* greatly affected language teaching methodologies. Teaching methodologies, though not directly related to SLA, do get their influence from these researches and hence affect student's learning.

Conclusions

The different approaches to motivation discussed above, though not definitive, do provide valuable insight into what instigates the learners to learn a second language. Various models have been proposed to identify the exact stimulus behind motivation but so far nothing concrete has been found out/agreed upon by researchers. It is important to note that the “integrative” theory, originally presented by Gardner has lost not only its ground, it has almost diminished as a factor affecting motivation. Instead, other factors, primary among them the SDT, have been found to play a major role in learner motivation.

The aforementioned study is based on facts collected from diverse places in countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan and Canada (all of them urban). But it is quite possible that had the studies been conducted in offline places (far off from urban, developed settings) the motivational patterns would be different. It is also acknowledged that the facts as stated in the study may not reflect the exact picture of motivation as the respondents in various places may not have/could not respond as explicitly as needed in order for the researchers to get a better insight into their motivational patterns. As English is spreading out to every nook and corner of the globe, there is clearly a need to include diverse populations of learners to get a better and more definitive understanding of L2 motivation.

References

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Gardener 2005; Integrative motivation and second language acquisition

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Lamb 2004; Integrative motivation in a globalized world

Kormos 2011; Systems of Goals

Norton & Kamal; Pakistani imagined communities

Habibullah Pathan 2012; A longitudinal investigation of Pakistani university students' motivation for learning English