1 Motivation and good language learners

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It almost goes without saying that good language learners are motivated. Common sense and everyday experience suggest that the high achievers of this world have motivation, a word which derives from the Latin verb *movere* meaning to move. Thus, simply defined, we might say that motivation concerns what moves a person to make certain choices, to engage in action, and to persist in action. The need for personal motivation is a message that resonates across so many stories of major and minor human endeavor, whether in the single-minded dedication of an athlete pursuing an Olympic dream, the drive and ambition of a young executive aiming for the top of the corporate ladder, or the willpower and self-discipline of someone determined to lose weight or to give up smoking. Without motivation, success will be hard to come by, and the case of learning a second or foreign language is little different. Motivation is listed by Rubin (1975) among the three essential variables on which good language learning depends. As Corder (1967, p. 164) famously put it forty years ago, "Let us say that, *given motivation*, it is inevitable that a human being will learn a second language if he is exposed to the language data." Yet however commonsensical this general observation might be, the pursuit of its empirical verification has exercised language acquisition scholars for decades and generated an enormous amount of research.

The social-psychological perspective

Led by the pioneering work of Canadian social psychologists Gardner and Lambert (1972), research into motivation was for many years shaped by social-psychological perspectives on learner attitudes to target language cultures and people. Gardner and Lambert argued that language learning motivation was qualitatively different from other forms of learning motivation, since language learning entails much more than acquiring a body of knowledge and developing a set of skills. On top of this, the language learner must also be willing "to identify with members of another ethnolinguistic group and to take on very subtle aspects of their behavior, including their distinctive style of speech and

their language" (Gardner and Lambert, 1972, p. 135). Gardner and Lambert speculated that learners' underlying attitudes to the target language culture and people would have a significant influence on their motivation and thus their success in learning the language.

This speculation gave rise to the now classic distinction between *integrative* and *instrumental* orientations, the former reflecting a sincere and personal interest in the target language, people, and culture and the latter its practical value and advantages (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). A substantial body of largely correlational research was generated to explore the hypothesis that integratively motivated learners are likely to be successful language learners in the long run. While findings have been to some extent mixed (for a recent meta-analysis, see Masgoret and Gardner, 2003), there is little doubt that the concept of integrative motivation and the social-psychological angle of inquiry powerfully shaped the way language learner motivation was theorized and empirically explored until the early 1990s. So much so that Skehan (1989, p. 61) suggested that "almost all other writing on motivation therefore seems to be a commentary, in one way or another, on the agenda established by Gardner."

At the risk of over-simplifying the social-psychological legacy of research on language learning motivation, however, I think it is true to say that the angle of inquiry it promoted yielded few genuinely useful insights for teachers and learners. Despite evolving from a social-psychological model (Gardner and Lambert, 1972) to a socio-educational model of language learning (Gardner, 1988), Gardner's theory and the research it generated came under sharp criticism for failing to take adequate account of the classroom context of learner motivation (see in particular Crookes and Schmidt, 1991). At bottom, this failure may simply be a reflection of the rather different concerns of researchers and teachers (Ushioda, 1996). It is only within the last decade or so that we have witnessed more productive interaction between the interests of researchers and teachers. Crookes and Schmidt's (1991) seminal critique of the social-psychological tradition and their call for a more practitioner-validated classroom-based concept of motivation marked the beginning of an unprecedented wave of discussion among motivation scholars during the 1990s (for a review, see Dörnyei, 1998). This "motivational renaissance" (Gardner and Tremblay, 1994, p. 526) led to a broadening of the research agenda and a move towards what Dörnyei (2001a, pp. 103–105) has called more "education-friendly" approaches to language learner motivation which provide potentially much richer insights for teachers and learners.

