Language teachers and L2 learning motivation:
To what extent can teachers improve levels of motivation?

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What are the key factors that motivate someone to learn a foreign language?   To what extent can we, as teachers or language advisors, improve levels of motivation in our students?

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1 Introduction

What are the key factors that motivate someone to learn a second language? A compelling reason to learn, such as a desire to integrate into a community, or to achieve professional success, is a primary key factor. But, because desire itself is not sufficient to acquire an L2, learners must commit to language learning plans. Another key factor of L2 learning motivation is intrinsic interest, because although learners can commit to short term learning plans regardless of interest, learners who are interested in language activities are more likely to remain motivated. A third key factor of L2 learning motivation is the belief that one's effort is leading to improvement: learning a language is a long, challenging process, so recognizing one's success gives satisfaction to hard effort.

When teachers or language advisors are involved with a learner's language development, they have the potential to improve the learner's language learning motivation at all phases of the language learning process. However, because language learning success in the absence of a teacher depends on a learner's ability to motivate him or herself, successful learners are ones who are able to do this. Is there a link between language teachers and ongoing self-motivation? The link is not always clear, but language teachers can certainly familiarize students with self-regulating techniques. Furthermore, by teaching interesting and effective classes, language teachers may inspire learners to remain committed to language learning.

Section 2 of this paper will include an overview of three influential models of second or additional language learning motivation: Gardner's socio-educational model, Dornyei's L2 motivational self system, and Dornyei's process oriented model. Section 3 will elaborate upon the aforementioned factors which I believe are most essential to language learning motivation: strong orientation, intrinsic interest, and satisfaction with one's progress. Section 4 will address the question of the extent to which teachers can improve levels of student motivation, in terms of how teachers can influence students at every stage of language development.

2   Second and foreign (L2) language learning motivation models

There are several constructs by which to approach L2 learning motivation (Ellis 2008), but this section will focus on three. It begins with Gardner's socio-educational model, which established the **integrative** (learning for social or personal reasons) and **instrumental** (learning for practical reasons) dichotomy which is still integral to L2 learning motivation theory. The next subsection is an outline of Dornyei's L2 motivation self-system, which expands Gardner's idea of integrative motivation to account for EFL learners, who are not learning an L2 in order to integrate into a particular community (Ellis 2008). Finally, this section will contain an explanation of Dornyei's process oriented model, which uses the concept of time as a natural organizing concept to explain the various phases of language learning motivation (Dornyei 2000).

2.1   Gardner's socio-educational model

In 1972, Gardner and Lambert began to test the theory that motivation, to a greater degree than ability, explains why some people learn second or foreign languages better than others (Ushioda 2001). Integrative and instrumental orientation are factors in this research, but **integrative motivation** is considered the key factor leading to language achievement. Integrative motivation consists of two variables: **integrativeness,** or "a genuine interest in learning the second language in order to come closer to the other language community", and **attitudes towards the learning situation,** which refers to how a learner feels about the language course or teacher (Gardner 2001). Gardner considers instrumental motivation to be a supplementary factor, explaining why a learner may or may not be successful, in spite of high integrative motivation. Other factors explaining language achievement include motivational intensity and anxiety, which is a negative factor. Gardner's model sees language achievement as a function of integrative motivation, instrumental motivation, and anxiety.

The AMTB (Attitude/ Motivation Test Battery) was developed by Gardner and Pat Smythe as a means to assess major affective factors involved in language learning (Gardner 2001). The test consists of five categories of questions to assess the following: integrativeness, attitudes to the learning situation, motivation (intensity and desire), instrumentality, and language anxiety. An AMI (Attitude/Motivation Index) is calculated as

a function of the integrative motivation score plus an instrumental motivation score, minus a language anxiety score. Jacques (2001) attributes the longevity of the socio-educational model to the fact that research based on it can be quantified using the AMTB; however, Ushioda (2001) and Dornyei (2000) are critical of the pervasive use of research methods which quantify one's motivation at a single point in time.

