Understanding the Motivation of Second-Language Learners: From Gardner to Dörnyei

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INTRODUCTION

For any teacher there is a good chance that at the top of their list of concerns sits motivation. What can they do to better motivate their students? Could they change the teaching approach, the curriculum, their teaching style? There is very good reason for teachers to be concerned with motivation, as the importance of motivation in second language learning has been widely accepted by both teachers and researchers as one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of second/foreign language (L2) learning (Oxford and Shearin, 1994: 12).

Motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the L2 and later the driving force to continue studying the L2 long after the initial glow has faded and the realization sets in of just how much time and effort it takes to learn another language (Dörnyei, 1998: 117). Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals, and neither are appropriate curricula and good teaching enough on their own to ensure student achievement. On the other hand, high motivation can make up for considerable deficiencies both in one's language aptitude and learning conditions (Dörnyei, 2005: 65). It is no small wonder why motivation tops the agenda.

Understanding motivation, however, is not easy. The wealth of literature devoted to the subject, as well as the vast diversity of theories attests to this. Motivation is a complex, multifaceted phenomena. Not surprising then, the term has been reinterpreted and reconceptualized time and time again. Moreover, there has consistently been a disconnect between how researchers conceptualize motivation, and what the practicing teacher wants to get as a result of this research – in the way of practical applications that can be easily applied to the classroom.

In the past few decades, however, there has been a marked shift in

thought on L2 motivation. Out of this has been proposed a number of models and frameworks that hold some promise in allowing second language (SL) motivation theory to be more susceptible to practical application for those teachers on the front line. This paper will first take a brief look at the traditional conceptualization of motivation before detailing some recent additions to the field. Finally, one of these recent frameworks will be examined in greater detail and an attempt made to consider how such a model could aid in creating potential strategies for improving the motivation of a group of English as a foreign language (EFL) learners.

THE TRADITIONAL SL APPROACH TO MOTIVATION

The initial impetus in L2 motivation research came from social psychology (Dörnyei, 1998: 122). Much of the research into the nature and role of motivation in the L2 learning process has been initiated and inspired by two social psychologists working in Canada, Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert (1972). They were primarily interested in understanding the unique Canadian social situation characterized by the often confrontational coexistence of the French-speaking (Francophone) and English-speaking (Anglophone) communities in Canada. They argued that the motivation to learn the language of the other community is a primary force responsible for enhancing or hindering intercultural communication and affiliation (Dörnyei, 2005: 67).

They adopted a social psychological approach that was based on the main tenet that "students' attitudes toward the specific language group are bound to influence how successful they will be in incorporating aspects of that language" (Gardner, 1985: 6). Gardner and his associates also established scientific research procedures and introduced standardized assessment techniques and instruments, most notably through their "Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB)", which has stimulated a large number of empirical studies (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991: 220).

From an educational point of view, one of the main points of interest in Gardner and Lambert's claim is that it asserts that unlike most other school subjects, a foreign language is not a socioculturally neutral field but is affected by a range of sociocultural factors such as language attitudes, cultural stereotypes and even geopolitical concerns (Dörnyei, 2005: 67). As such, L2 motivation research is somewhat distinct from both mainstream psychological research and the field of education. Dörnyei (2005: 68) suggests that this

distinction between the study of foreign languages and other school subjects partly explains why the theory of L2 learning and teaching has never managed to fully integrate into the broader domain of educational studies.

Gardner's theory of second language acquisition, the Socio-Educational Model of Second Language Acquisition, is one of the most influential models to emerge from the socio-psychological field. This model incorporates the learner's cultural beliefs, their attitudes towards the learning situation, their integrativeness as well as their motivation (Williams and Burden, 1997: 116).

Gardner also makes the now well-known distinction between integrative and instrumental orientations in motivation. While related, orientation is not the same as motivation, but represents the initial reasons for studying the L2. An integrative orientation occurs when the learner is studying a language because of a desire to identify with the culture of speakers of the target language. An instrumental orientation, on the other hand, describes a group of factors concerned with motivation arising from external goals such as passing exams, financial rewards, furthering a career or getting a promotion (Williams and Burden, 1997: 116).

