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Motivation for Second Language Learning with Reference to Lightbown and Spada's (2001) Study: A Critical Review

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the motivation for second language learning with reference to Lightbown and Spada's (2001) study. Lightbown and Spada's (2011) study first drew attention to a multitude of features associated with being an effective learner. In turn, the study assessed the available literature in such a way as to confirm or reject, by means of empirical evidence and clear reasoning, each of the elements on their list. Noteworthy, it is possible to divide the features that the authors highlighted into the following primary factors: firstly, motivation; secondly, personality; thirdly, aptitude; fourthly, intelligence; and finally, learner characteristics. In view of these, it is the aim of the present article to examine the motivation that underpins an individual's decision to learn a second language (L2). Both the literature and the existing theoretical frameworks indicate that a clear correlation exists between motivational types, on the one hand, and motivational factors, on the other. Motivation is often associated with dropping eventually when it is present in the form of sustained motivation (i.e., motivation that persists only for the length of the course), intrinsic motivation, or falling self-efficacy perceptions, while contrastingly, notable achievements typically arise from integrative motivation. The literature is explicit regarding the fact that motivation must be accompanied by a learner's active engagement, and in the context of L2 acquisition, the variables that affect the learning process-especially those which operate by means of impacting self-motivation-must be acknowledged (e.g., cross-cultural issues, the classroom's social environment). Noteworthy, while strategic approaches can be capitalised on by educators to promote learning motivation, punishments and excessive corrective measures adversely affect motivational levels. Context-specific issues should always be borne in mind throughout the process of L2 teaching and learning within the classroom.

Keywords: *Motivation, Second Language Learning, ESL, Self-Efficacy Perceptions, Lightbown & Spada*

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1. Introduction

In their research, Lightbown and Spada (2001) identified the ten characteristics of a good learner. Following this, the authors evaluated the research evidence as a way to establish support for the contentions in their statements, or if appropriate, to derive an empirical basis on which to reject them. The listed characteristics can be categorised into the five main factors of motivation, personality, aptitude, intelligence, and learner characteristics. In view of these considerations, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the motivation for second language learning with reference to Lightbown and Spada's (2001) study.

2. What Lightbown and Spada (2001) Say about Motivation

In two sections of their article, Lightbown and Spada (2001) discuss motivation by way of attitudes and motivation in the classroom setting. According to the authors, vague definitions and methodological inadequacies affect the quality of research evidence, and as a result of this, the causal relationship between motivation and learning is relatively unclear. Nevertheless, it is possible to state that the communicative needs of a learner to use the second language (L2) in a wide range of situations, as well as their attitudes towards the L2 community, determine the motivation. Furthermore, cultural aspects of the L2 may lead to the acceptance or rejection of the language. It is also well documented that enforced motivation by



external pressure will diminish internal motivation and the L2 learner's general attitude towards language learning. For example, parents who force their children to achieve the top grades in their linguistic studies can affect the inherent motivation of the student and even destroy it, despite the student's own desire to achieve the highest marks. In a classroom context, motivation is often highest when students enjoy what is taught. As such, certain pedagogical practices can increase motivation. Therefore, the aim of this essay is to re-evaluate the contentions of Lightbown and Spada (2001) regarding motivation as a factor of L2 learning in light of the empirical literature.

3. How Motivation Affects Second Language Learning

Motivation can affect L2 learning through its dimensions and factors, relationship of these dimensions and factors with learning, and the effect of the motivational strategies used by teachers through these factors in the classrooms. Research evidence for each of these three perspectives is given below.

3.1 Dimensions and Factors of Motivation

Various theories and frameworks deal with the dimensions and factors of motivation to explain its effect on L2 learning. As early as 1956, Nida differentiated the motivation for L2 learning into four types: getting a good grade, needing to pass certain examinations, career prospects, and curiosity about the outside world. Without these motivations, learners are unlikely to enjoy L2 learning.

In a more recent study, Lepp-Kaethler and Dörnyei (2013) pointed out that motivation indicates why a person wants to do something, determines whether they will pursue it diligently, and informs how long it is sustained. In L2 learning, there should be a strong reason or need for studying the L2. This acts as the motivation to start the learning process. Once the learning process starts, sustained motivation is necessary to continue studying the L2 as long as required.

Application of the complex dynamic systems concept in L2 learning was discussed by Dörnyei, MacIntyre, and Henry (2015). The concept was also used by Wanige, Dörnyei, and De Bot (2014) to show that motivation changes over time at individual levels with predictable and stable phases even during the class time of 50 minutes, inseparable from the learning context of the learner. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that the engagement of

the student for the subject matter and initial level of motivation influences the overall stable level of motivation.