2.1.1   Critiques of the socio-educational model

Gardner's socio-educational construct is a useful entry to L2 motivation theory, but one which has yielded much criticism (Ellis 2008). This paper will not focus on every critique, but one important point is that integrative orientation or motivation may not be an important motivating factor for EFL learners who have no contact with a target-language community, so its scope as a motivational construct seems to be highly limited (Dornyei 2010; Ellis 2008). Also, the socio-educational approach seems to neglect the classroom situation; this is the main point of Crookes and Schmidt's (1991, cited in MacIntyre 2002) influential "Motivation: Reopening the research agenda", in which they argue that students' affective influences or "reason for studying" are not as important to language teachers as whether or not the student willingly participates in language learning activities. A third critique comes from **attribution theory** research, which argues that while Gardner presents motivation as a precursor to linguistic achievement, linguistic achievement may actually be a precursor to motivation (Ellis 2008; Ushioda 2001). Finally, a very important critique is that the socio-educational model does not look at how student evaluation functions through time (Dornyei 2000; 2005). Language learning requires task-learning, or several processes over a significant period of time, so multiple different explanations of motivation are needed at different stages (Dornyei 2000).

2.2   L2 motivational self system

How do foreign language learners integrate into an L2 community? This question is important today, as English is in many ways a global language. English learners may see themselves as members of a non-localized worldwide community of English speakers of many cultural backgrounds, rather than as potential integrators into a particular community (Dornyei and Ushioda 2009). Dornyei's (2005; 2010) L2 motivational self system uses the psychological construct of **possible selves** to explain how foreign language learners can imagine themselves as integrated participants in the target L2 community. The possible

selves construct consists of **the ideal self**, or what one hopes to become, and the **ought-to self**, or what one feels is their duty to become.   The L2 motivational self system builds on Gardner's idea of instrumental motivation, as Dornyei explains that the *ideal self construct* parallels one's *positive affect for the L2 community*, a key component of instrumental motivation.   Just as one hopes to come closer to a target language community, one hopes to diminish the distance between one's actual and possible self (Dornyei and Ushioda 2009).

The L2 motivational self-system includes instrumental as well as integrative orientation.   Dornyei and Shoaib (2005) propose that instrumentality may be internalized and become part of one's ideal self.   Also, there are different kinds of instrumental orientation which may be internalized.   A Japanese study by Taguchi et at (2009, cited in Dornyei 2010) shows that a certain type of aspect of instrumental orientation, the **promotion** aspect (what one hopes to accomplish with one's language skills) tends to correlate with one's ideal self, while the ought-to self tends to correlate to a **prevention** aspect (what one hopes to avoid).   The L2 motivational self-system acknowledges the internalization of instrumental orientation, which explains how foreign language learners can be very motivated to learn an L2 for instrumental purposes.

2.3   The process oriented model

Dornyei's process oriented model of L2 learning motivation builds on psychologist Heinz Henckhausen's (1991, cited in Dornyei 2000) argument that motivation can be understood best when organized into 'natural' phases: language achievement is a very long project, requiring many learning cycles, consisting of many tasks through many years, so time is a natural organizing concept for L2 learning motivation.   Dornyei's process oriented model of language learning motivation (see figure 2.1) illustrates how learners are motivated at three main stages of their development: the preactional (choice) stage, the actional (executive) stage, and the postactional (motivational retrospection) stage.