Motivation from within

With the move towards more education-friendly and classroom-based approaches to the study of motivation, research attention since the 1990s has increasingly turned to cognitive theories of learner motivation, thus bringing language learner motivation research more in line with the cognitive revolution in mainstream motivational psychology. Cognitive theories focus on the patterns of thinking that shape motivated engagement in learning. These patterns of thinking include, for example, goal setting, mastery versus performance goal-orientation, self-perceptions of competence, self-efficacy beliefs, perceived locus of control, and causal attributions for success or failure (for a comprehensive overview, see Pintrich and Schunk, 2002). From a pedagogical perspective, a key message emanating from research on cognitive theories of motivation in education and in language learning is the vital importance of learners having their own motivation "from within" (Deci and Flaste, 1996, p. 10).

Generally speaking, the optimal kind of motivation from within is identified as *intrinsic motivation* – that is, doing something as an end in itself, for its own self-sustaining pleasurable rewards of enjoyment, interest, challenge, or skill and knowledge development. Intrinsic motivation is contrasted with *extrinsic motivation* – that is, doing something as a means to some separable outcome, such as gaining a qualification, getting a job, pleasing the teacher, or avoiding punishment (Ryan and Deci, 2000). There is a considerable body of research evidence to suggest that intrinsic motivation not only promotes spontaneous learning behavior and has a powerful self-sustaining dynamic but also leads to a qualitatively different and more effective kind of learning than extrinsic forms of motivation. This may be because the rewards of learning are inherent in the learning process itself, in the shape of feelings of personal satisfaction and enhanced personal competence and skill deriving from and sustaining engagement in learning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1978). Thus, intrinsically motivated learning is not simply "learning for the sake of learning" (though many teachers would undoubtedly value such learner behavior in itself); nor is it simply learning for fun and enjoyment (though many teachers and learners, especially within primary and secondary school contexts, might regard "motivating" as synonymous with "fun" as opposed to "boring"). Rather, intrinsically motivated learners are deeply concerned to learn things well, in a manner that is intrinsically satisfying and that arouses a sense of optimal challenge appropriate to their current level of skill and competence (Deci and Ryan, 1980). Compared to their extrinsically motivated counterparts, research suggests that such learners are likely to display much

higher levels of involvement in learning, engage in more efficient and creative thinking processes, use a wider range of problem-solving strategies, and interact with and retain material more effectively (Condry and Chambers, 1978; see also Amabile and Hennessy, 1992; Fransson, 1984).

In the language learner motivation field, there has been a tendency to conflate the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction with the integrative/instrumental distinction to some extent, since intrinsic motivation, like integrative motivation, is founded in deep-rooted personal interests and positive attitudes and feelings (for instance, Dickinson, 1995; Noels, 2001). However, as Gardner (1985) has made clear, both integrative and instrumental motivational orientations are defined with reference to ultimate purposes for learning a language (social-integrative or pragmatic purposes), and thus both constitute forms of extrinsic motivation since the language is learned as a means to an end. As Schmidt and Savage (1994) note, a language learner might have strong integrative motivation yet derive very little intrinsic pleasure from the learning process. This point is particularly pertinent to our discussion of good language learners' motivation, since it brings to our attention the positive value and effectiveness of some forms of extrinsic motivation. As noted earlier, after all, there is a wealth of research in the social-psychological tradition to indicate that learners with strong motivation, whether defined by integrative or instrumental goals, are likely to succeed in language learning. Thus, while its self-sustaining dynamic may make intrinsic motivation an optimal form of learning motivation, we should not lightly dismiss extrinsic motivation as inherently less effective and less desirable. In many educational contexts, certain types of extrinsic goal are indeed positively valued (for instance, examination success, academic, career, or life ambitions).

Rather, motivational factors intrinsic to the learning process (enjoyment, sense of challenge, skill development) and those extrinsic to the learning process (personal goals and aspirations) are best viewed as working in concert with one another in the good language learner (van Lier, 1996). At bottom, what seems crucially important is not whether these motivational factors are intrinsic or extrinsic to the learning process, but whether they are internalized and self-determined (emanating from within the learner), or externally imposed and regulated by others (teachers, peers, curricula, parents, educational, and societal expectations). The clear message is that externally regulated motivation (the traditional "carrot-and-stick" approach) can have short-term benefits only, and that our real aim as educators must be to foster learners' own motivation from within (Deci and Flaste, 1996).