While Gardner's social argument has been accepted by researchers all over the world, it failed to take into account the actual learning situations these researchers were working in (Dörnyei, 2005: 67). Some researchers questioned the usefulness of this conceptualization in regards to foreign language situations, and there have been several calls in the literature on FL learning to broaden the perspective used to examine motivation in this subject area (Dörnyei, 1994; Oxford and Shearin, 1994).

The Hungarian SL motivation researcher Zoltán Dörnyei points out that serious differences exist between ESL and EFL contexts that make integrative motivation far less relevant in the EFL context. A second language is one that is learned in a location where that language is typically used as the main vehicle for everyday communication. In such situations, learners are surrounded by the target language, and it can be argued that they have a much larger vested interest in becoming integrated into the target-language culture (Oxford and Shearin, 1994: 14-15). This is in stark contrast with the situation of an EFL student, where outside of the classroom they have very little if any exposure to the target language. Such a lack of meaningful contact with the target-language community makes it virtually impossible to form clearly

articulated attitudes toward the target-language group, which is a vital component of integrativeness.

Gardner's theory was the dominant model in the L2 field for more than three decades and the AMTB and other statistical data processing techniques that Gardner introduced set high research standards in the field (Dörnyei, 2005: 71). It can be argued that one problem with the dominance of this model was that it effectively stifled the growth of new research avenues in L2 motivation. That is, until just before the turn of the millennium.

THE EDUCATIONAL SHIFT OF THE 1990s

The 1990s witnessed a rekindling of interest in motivation in foreign and second language learning with many researchers seeking alternate ways of conceptualizing motivation and setting new research agendas (Williams and Burden, 1997: 118). One of the main drives behind these attempts at reform was the desire to adopt a more pragmatic, education-centered approach to motivation research, which would be consistent with the perceptions of practicing teachers and, thus, be more relevant to classroom application. It was felt that the social-psychological approach did not provide a sufficiently detailed description of the classroom dimension of L2 motivation, one that could be used to explain specific student behaviors and to help generate practical guidelines for motivating learners (Dörnyei and Csizér, 1998: 204-205).

One of the ways that researchers attempted to create a new paradigm was through the modification or extension of existing motivational constructs. Another group has taken an alternate tack by adopting a descriptive role, examining learners' motivational patterns in a given sociocultural or educational environment. Despite these differences Dörnyei (1998: 122-124) suggests that these studies all share three underlying themes:

(a) There was a conscious effort to complement the social psychological approach with a number of concepts that were seen as central to mainstream psychology but had not received significant attention in L2 research.

(b) Researchers were trying to conceptualize motivation in such a way that it would have explanatory power with regard to specific language learning tasks and behaviors and not just broad, whole-community-level social tendencies.

(c) There was an effort for a more pragmatic, education centered approach to

motivation research which would be more relevant for classroom application.

Accordingly, a growing number of studies examined the motivational impact of the main components of the classroom learning situation, such as the teacher, the curriculum and the learner group. This did not mean, however, that researchers rejected the findings of the previous period. In fact, it was generally acknowledged that Gardner and his associates' macroperspective was useful to characterize and compare the motivational patterns of whole learning communities, which allowed researchers to then draw inferences about important issues.

Once again, as research progressed it became clear these broad factors had limited explanatory power and there was a push to bring a greater utility to the learners' immediate situation. This is what many of these new areas of research were attempting to do (Dörnyei, 2005: 75).

The following is a small sampling of the new research, and by no means should this be considered exhaustive. It is being presented to give an idea of some of the directions being taken.

Tremblay and Gardner's (1995) extended model

To counter the earlier criticism that Gardner and Lambert's social psychological approach (detailed above) was too narrow a vision of motivation, Gardner this time teamed up with Paul Tremblay to extend Gardner's social psychological construct of L2 motivation by incorporating into it new elements from expectancy-value and goal theories (Tremblay and Gardner, 1995: 505). While this model is straightforward in offering a *language attitudes → motivational behavior → achievement sequence*, a novel element is included, being three mediating variables between attitudes and behavior: *goal salience, valence and self-efficacy*. Thus, the model offers a synthesis of Gardner's earlier, socially motivated construct and recent cognitive motivational theories, and demonstrates that additional variables can be incorporated into Gardner's socio-educational model of L2 learning without necessarily damaging its integrity (Dörnyei, 1998: 127).