2.3.1   The preactional stage

The preactional stage may be divided into three parts: **goal setting, intention formation,** and the **initiation of intention enactment** (Dornyei 2000).   These subphases may occur in quick succession, but sometimes there is a significant amount of time between a person's wish to learn a language, and the actual enactment of this wish.   Antecedents of the

goal setting stage involves an individual's reasons for language learning, such as integrative feelings, an instrumental goal, or some combination of both (Dornyei 2000). In order for these antecedents to become part of the language learning process, they must be formed into goals, and then an intention. An intention differs from a goal, in that the former requires commitment and responsibility, while the latter may be a future aspiration without an actual commitment (Dornyei 2000). The preactional stage is finalized when an intention leads to an action plan, which includes subtasks and time frames. Therefore, opportunities, as well as hopes and desires, are key to the preactional stage.

2.3.2   The actional stage

During the actional stage, external factors, such as interesting classes or instrumental rewards, are likely to be important motivational factors (Ellis 2008). Learners who have strong self-regulatory strategies will be more likely to withstand the likely distractions which challenge one's initial motivation during individual study (Dornyei 2007). The actional stage includes **subtask generation and implementation**, an ongoing **appraisal process** of one's progress, and the application of **action control** mechanisms, or self-regulatory techniques by which the learner can keep him or herself committed to a course of action (Dornyei 2000). By means of the appraisal process and action control mechanisms, Dornyei explains that the learner can determine whether or not the action is leading to a positive **actional outcome** (527). This way, the learner can determine if and when the L2 learning action has been successful, or if it should be terminated.

2.3.4   The postactional stage

The postactional stage begins with one **forming causal attributions** about the actional phase, which may have ended successfully, with the attainment of a goal, or have been terminated. Next, one can evaluate their **internal standards and strategies**, and use their experience to judge how to continue, or improve upon, their language learning success. The final step in any language learning process is to **dismiss intentions** associated with the completed process, and to possibly move into a new preactional stage (Dornyei 2000).

Preactional stage/ Choice motivation	Actional stage/ Executive motivation	Postactional stage/ Motivational retrospection
Motivational functions: 1. Setting goals 2. Forming intentions 3. Launching action *Main motivational influences:* -Various goal properties (e.g. relevance, specificity and proximity) -Values associated with the learning process itself, as well as with its outcomes and consequences -Expectancy of success and perceived coping potential -Learner beliefs and strategies -Environmental support or hindrance	*Motivational functions:* 1. Generating and carrying out subtasks 2. Ongoing appraisal (of one's performance) 3. Action control (self-regulation) *Main motivational influences:* -Quality of the learning experience (pleasantness, need significance, coping potential, self and social image) -Sense of autonomy -Teachers' and parents' influence -Classroom reward and goal structure (e.g., competitive or cooperative) -Influence of the learner group -Knowledge and use of self-regulatory strategies (e.g. goal setting, learning and self-motivating strategies)	*Motivational functions:* 1. Forming causal attributions 2. Elaborating standards and strategies 3. Dismissing intention and further planning *Main motivational influences:* -Atributional factors (e.g., attributional styles and biases) -Self-concept beliefs (e.g., self-confidence and self-worth) -Received feedback, praise, grades

A process model of learning motivation in the L2 classroom (Dornyei 2001, in Dornyei 2005)

3   Key motivational factors

From examining L2 motivation theory, and from my own observations as a teacher and a learner of foreign languages, three main motivational factors emerge: learners require compelling orientation, or reasons, to commit to language learning goals, learners who take an intrinsic interest or enjoyment will be motivated to stay with the project, and learners who feel that their effort is leading to satisfactory progress will be motivated to continue learning.

3.1   Compelling orientation

Motivation begins with a reason for doing something, so Gardner's idea of integrative motivation continues to be an entry into understanding L2 motivation, although people's orientations may be more diverse or complex than the integrative-instrumental dichotomy (Ellis 2008).   I study Korean language because I live in Korea, and wish to

participate more fully in daily life, although long term integration is not my goal.   Real-life orientation, instrumental and integrative, explains why one voluntarily studies languages, and an individual's life circumstances explains how and when one begins, continues, or finishes studying a language.   Dornyei and Shoaib's (2005: 36) qualitative study of motivational change over time identifies a series of 'motivational transformational episodes' in a learner's life, such as entering or leaving school, changing a job, spending time in an L2 environment, or romantic relationships with L2 speakers: these events determine periods of renewed or abandoned language learning activity.   Furthermore, the learner's context determines which language will be worth pursuing; for example, I work as an English teacher in Korea because of the demand for English language teaching.   However, orientation does not explain why some people with similar orientations commit to language learning courses, and some drop out (Dornyei 2000).   Orientation is a key component of L2 learning motivation, but other factors are explain why not all people maintain their initial motivation.