The social context of motivation

Over the past decade or so there has been growing interest among motivation researchers in the socially situated context of motivation and in the significant role of social processes and influences in shaping individual motivation. This growth of interest in the social dimension of motivation is reflected in recent important volumes of papers on motivation research in education that address a range of situational factors, such as societal and cultural influences, curricular and institutional context, classroom environment, peer relations, teaching style, and methods, materials, or task design (for instance, McInerney and Van Etten, 2004; Volet and Järvelä, 2001). In the study of language learner motivation, the move towards more education-friendly approaches has similarly prompted an increased interest in the social learning environment, as reflected in current influential models of language learner motivation. For example, Dörnyei's (1994) framework of motivation integrates language-related and learner-internal factors with learning situation factors, including teacher socialization of motivation and classroom group processes. Similarly, in their comprehensive cognitive model of language learner motivation, Williams and Burden (1997) combine learner-internal factors with external factors such as interaction with significant others (parents, teachers, peers) and influences from the broader social context (for instance, cultural norms, societal expectations and attitudes).

Where discussion of the good language learner is concerned, the social context of motivation has some important implications. In an illuminating critique of good language learner research, Norton and Toohey (2001) discuss the limitations of a tradition of inquiry that has focused on the mental processes of internalizing language forms in interaction with available target language input, and on the influence of (good) language learner characteristics on these processes. They point out that the "situated experience" (p. 310) of learners has not been adequately taken into account in this research tradition, and argue the need for a dual focus on good language learners and on the social practices in the contexts in which they learn language. They make the case that the success of good language learners depends very much on the degree and quality of access to a variety of conversations in their communities, and not just on processes of internalizing linguistic forms and meanings. The extent to which the surrounding social practices facilitate or constrain learners' access to the linguistic resources of their communities will affect the quality and level of language learning success.

According to Norton and Toohey (2001), good language learners are those who find ways of exercising agency to negotiate entry into the

desired social networks. They illustrate this claim with two examples of Polish-speaking learners of English (an adult learner, Eva, and a kindergarten learner, Julie) both of whom succeed in commanding well-respected identities and valued social and intellectual resources for themselves, thus enhancing their opportunities to participate in the conversations around them. In Eva's case, although initially marginalized as an immigrant at her place of work, she achieves a more respected position among her co-workers and management when she brings her partner into the picture on social outings, as she becomes seen as someone in a desirable relationship with a partner who also provides transport for her colleagues in his car. In addition to these social resources, Eva is able to draw on intellectual resources and command respect for her knowledge of Italian and of European countries. In a similar vein but in the very different social context of a kindergarten community, five-year-old Julie comes to be regarded by her peers as a desirable playmate with access to valued information or "secrets," including knowledge of Polish, and with important grown-up and peer group allies, especially her cousin Agatha who is an experienced speaker of English and Polish.

Norton and Toohey's (2001) argument for a dual focus on good language learners and on the surrounding social practices is underpinned by a view of language learning as a struggle for identity, a view that is very much positioned within a poststructuralist critical perspective. At the heart of this critical perspective on language learning and use is recognition of inequitable power relations in language learners' struggle to participate in interactional settings in desired social, educational, or professional communities of practice. As Block (2002) wryly comments, for example, Gricean cooperative principles are often far from default conditions in interactional settings between native and non-native speakers. In relation to motivation in particular, Norton (2000, p. 10) has developed the concept of "investment," defined as the "socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language, and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practise it" (see also Norton, 1995). When learners invest in learning a new language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will enhance their cultural capital, their conception of themselves, and their desires for the future. A person's investment in a language may be mediated by other investments that may conflict with the desire to speak, such as fear of being marginalized as an immigrant, or resistance when one's professional status or cultural background is not valued or when access to desired symbolic and material resources is denied. For Norton and Toohey (2001), good language learners are people who exercise agency and succeed in setting up

