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## Motivation and Second Language Acquisition

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### Abstract:

This paper aims to explore the role of motivation in second language acquisition. The paper will first define motivation as it pertains to language learning. The paper will also include some literature about motivation in second language acquisition (SLA). The paper will conclude with ideas for creating and fostering motivation in the classroom.

What is motivation?

Motivation is an essential aspect of reaching one's objective. This is also true in the educational setting and in language learning acquisition. Different researchers in different areas define motivation differently. Dorney(2001) believes that motivation is related to how people decide for one area of expertise over another one, or for one activity over another. The more time students are willing to devote to a certain task no matter how challenging it is, the more possibilities they will have to learn. This attitude indicates that they are highly motivated to learn. Gardner and Smith (1985), state that motivation is directly linked to desire, effort, and want. Therefore, those are essential prerequisites for someone to be motivated. Gardner (2001) and Dornyei(2003) argue that acquiring a new language is different from learning subjects such as mathematics, geography, and others. "Learning another language involves making something foreign a part of one's self(Gardner, 2001, p.3). However, motivation is not static. Gas and Selinker state that it can change with time, and external and internal factors and contexts can influence that change.

### Models of Motivation

#### *Theories*

There is a great number of motivational theories in education. Therefore, it makes it confusing for instructors to know which one to employ. In the beginning, the theory focused on a social perspective, leading to a product-oriented approach, which evaluates the students' performance. According to Ellis (2008), educators became more focused on situation-specific factors. Nowadays, theories have migrated to a more process-oriented approach, which focuses on the student's learning procedure. There is also the socio-educational model, that focuses on motivational intensity, and integrativeness (Gardner 2005), as cited in Zareian and Jodaei, 2015. "Integrative motivation is defined with positive attitudes toward the target language group and the potential for integrating into the group, or at least an interest in meeting and interacting with members of the target language group" (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991, p. 472). According to Gardner (2002), integrative motivation includes aspects such as second language learner's social context, concerns, and interests, both inside and outside the classroom. As Zareian and Jodaei (2015) explain, integrative motivation should take into consideration the nature of the setting L2 learning occurs.

These examples show that there have been cognitive shifts in motivation research since the early 1990s. Motivation theories were then expanded and redefined, becoming a dynamic entity rather than static concept. The "shift of macro-perspective to micro-perspective motivate researchers to catch up with mainstream educational psychological theories such as Self—determination theory, Attribution theory, Goal theory, Classroom Friendly models, and the Neurobiology of L2 Motivation"(Zareian and Jodaei, 2015 p. 301).

### *Instrumental and Integrative Model*

Two important second language motivation models are the Instrumental model and the Integrative Model. Lowen and Reinders (as cited in Ghamdi, 2014) state that instrumental motivation serves the purpose of learning a second language for a job or academic requirement. On the other hand, Learners are integratively motivated when they want to be accepted by certain groups or communities. In that case, they usually want to learn “living aspects” of the target language. Therefore, it implies admiration, affection, or disposition towards the target language group, and the aspiration to be similar to that group or community. (Dornyei (2005).

### *Self-Determination Theory: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Model*

Self-determination theory includes intrinsic and extrinsic types of motivation. Bernard (2010) points out that three parts encompass intrinsic motivation: motivation for knowledge, for accomplishment and for stimulation. Motivation by knowledge is defined by the desire to know new things. Motivation for accomplishments relates to the pleasure to excel in a task or achieving one’s objective. Finally, motivation for stimulation refers to positive feelings towards the target language. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, relates to external factors permeating second language learners’ lives, such as job opportunities, the desire to obtain praise from teachers or bosses, and the wish to prove to others an outstanding performance (Zareian and Jodaei, 2015).

### *Goal Theory*

Achieving a goal can be part of any activity related to work, study, or personal achievements. Goal-setting and goal-oriented are the two goal theories that can be applied to second language motivation. theory (Locke and Latham (2002). The former affects one’s performance and is associated with the strategies learners use as well as with their determination. As Locke states (1996), Goal settings and performances are connected. On the other hand, goal-setting theory explains that students’ performance is associated with their perceived goals (Dornyei, 2005).

### *How can teachers employ strategies to motivate their students and keep them motivated?*

When it comes to motivation in second language acquisition, a frequent question always arises: is motivation a student or a teacher issue?

According to Renandya (2014), the answer to this question depends on the perspective we give to motivation. In other words, whether it is a fixed or dynamic construct. “When we see motivation as a fixed entity, we simply describe our students as being either motivated or unmotivated (Renandya, 2014 p. 7)”. If that is the case it implies that students are in charge of their motivation, and as a consequence, there is little or nothing that an instructor can do to change it.

When motivation is perceived as a dynamic construct, it can change depending on many factors, including classroom situations, students’ personal problems, students’ goals, and even students’ personalities. If that is the case, Johnson (2008), argues that it becomes a teacher issue. However, Renandya (2014) points out that even if this is the case. Students still have some responsibility over their learning motivation.

Renandya (2014), says that although the teachers play a critical role in their students’ motivation, there are other components that also affect students’ motivation. Starting with the teacher’s responsibility, there are some key attributes such as enthusiasm, friendship, care, humor, fairness, encouragement, and patience (Miller, 2012; Borg, 2006). According to the authors cited above, these characteristics develop respect, trust, admiration, and the will to learn in most students (Miller, 2012; Borg, 2006).