3.2   Intrinsic interest in learning activities

People who commit to language learning plans generally enjoy the language learning process.   The concepts of integrative orientation and a strong L2 self are compelling because they refer to motivated individuals who voluntarily learn a language to become closer to a target language community, or to their ideal self (Dornyei 2010; Gardner 2001). Motivated learners are, by definition, those who do not require external pressure to engage in learning activities. A study by Ushioda (2001) finds that motivated language students often engage in personally meaningful target language activity outside of classroom activities, which may not be personally meaningful.   But, research shows that teachers have the ability to help 'unmotivated' students become interested in classroom activities (Brown 2007).   Crookes and Schmidt's (1991, cited in Robinson 2002) influential "Motivation: Reopening the research agenda" examines how teachers can encourage students to willingly participate in learning activities.   Dornyei (2007) also offers an array of suggestions for teachers who wish to elicit intrinsic motivation in their classes.   Teachers who rely too heavily on extrinsic rewards, such as candy, find that student efforts may become dependent on these rewards (Brown 2007).

3.4 Effort leading to perceived success

The need for achievement and the development of self-confidence are important components of L2 motivation (Dornyei and Csizer 1998). These qualities are important for task based motivation as well: the expectancy of success encourages learners at the beginning of the task process (Dornyei 2007), and feedback showing that one is succeeding is a motivating influence during a learning task (Julkunen 2001). Likewise, retrospective self-evaluation, when seen as a function of effort causing improvement, is a motivating factor for further language learning (Dornyei 2007). Past success may lead students to expect future success, and thus increase motivation. A study by Ushioda (2001) found that Irish students studying French at a university were strongly motivated by past successes in learning French, which they attributed to effort and interest. Ushioda proposes that given Dornyei's point that young students are unlikely to have instrumental language learning goals, it may be that success in school language classes motivates students to pursue goals which require L2 proficiency (1996; in Ushioda 2001). If teachers can help students subjectively appraise their language learning progress in terms of effort made, as Dornyei (2007) suggests they can, then more students may succeed in jobs requiring L2 proficiency.

4 How can teachers improve levels of motivation?

Can teachers give students a reason to study language beyond the classroom door? Dornyei (2007: 719) argues that teachers can 'inspire a lifelong commitment to the subject matter' through a motivating teaching style. Motivating classes seems to be an essential part of L2 learning class management. There are techniques which allow teachers to establish and maintain intrinsic motivation in language activities. Teachers also can, to some extent, encourage students to subjectively assess their language results in positive ways. However, although teachers can inspire positive feelings towards a language, or remind students of the instrumental need to study a language, they do not determine for the student the reasons why (social reasons, for example) pursuing achievement in a particular language will, or will not be important. Furthermore, teachers cannot determine whether or not students will adopt positive self-motivating techniques. But, because the ability to motivate one's self is necessary for long-term language achievement, teachers should try and develop these techniques in students.