counter-discourses in which their identities are respected and their resources valued, and who thus succeed in negotiating entry. Yet, as they comment, Eva and Julie are both fortunate in that the communities to which they desire access are eventually receptive to their contributions. An important critical insight highlighted by this poststructuralist perspective on motivation is that good language learning is never simply in the hands of the motivated learner, since much will depend on the surrounding social practices. Good language learning and motivation are in this sense socially constructed or constrained, rather than simply influenced, positively or negatively, by the social context.

One theoretical tradition in particular that can illuminate this socially constructed nature of motivation is Vygotskian sociocultural theory. Though sociocultural theory broadly informs Norton and Toohey's (2001) work on motivation, its potential richness as a conceptual framework for analyzing language learner motivation remains rather underdeveloped (Ushioda, 2007). This is despite its increasing influence in other major domains of language teaching research, such as task-based language learning (for instance, Swain, Brooks and Tocalli-Beller, 2002) and the literature on autonomy (for instance, Little, 1999). One reason why the influence of sociocultural theory has not firmly penetrated the language learning motivation field may be that the motivational dimension of Vygotsky's theory itself remains relatively under-theorized (Ushioda, 2007) and it is only fairly recently that it has begun to attract significant attention among motivation researchers in education (for instance, Hickey and Granade, 2004). Central to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of mind is the principle that higher-order cognitive functions are internalized from social interaction with more competent others (Vygotsky, 1978). Bronson (2000, p. 33) explains how this principle applies also to the socially constructed growth of motivation by highlighting the important distinction between the organismic impetus to learn and to regulate one's actions, and the socialization of motivation for culturally constructed goals and activities. This process of socialization takes place through the child's participation in activities in a particular sociocultural setting. Thinking, wanting and doing are shared and jointly constructed in the dialogic interactions between children (learners) and members of the surrounding culture or social learning environment. Gradually, children (good language learners) appropriate for themselves culturally valued patterns of planning, attending, thinking and remembering (Lantolf, 1994), and culturally valued goals and intentions (Ushioda, 2007). This Vygotskian perspective illuminates how motivation "from within" can be fostered through the formulation of shared intentions and purposes (rather than exclusively teacher-imposed goals). It also highlights the way in which motivation develops through social participation

and interaction. As Rueda and Moll (1994) explain, motivation is not located solely within the individual but is socially distributed, created within cultural systems of activities involving the mediation of others. Good language learners, including Norton and Toohey's (2001) Eva and Julie, know how to seek out and to exploit this social interdependence and the human need for relatedness or connectedness that is integral to internally driven motivation (Ryan, 1991).

Motivational self-regulation

Where the pursuit of any difficult and challenging personal goal is concerned, the long path towards success is never easy and is usually beset with obstacles of one kind or another. Motivation will suffer unless ways are found to regulate it. Aside from the inevitable detriments to motivation posed by institutionalized learning (for instance, coursework requirements, examination pressures, competing demands from other courses of study), steady increases in the cognitive burden of language learning may also have negative consequences. As language proficiency develops, the learning demands grow exponentially in terms of cognitive and linguistic complexity, and skill and activity range, while any pay-off for the learning effort expended in terms of increased mastery becomes less and less tangible. Sadly, research all too often points to a steady decline in levels of motivation, once the initial enthusiasm and novelty of learning a new language begin to wear off (for instance, Chambers, 1999; Little, Ridley and Ushioda, 2002; Williams, 2004; Williams, Burden and Lanvers, 2002). How many of us know people who eagerly take up a new language, only to drop out of evening classes after just a few weeks?

