

THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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ABSTRACT: this paper explores the role of motivation in second language acquisition and how it may facilitate learning process regardless of learners' age, learning context, national background. Researchers suggest that the more students are motivated, the more easy they can grasp the language input in short period.

KEY WORDS: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, language input, linguistic benefits, autonomy, competence, language plateau

INTRODUCTION

The process of second language learning is complicated and impacted by a number of cognitive, emotional and social factors. Among these mention factors, motivation stands out as one of the most pivotal elements in determining a learner's success. Motivation leads learners to initiate language study, challenge themselves, and strive for proficiency. Whether it stems from a natural desire to connect with new cultures, advance professionally, seeking better job opportunities or achieve personal goals, motivation shapes the intensity and direction of language learning process. This article sheds light on the role of motivation in language learning, examining key theoretical perceptions, the types of motivation and how motivational factors fosters language outcomes.

UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATION

Motivation in education refers to the internal drive or external influence that stimulates learners to engage in the learning process, sustain their passion (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2014). It is psychological factor that initiates, guides, inspires and maintains goal-oriented behaviors. In the second language acquisition process, motivation determines how much effort a language learner is willing to put into a new language learning, how persistent they are in overcoming challenges, and how actively they can participate in language learning.

There are two main types of motivation is categorized:

Intrinsic motivation comes from within the learner. Learners learn language as it is enjoyable, and want to discover new cultures and traditions.

Extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards such as high GPA, international exams, university applications, social recognition or higher job offers.

Both types of motivation play a pivotal role in language learning,

Theories of Motivation in Second Language Acquisition

Motivation has long been recognized as a critical factor in second language acquisition (SLA), and several key theories have shaped our understanding of how it influences language learning. Among the most influential is Gardner's **Socio-Educational Model** (1985), which highlights the importance of social and cultural factors in language learning. Gardner distinguishes between two main types of motivation: **integrative** and **instrumental**. Integrative motivation refers to a learner's desire to integrate with the culture of the target language, interact with its speakers, and become part of the language community. In contrast, instrumental motivation is more goal-oriented and practical, involving reasons such as passing exams, getting a better job, or earning a promotion. Gardner's theory suggests that learners with high levels of integrative motivation are more likely to succeed in achieving long-term language proficiency, especially when they are immersed in the language environment.

Another influential perspective comes from **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)**, developed by Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000). This theory focuses on the quality of motivation and the extent to which it is autonomous or self-regulated. According to SDT, learners are most motivated when their psychological needs for **autonomy**, **competence**, and **relatedness** are met. Autonomy refers to the learner's sense of control over their learning process; competence involves the feeling of being capable and effective in using the language; and relatedness relates to the desire to connect with others, including peers and speakers of the target language.

Building on these earlier theories, Zoltán Dörnyei proposed the **L2 Motivational Self System**, a modern framework that emphasizes the role of self-image and personal identity in language learning. This model consists of three core components: the **Ideal L2 Self**, the **Ought-to L2 Self**, and the **L2 Learning Experience**. The Ideal L2 Self represents the learner's vision of themselves as a proficient user of the target language in the future. This imagined self can be a powerful source of motivation, especially when it aligns with the learner's goals and aspirations. The Ought-to L2 Self, on the other hand, reflects the attributes a learner believes they should possess, often due to external expectations from family, teachers, or society. Finally, the L2 Learning Experience refers to the immediate learning environment, including the influence of teachers, classmates, learning materials, and classroom atmosphere. According to Dörnyei, motivation is most effective when learners have a vivid and emotionally engaging vision of their Ideal L2 Self, combined with positive learning experience that support their learning process.

FACTORS INFLUENCING MOTIVATION

Motivation in second language acquisition is shaped by a range of interrelated factors which can either enhance or hinder the drive of learners towards to succeed. One of the most significant influences is personal goals and aspirations. When learners

have clear objectives in language learning such as studying abroad, pursuing better job opportunities, or connecting with target language's speakers, - they are more likely to invest sustained effort in their language learning journey. Equally important is classroom environment together with teaching styles which can either stimulate or stifles motivation. A positive, supportive, and interactive classroom environment coupled with learner-centered teaching methods tend to increase students' motivation and engagement. Additionally, social and cultural factors play a key role as learners who are exposed to interested in the culture of target language often show greater enthusiasm in receiving language input. Family expectations, peer attributions and societal values surrounding the importance of English or another language can strongly affect motivation. Finally, feedback and perceived success are critical in maintaining motivation. Constructive feedback helps learners realize their progress and areas for improvement, while consistent success, no matter how small would boost learners confidence reinforcing a positive attitude towards language learning. Together, these factors mentioned above create a dynamic motivational framework that varies across individuals and learning contexts.

MOTIVATION ACROSS DIFFERENT STAGES OF LEARNING

Motivation in second language acquisition is not static, it often changes depending on learners' stage of proficiency. Beginner levels typically experience a surge of initial enthusiasm, driven by curiosity, novelty and immediate goals. At this level, motivation can be strong but fragile, easily discouraged by challenges such as pronunciation difficulties, fluency, or grammar complexity. In contrast, advanced learners may struggle with maintaining motivation for a long period of time, especially, when results seem less visible. This level requires deeper, more sustained form of motivation as learners must continue refining skills and mastering subtleties of language without quick gains seen at the beginning. One of the most challenging phases is when learners hit a **language plateau** a period which learners feel stagnant despite continued effort. Overcoming this language plateau requires strong intrinsic motivation with clear objectives and often shift in learning strategies. Language instructors and students alike must realize these motivational fluctuations and adjust support accordingly, ensuring that learners stay engaged and committed though the entire language learning journey.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, motivation plays a vital and multifaceted role in second language acquisition, influencing how learners begin, persist, and ultimately succeed in their language learning journey. As explored throughout this article, various factors—from personal goals and classroom environment to cultural influences and self-perception—can either enhance or hinder motivation. Given its central importance, it is essential for educators and learners alike to actively **foster and maintain motivation** at every stage

of the learning process. This includes creating supportive learning environments, setting realistic and meaningful goals, and addressing the changing nature of motivation over time. Integrating motivational strategies into language education not only improves learning outcomes but also helps learners develop a lasting, positive relationship with the target language. Ultimately, recognizing and nurturing motivation is key to unlocking a learner's full potential in acquiring a second language.

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