4.1   Establishing a motivating class environment

Teachers should establish a motivating class environment from the outset of the course.   Crookes and Schmidt (1991, cited in Jacques 2001) offer four main motivational factors that are important when generating student interest in the classroom: interest (intrinsic motivation), relevance (connected to the students' goals, needs, and values), expectancy (the students' expectation of success, realistic beliefs), and satisfaction (an appropriate combination of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards).   In some classrooms, teachers may enhance interest and relevance by reminding students of their established language learning goals (Dornyei 2007).   As a public middle school English teacher in Korea, I find that generating interest and relevance in this way can be challenging: students are required to attend English class, and may not see its relevance to their lives.   Dornyei and Csizer (1998) recommend teachers to personalize the learning context by developing material aimed at the interests of particular students.   To generate interest and relevance, I supplement textbook material with material that is especially appealing to young Korean adolescents. In addition, I present myself as a relatable figure, in order to familiarize learners with the target language culture, to make English learning more relevant.

4.2   Fostering motivating group dynamics

At the head of a motivating classroom should be an active teacher-facilitator who allows students an optimal degree of autonomy: the teacher should not be a dictatorial figure, but should be strong enough to establish and maintain positive **group norms**, and to assign **group roles** (Dornyei 2007).   *Group norms* refers to the unspoken rules of social interaction within a social context, such as a classroom.   Group norms can be positive and helpful, or negative and detrimental to a motivational classroom environment: for example, when high achieving students are shunned.   Dornyei (2007) states that if the norms are successfully established from the beginning, the class will appreciate their benefit and voluntarily protect them.   *Group norms* refers to assigning roles (for example, writer, helper, 'quiet captain') to individual students, in order to allow equal participation in co-operative learning activities. A Finnish study (Julkunen 1989, 1990, cited in Julkunen 2001) found that co-operative style learning tasks resulted in high motivational scores in pre-task and post-task questionnaires, in students of all ability levels.   As a teacher, I have observed that assigning student roles allows students to become quickly involved in learning tasks, with less confusion than in more laissez-faire groupings.

4.3   Planning appropriately motivational classes

Different classes require different motivational techniques.   I attend a Korean language class with other intrinsically motivated adults who desire to participate more fully in Korean culture, so we do not require much extrinsic motivation.   Class members appreciate the class as a safe environment to practice Korean with a helpful teacher.   Several items listed in Dornyei and Csizer's (1998) empirical study, "Ten commandments for motivating language learners", can be observed as factors which make our classes enjoyable and effective: good teacher role model (1), relaxed classroom atmosphere (2), good teacher-learner relationship (4), increased learner linguistic self-confidence (5), interesting classes (6), personalized content (8), and familiarization with cultural knowledge (10).

In the classes I teach, which are involuntarily attended by Korean public middle school students, active teacher-led group motivation is important; it is not enough to simply provide students with speaking opportunities.   Also, the class is too large to accommodate extensive conversation practice.   Instead, co-operative learning techniques, such as assigning roles to individual students within groups, keeps students on task and participating equally within the class.   Competitiveness can be a fun way to motivate classes of young learners, so establishing a points system to reward groups who participate and behave well contributes to the motivating factor of satisfaction, and elicits positive learning behaviour. Many learning activities also take on the form of competitive games; language games are a particularly engaging type of learning task as they involve uncertainty and unpredictability, but not so much as to discourage the learner (Maehr 1984, cited in Julkunen 2001).   Young students seem to enjoy competitive games, so a balance between cooperativeness and enjoyable competitiveness can make the language classroom a relaxing, pleasant and motivating environment.

4.4   Planning tasks that encourage 'flow'

Language learning is a process of many tasks; the language class itself is a task in the language learning process.   Tasks should be presented in a way that makes them interesting and relevant, just as the class itself should be presented as interesting and relevant (Dornyei and Csizer 1998).   Research indicates that the characteristics of motivational learning tasks parallel those of a motivational class.   Julkunen (2001) cites Keller's (1983, 1984) list of determinants which affect how motivated a student will be to perform a task: interest,

relevance, expectancy of success, and satisfaction with outcomes. Egbert (2003, cited in Ellis 2008) and Csikszentmihalyi (1991, cited in Julkunen 2001) also identify certain elements of enjoyable classroom tasks. Common elements include: opportunities for intense concentration, immediate feedback, a lack of self-consciousness, and the perception that time is passing quickly. Such tasks, according to qualitative and quantitative studies conducted by Egbert, can lead to 'flow', or the experience of being intensely absorbed in the task, resulting in improved task performance (Egbert 2003, cited in Ellis 2008). Different tasks are absorbing for different groups of students. In classes I attend, sharing news and personal stories in L2 allows students to learn many relevant new words without boredom or anxiety. In classes I teach, games tend to produce the most 'flow'.