For motivation to be sustained through the vicissitudes of the learning process, it seems clear that learners need to develop certain skills and strategies to keep themselves on track. These might include setting themselves concrete short-term targets, engaging in positive self-talk, motivating themselves with incentives and self-rewards, or organizing their time effectively to cope with multiple tasks and demands. Such strategies are variously discussed in terms of self-motivating strategies (Dörnyei, 2001b), affective learning strategies (Oxford, 1990), efficacy management (Wolters, 2003), effective motivational thinking (Ushioda, 1996), anxiety management (Horwitz, 2001), self-regulatory skills (Dörnyei and Ottó, 1998), and motivational self-regulation (Ushioda, 2003, 2007). Good language learners, it seems, develop strategies for "getting your motivation on line again," as expressed by one successful and motivated language learner (Ushioda, 2001, p. 117). This might entail, for

example, engaging in an intrinsically motivating activity, or "rediscovering your enjoyment as it were by doing something you know you like doing" (p. 117).

Unfortunately, research on how language learners might be brought to think positively and develop skills in motivational self-regulation is still scarce. In keeping with much of the literature on learning strategies, Dörnyei (2001b) stresses the importance of raising learners' awareness of self-motivating strategies through discussion and sharing of experiences. Ushioda (1996, 2003) emphasizes the role of teacher feedback in promoting positive and constructive thinking. According to McCombs (1994), our capacity for motivational self-regulation is a function of the degree to which we are aware of ourselves as agents in the construction of the thoughts, beliefs, goals, and expectations that shape our motivation. As McCombs argues, without an understanding of our role as agents in formulating goals, self-perceptions, and motivation, the stage cannot be set for the emergence of self-regulatory processes – that is, recognition of our potential to have control over what we think, and thus control over our motivation. Failure to recognize the self as agent in controlling thought and thus motivation can lead learners to become trapped in negative patterns of thinking and self-perceptions, with detrimental consequences for their motivation. This latter phenomenon is well documented in the field of education, reflected in particular in the maladaptive motivational pattern of "learned helplessness" among learners who experience repeated poor performance and see little point in exerting further effort (Dweck, 1999; Peterson, Maier and Seligman, 1993).

Implications for the teaching/learning situation

When we turn our attention to what teachers and learners might do to achieve and maintain motivation, we find that it becomes impossible to consider pedagogical approaches to fostering motivation from within without considering approaches to fostering self-determination. A fundamental pedagogical principle in promoting learner-regulated motivation rather than teacher-regulated motivation is that learning needs to be driven by learners' own personal needs, goals, and interests. This entails involving learners in making informed choices and decisions about their learning and in setting their own goals and learning targets, and thus fostering feelings of personal responsibility (Ushioda, 1996). This intimate connection between self-determination and motivation is vividly captured in Dam's (1995) account of her original reasons for giving her reluctant language learners more autonomy in the classroom.

Thus, whereas motivation has traditionally been regarded as something that teachers "do" or "give" to learners through a variety of motivational tricks and strategies, current insights emphasize the importance of fostering learners' own motivation and sense of self-determination (for instance, Dickinson, 1995; Noels, 2001; Lamb, 2004). Yet, as Dam's (1995) full account of her classroom practice makes plain, the healthy growth of individual motivation depends very much on the quality and level of interpersonal support provided in the social learning environment.

In order to promote healthy interaction between social and individual processes of motivation, it seems clear that there must be close alignment between pedagogical goals and values, individual needs and interests, and peer-related interpersonal goals (Ushioda, 2003). As the literature on autonomy suggests, achieving such alignment entails involving learners in some of the decision-making processes that shape classroom learning. Important insights derive also from research on cooperative and collaborative language learning (for instance, Crandall, 1999; Dörnyei, 1997; Littlewood, 2002; Nunan, 1992). Incorporating classroom activities where learners work together in pairs or small groups to achieve common goals can help to foster cognitive and motivational interdependence among learners and a sense of shared responsibility. The powerful role of collaborative learning in mediating the growth of individual motivation is widely recognized in studies of child development (for instance, Bronson, 2000), theories of intrinsic motivation (Deci and Flaste, 1996; Ushioda, 1996), classroom studies (for instance, Good and Brophy, 1987), and research on peer tutoring in higher education (for instance, Falchikov, 2001).