In line with Gardner's past approach, the new model has also been empirically tested. This firm empirical grounding coupled with the clarity of the model make the Gardner and Tremblay study a particularly important data-based investigation (Dörnyei, 1998: 127).

Williams and Burden's (1997) extended framework

Williams and Burden attempt to summarize the motivational components that are relevant to L2 instruction as part of a larger overview of psychology for language teachers. To this end, they reviewed a wide range of relevant motivational theories and drew them together in a highly detailed framework of motivational factors (Dörnyei, 1998: 126). Williams and Burden are among the few L2 motivation researchers who provide an elaborate definition of motivation (Williams and Burden, 1997: 120):

> Motivation may be construed as a state of cognitive emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals).

This is similar to Dörnyei's list (see below) in that it does not offer any directional relationships between the listed items.

While the above have all made significant contributions to L2 motivation research, we will now be looking at the framework that this author believes to hold particular promise for teachers in the EFL classroom.

DÖRNYEI'S EXTENDED FRAMEWORK

In an attempt to make sense of the different components involved in second language motivation, Dörnyei proposes a three-level categorization, which attempts to synthesize various lines of research by offering an extensive list of motivational components (Williams and Burden, 1997: 118). These are categorized into three broad levels, the *Language Level*, the *Learner Level*, and the *Learning Situation Level*. These three levels coincide with the three basic constituents of the L2 learning process (the L2, the L2 learner and the L2 learning environment) and also reflect the three different aspects of language (the social dimension, the personal dimension and the educational subject matter dimension) (Dörnyei, 1994: 278).

Components of foreign language learning motivation

LANGUAGE LEVEL	Integrative Motivational Subsystem
	Instrumental Motivational Subsystem
LEARNER LEVEL	Need for Achievement
	Self-Confidence

・Language Use Anxiety

・Perceived L2 Competence

・Casual Attributions

・Self-Efficacy

LEARNING SITUATION LEVEL

Course-Specific	Interest
Motivational Components	Relevance
	Expectancy
	Satisfaction
Teacher-Specific	Affiliative Drive
Motivational Components	Authority Type
	Direct Socialization of Motivation
	・Modeling
	・Task Presentation
	・Feedback
Group-Specific Motivational	Goal-Orientedness
Components	Norm & Reward System
Group Cohesion	
Classroom Goal Structure	

Source: Dörnyei, 1994: 280

In this model, the *language level* encompasses various orientations and motives related to aspects of the second language, such as the culture and the community, and the usefulness of the language. These will influence the goals learners set and the choices they make. The *learner level* involves individual characteristics that the learner brings to the learning tasks. Key features of this level are need for achievement and self-confidence. Lastly, the *learning situation level* includes components related to the course, the teacher and the group dynamics (Williams and Burden, 1997: 118). This last level, according to Dörnyei (1998: 125), is the most elaborate part of the framework, as it is associated with situation-specific motives rooted in various aspects of language learning in a classroom setting.

A detailed framework like this is very useful in emphasizing the multidimensional nature of L2 motivation, pulling together a number of different lines of research and providing an elaborate enough specification of

relevant motives for the purpose of in-depth analysis of particular learning situations and design of intervention techniques to enhance them (Dörnyei, 1998: 126).

There are, however, some concerns and limitations with the framework Dörnyei presents. For example, his list lacks an indication of any relationship between the different components and therefore cannot be seen as a motivation model proper. Furthermore, the components are quite diverse in nature and it would prove somewhat difficult to submit them to empirical testing. The framework also lacks a goal component and, as such, does not reflect sufficiently recent findings in self-determination theory (Dörnyei, 1998: 126).

It was Dörnyei's intention through this framework to outline a comprehensible motivational construct directly relevant to L2 classroom motivation. It is this author's contention that it does just that. This is not to say it is without its limitations as mentioned above, but it is one of the most promising models to date in L2 motivation research to link what is happening in the 'lab' with something that teachers can use immediately to help them in providing a motivating environment for their students. With motivation being such an important factor in learning success, skills in motivating learners should be seen as central to effective teaching (Dörnyei and Csizér, 1998: 207).