4.5   Familiarizing students with self-motivating strategies

Learning foreign languages, especially English, is increasingly important in society, so teachers who can develop self-motivating language learners do students a great service. Dornyei (2001, cited in Dornyei 2007) divided self-motivating strategies into five main categories:

Commitment control strategies, to help preserve or increase students' original goals. Teachers may remind students of the possible outcomes, positive or negative, of the language learning action.

Metacognitive control strategies for managing concentration and reducing procrastination. Teachers should try and teach effective study habits.

Satiation control strategies for avoiding boredom. Teachers can, for example, think of interesting subjects or suggest interesting activities for self-study.

Environmental control strategies such as maintaining a quiet, distraction free study area, or asking for help.

Ushioda (2001) finds that motivated students have well-established self-motivating strategies as part of a habitual study practice. It is not apparent that these students learned their self-motivating strategies from language teachers in particular; rather, they probably applied effective study habits, acquired from teachers and parents, to a subject that they experienced success in and enjoyed. However, language teachers should remind students of the importance of applying self-motivating strategies to language learning, and should explicitly instruct students in the strategies outlined by Dornyei.

4.5   Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation

Attribution theory proposes that motivated learners engage in positive self-evaluation (Ellis 2008: 685).   For example, Ushioda's (2001) study of voluntary language students at a university found that these motivated learners engaged in effective motivational thinking: they were able to attribute positive L2 outcomes to their own abilities and effort, to attribute negative outcomes to temporary shortcomings (Ushioda 2001).   Dornyei (2007) acknowledges that teachers should encourage positive retrospective self-evaluation. Positive motivational feedback offers satisfaction to the student, promotes a positive self image, and helps the student to identify areas which need improvement (Dornyei 2007).   However, course feedback offers a particular challenge to many language teachers; formal grades sometimes do not account for the effort or improvement a student has made, so they can be discouraging.

When teachers are required to assign grades to students, teachers should emphasize from the beginning of the course the importance of effort upon outcome.   In these situations, it may be important for teachers to present and review material in a way which helps students to perform well on tests, and to promote the idea that increased effort will improve test results. Unfortunately, a problem with 'teaching to the test' is that it may place the achievement of high grades above the task of actually learning the material (730).   If teachers can make the language class an interesting environment, in spite of the shadow of 'the test', then perhaps they can motivate students to pursue language studies beyond the constricting school environment.   Ushioda's (2001) study finds that many motivated learners seek personally interesting target language activity outside the limits of formal study. Language learning is increasingly important in today's world, so teachers should encourage students to view language learning success as something that goes beyond school examinations.

5   Conclusion

People are motivated to learn languages for a variety of reasons, and successful learners are able to stay motivated through the long and difficult process of language acquisition.   Although the link is not clear between language teaching and long term motivation, there seems to be links between language learning enjoyment, success, and long-term learning motivation (Nikolov 2001).   By planning enjoyable classes, language teachers may be able to inspire long-term learning motivation in students.   Research shows that there

are many techniques teachers can use to prepare motivational classes, so teachers should familiarize themselves with a variety of techniques.   Not every technique will work with every class, or with every teacher.

   In today's world, foreign language ability is increasingly important, so many people will feel motivated to learn languages for professional reasons.   People who enjoy the process of learning, and who can appreciate their successful efforts, will be most likely to be successful in the increasingly common goal of language acquisition

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