Another component that influences students’ motivation are the methods used by their teachers. Teachers should not only have a detailed knowledge of different teaching methods, but also decide on which methods to teach depending on their students’ personalities and levels of learning among other factors. Ranandya (2014), says that “effective teachers are very skillful in formulating the objective of the lesson; choosing and organizing learning activities; evaluating how well the lesson went (p. 5).” It is also important for teachers to have in mind that students should have a choice in their learning process, so as to keep them engaged and prevent the lessons from becoming tedious.

Attention should also be given to the textbook – appropriateness, interest, updated texts, connection to students’ real lives – and the activities used should be meaningful and relevant (Renandya 2014). Finally, assessments also play a key role when motivating students.

According to Jacobs and Farrell (2003), good assessments reflect closely to what we teach and how we teach in class. Good assessments should include questions about students' weaknesses and strengths.

They serve both to test and to teach, and have to reflect the language used in real life. A good option are the so-called alternative assessments, such as projects, research papers, which remove students' anxiety and fear.

Some practical examples

This paper has presented some theories teachers can employ to motivate their students. A paper put together by 18 graduate students of NIE, and edited by Dwyer and Renandya (2021), describes some activities that can help students become more confident and fluent speakers of the target language. They grouped the activities into fluency-focused-activities; language-focused-activities; socio-cultural activities; and public-speaking activities. The paper will describe one example from each of the above categories, and then will describe some of the activities I use to motivate my students.

Fluency-Focused Activities

Shadowing: Students choose one topic or speech by someone of their choosing. Then, they follow the speaker and imitate the speaker's pronunciation and tone. Through practice, learners' fluency can be enhanced. It also could be a competition to see who the best imitator is to increase students' motivation.

Language-focused activities

Taboo – a game where students are separated into groups of 4-5. A pile of cards with nouns are placed in the center of each group. Students will take turns describing a noun for the rest of the group to guess. The group member who guesses correctly has the greatest number of points/cards by the end of the game wins.

Socio-culturally sensitive speaking activities

Students will take on different roles according to the context given by the teacher, and take on roles like father and son, or customer and seller as if they are present in an authentic situation that enables real-world application.

Public speaking activities

Podcasting – Podcasting is a great way to involve students in the speaking production process. They can pick a topic, and plan what they are going to say. Afterwards, they will proceed to talk about their topic, at an appropriate length. This can be done solo or cooperatively with students working in pairs or small groups to create the final product. As it is a natural fluency activity, students do not have to worry about using language perfectly.

All the activities above are considered speaking activities. When designing activities for my students, I have in mind activities that can also be integrated into different skills, and grammar. When learning the use of commands in Portuguese, in an intermediate class, I designed an activity in which students must produce a food recipe. This is because recipes require the use of commands.

After explaining the vocabulary, I designed a game to help students practice the ingredients they learned. Each group would have to think of a dish and come up with 5 ingredients used to prepare that dish. Then, the other groups must guess the name of the dish.

Example: Ground beef; bread, pickles, cheese, and onions – Cheeseburger. The group that guesses it correctly scores a point and so on.

Then, students read a recipe in Portuguese with the commands and answer questions about it. The text serves to introduce the commands. Example: heat the oven to 350 F.

After that, to practice the commands, I give them some prompts:

What do you have to do with the onions?

They would say: chop the onions – Or “corte as cebolas” (in Portuguese there is a special conjugation for commands).

After that, I play a video of a Brazilian cooking TV show. They watch the video and must answer questions about the video. Then, in groups, students should write a recipe, including the ingredients used to create that recipe and the manner in which things have to be done, so that they can use the commands. They finally present their recipes to the class, as if they were participating in a TV cooking show.

The activity described above is very connected to students' real lives, and it includes all skills: listening, writing, speaking, reading, and grammar. Naturally, when students are preparing the activity, or presenting it, I can also check their vocabulary usage and pronunciation. The activity includes fluency, language, cultural aspects, and public speaking. Students get very motivated when performing this activity.

Another example of an activity that was designed for my Beginner Portuguese class involves classroom conversation. After explaining classroom vocabulary, I play a dialogue between two university students talking about their courses, schedules, and professors.

Students should answer questions about the dialogue they listened to.

Example of questions:

- How many courses does Peter have?
- What time is his calculus course?
- What is his professor like?
- What is his math course like?

After the listening activity, students must reproduce a similar dialogue among themselves. For that, I give them a table to be filled out with their courses, schedule, and description of their courses and professors.

Example:

Course	Days	Time	What is the course like	What is the professor like

Students fill their charts out and interview at least two colleagues in their class. For homework, students must write a paragraph reporting the classroom information they found out about one of their friends. This way, I can integrate three skills in the same kind of activity, one leading to the other: listening, speaking, and writing. The above activities are motivating to the students because they are real life activities. Therefore, they see the relevance in learning and practicing them (Renandya, 2014).

### Conclusions:

These accounts only touch on the most prominent issues about motivation and second language acquisition. My intention was to share techniques used to make the process of motivating students to learn a second language, and thus make their learning process smoother for these students. "When students choose to participate enthusiastically in a language lesson and are willing to extend sufficient efforts even when the activity is challenging, we know that they are motivated to learn and are likely to take in more and more from the lesson (Renandya, 2014, p. 1)."

This study also highlights how important it is for the instructor to know different motivation models in second language acquisition and make use of them appropriately. Finally, based on the theories described, the study also provides practical examples of activities that can be used to motivate second language learners in their learning process.

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