In order to create such a set of motivational strategies, Dörnyei created a list of ten macrostrategies which represented a detailed description of the relevant motives to be promoted (Dörnyei and Csizér, 1998: 209). This he interestingly referred to as the 'Ten commandments for motivating language learners'. This list, however, was criticized for not being based on systematic research, but rather being the result of a synthesis of personal experience and a semi-formal survey. Dörnyei (1998: 131) addressed this concern, however, when he teamed up with Kata Csizér to complete another study that revised the original list, and based the commandments on empirical data concerning the beliefs and practices of language teachers. This later study was conducted in Hungary, and the results were compiled into a revised list of ten commandments.

Ten commandments for motivating language learners: final version

1   Set a personal example with your own behavior.
2   Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.
3   Present the tasks properly.

4   Develop a good relationship with the learners.

5   Increase the learners' linguistic self-confidence.

6   Make the language classes interesting.

7   Promote learner autonomy.

8   Personalize the learning process.

9   Increase the learners' goal-orientedness.

10 Familiarize learners with the target language culture.

Source: Dörnyei and Csizér, 1998: 215

Dörnyei contends that the research in general motivational psychology in general and L2 motivation in particular has focused more on identifying various motives and validating motivational theories than on developing techniques to help teachers increase the motivation of their students. These ten commandments go a long way in bridging this gap. Teachers now have the potential for a model that provides them practically applied strategies (Dörnyei and Csizér, 1998: 208).

CONCLUSION

I would like to consider applying this framework to the Japanese English as a foreign language context. To this end, the framework would be used to identify broad categories of motives as they pertain to the Japanese EFL classroom and its students. As mentioned before, Dörnyei and Csizér applied this framework to Hungarian students studying EFL. While this study provides useful insights it was not its intent to be valid for all cultural, ethnolinguistic and institutional settings. Indeed, Dörnyei (1998: 224) emphasizes that no motivational strategy has absolute and general value due to the diverse learning contexts.

In Japan, schools and the curriculum are undergoing reform, and one principal target of this reform is the teaching of English. In 1989 a New Revised Course of Study (NRCOS) proposed a more communicative approach to EFL teaching (Lamie, 2004: 115). Following this reform agenda, the Japanese Ministry of Education (Monbusho) has made communicative language teaching (CLT) in the elementary school obligatory (The Japan Times, 2006: 1). As teachers of EFL in Japan effectively make this transition, a good understanding of motivational strategies, devised with their particular cultural context in mind, would certainly aid them considerably.

In her work examining the willingness to communicate (WTC) of Japanese EFL students, Tomoko Yashima (2002) investigated the influence of L2 proficiency, attitudes or motivation, L2 communication and international posture (general attitude toward the international community and foreign language learning) on L2 communication. To this end, Yashima (2002: 63) utilized a WTC model, as well as the socioeducational model. The results of her study show that international posture influences motivation, which, in turn, predicts proficiency and L2 communicative confidence.

In her concluding remarks she suggests that international posture and confidence in L2 use seem to be keys both in understanding and in promoting L2 learning and communication in the Japanese EFL context. She posits that in order to encourage students to be more willing to communicate in the TL, EFL lessons should be designed to enhance students' interest in different cultures and international affairs and activities, as well as to reduce anxiety and build confidence in communication (Yashima, 2002: 63).

While it is important to conduct research to better understand how such variables play out in the Japanese EFL context, it would also be important to be able to add to this specific motivational strategies. Understanding the source of a student's motivation is very important in providing a learner-centered classroom. Knowing how to stimulate their motivation, on the other hand, would be even more useful in a practical sense. Such strategies are very important in providing a classroom that truly meets the needs of the students.

Irie (2003: 87-88) states that the research on motivation in Japan to date, largely at the post-secondary level, has for the most part focused on identifying the underlying structures of L2 motivation in Japanese EFL contexts. While research such as Yashima's opens our minds to what motivates Japanese EFL students, and allows us to better understand their cultural peculiarities, a model such as Dörnyei's will allow teachers to improve their students' learning motivation by adjusting aspects of the classroom environment.

It should be noted in closing that many of the strategies that Dörnyei offered in his ten commandments might seem self-explanatory to a seasoned EFL teacher. It goes without saying, however, that if all motivation strategies were so self-evident, why are so many teachers—myself included—spending as much time as they are worrying about how to get their students motivated? A framework which begins to offer motivation strategies that are open to practical

application in the EFL classroom would be greatly beneficial. This will be even more important, once again, as Japan continues its evolution to a more communicative approach in English language teaching.

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