Getting learners involved and motivated in learning is essential. For teachers and learners, however, the real challenge lies in finding ways of sustaining that motivation through the long and often arduous process of learning a language. This entails developing skills and strategies for regulating motivation. How can learners be brought to see themselves as agents of their own thinking and thus with the capacity to redirect their thinking in healthier ways? Once again, the social-interactive context of learning would seem to play a crucial role. As McCombs (1994) argues, by providing positive interpersonal support and appropriately structured feedback, teachers can prompt and scaffold learners' attempts to reflect constructively on their learning experience and to redirect their thinking in more positive ways. The teachers' task here is not so much to tell learners what *they* think, but to lead *learners* to reflect on and evaluate their own achievements and learning experience in a constructive manner (Ushioda, 1996). For example, faced with disappointment or frustration at their unsatisfactory performance in a task, learners might be prompted

to analyze the problems experienced and their underlying causes, and to identify positive steps they can take to address these areas. Recognizing that how they choose to think can affect how they feel is a vital step in the path towards motivational self-regulation. As Bruner (1996, p. 49) comments, once learners are brought to realize that they act not directly "on the world" but on beliefs they hold about the world, they can begin to "think about their thinking" and so take control of their learning.

Questions for further research

Despite the growing body of theorizing in the field, actual classroom-based studies of motivational events and processes and of good language learners in this situated framework remain surprisingly few in number. Undoubtedly, the key players who have potentially much to contribute here are teachers and learners themselves. Teachers are ideally positioned to undertake research on motivation in their own classrooms – research that is sensitive to local needs and conditions, that is shaped by clear pedagogical aims and principles, and that can contribute to teachers' own professional development as well as to professional knowledge at large. There is growing recognition of the value of practitioner research in language education, whether framed as action research (Edge, 2001; Wallace, 1998), exploratory practice (Allwright, 2003), or teachers' narrative inquiry (Johnson and Golombek, 2004). More experience-based insights from teachers would greatly enrich our understanding of language learner motivation, and contribute to bringing theory and practice into much closer interaction.

Above all, research insights from learners themselves in a variety of learning contexts are much needed to substantiate and inform our theorizing, particularly in relation to the socially situated growth and regulation of motivation. Norton and Toohey's (2001) work is an important contribution in this regard, but perhaps the most promising line of inquiry lies in enabling language learners' own voices and stories to take centre stage, either in person (for instance, Lim, 2002) or minimally mediated by the researcher (for instance, Lamb, 2005). Good language learners have much to teach us about motivation.

Conclusion

Until relatively recently, research interest has focused primarily on describing, measuring, and classifying language learner motivation (integrative, instrumental, intrinsic, extrinsic), and examining its relationship

with achievement or behavioral outcomes such as classroom participation or persistence in learning. For researchers, motivation is an interesting issue because it is a significant variable in theoretical models of language learning by those who already speak other languages and implicated in learning success.

For teachers, on the other hand, motivation is an issue because it is usually a problem, and the learners they have to deal with are not theoretical abstractions but real people in actual learning situations with complex individual histories and personalities and a variety of conflicting goals and motives. Thus, for teachers, the distilled research finding that positive attitudes and motivation contribute to successful learning yields little useful insight into their day-to-day problems of how to motivate little Samantha in Class 2B and keep her motivated.

Fundamentally, two key principles seem crucial to the maintenance of motivation: first, motivation must emanate from the learner, rather than be externally regulated by the teacher; second, learners must see themselves as agents of the processes that shape their motivation. After all, as long as motivation is externally regulated and controlled by the teacher, learners cannot be expected to develop skills in regulating their own motivation on which good language learning depends.

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