Many effective motivation types in the language learning process were identified in an additional EFL programme by Galishnikova (2014). The motivational types included were engagement activity, immersion learning through the verbal environment, influence force, and professional aspiration.

In a Malaysian context, with students learning Mandarin as the L2, Tan, Ismail, and Ooi (2016) identified the following five motivational factors: firstly, motivation due to requirement; secondly, motivation provided by better understanding and interaction; thirdly, motivation arising from pleasure and interest, as well as the encouragement to learn more; fourthly, motivation for the need for future career development; and finally, motivation from the way leisure and entertainment are integrated into the learning activity. Above all else, the researchers found that the requirement motivational factor was the most influential.

3.1.1 Integrative Motivation vs. Instrumental Motivation

Gardner and Lambert (1972) proposed two types of motivation for language learning: integrative and instrumental. In the case of integrative motivation, L2 learners want to understand more about the language, know and interact with the L2 culture, and engage with individuals embedded within L2 communities. On the other hand, in the case of instrumental motivation, learners want to learn a language merely for a practical reason (e.g., career advancement).

3.1.2 Extrinsic Motivation vs. Intrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation occurs when a language is learned due to an external need (e.g., obtaining some advantage or mitigating certain negative effects). By contrast, intrinsic motivation arises from the pleasure of learning the language (Dörnyei, 1994).

3.2 The Relationship between Motivational Factors and Learning

Masgoret and Gardner (2003) observed a strong relationship between motivational factors and learning achievements. In particular, it is notable that this relationship was higher than other correlations with achievement. In his paper, Gardner (2007) recognised L2 learning motivation in classrooms. The researcher

considered these to be associated with four stages of acquisition (namely- elemental, conscious expression, consolidation, and automaticity and thought), with each acting in different ways in the following distinctive contexts: the cultural and the educational. Attitude towards the learning situation and integrativeness are the influential factors of these stages. Furthermore, the intensity of the learning motivation rather than the type of learning motivation was found to be more important. Integrative motivation, through the inclusion of openness to cultural identification as its component, was most often associated with the highest level of achievement (automaticity and thought).

Using a longitudinal mixed methods approach, Busse and Walter (2013) studied the time- and context-sensitive nature of the motivational attributes of students learning German in the UK. Although the students all had a desire to achieve proficiency in German, a gradual decline in their self-efficacy beliefs and intrinsic motivation was noted along with a corresponding gradual decline in their effort to engage with learning the language during the course of the year. This is why it has often been suggested that sustained motivation is required.

3.2.1 Motivation Self-identities

One of the tenets of identity-based motivation theory (IBM) is that motivation in the context of language learning often arises from the perceptions every L2 learner has about their future language selves. According to Dörnyei and Chan (2013), the way in which these perceptions about future language selves develop is critical, and it is often intimately bound to a wide-ranging imagery capacity (including visual and auditory elements). Given that future self-identities influence motivation, it is reasonable to state that the imagery capacity is linked to motivation in an indirect way. However, the illogicality of this correlation is a possibility, and so the possibility should be borne in mind that the conclusions are incorrect.

In the Taiwan-based study conducted by Huang, Hsu, and Chen (2015), the researchers demonstrated that L2 learners displayed distinctive motivation characteristics, each associated with self-identities informed by the surrounding social and cultural landscape. Regarding the learning process for several foreign languages, the researchers identified the impact of local contexts and cross-cultural issues. These findings were consistent with

the study conducted by Kormos and Csizer (2014), who found that the independent learning behaviour of Hungarian learners was affected by motivational variables, also being mediated by self-regulatory approaches. Joe, Hiver, and Al-Hoorie's (2017) recent study conducted in Korea also found that the social aspects of the classroom environment were statistically significant predictors of fundamental psychological needs, which resulted in the self-determined motivation of the students. As a consequence, L2 learners were more willing to communicate and, in this way, achieve highly.

In a vocabulary learning Chinese EFL context, Zhang, Lin, Zhang, and Choi (2017) found that learning strategies partially mediated the relationship between motivation and vocabulary learning. However, it was found that only intrinsic motivation was significant both directly and indirectly. In the case of extrinsic motivation, the indirect effect was found to be significant.

3.3 Teachers' Motivational Strategies

In applying motivational factors and dimensions to classroom contexts, the role of teachers is important. Teachers can use a variety of motivational strategies to promote motivated language learning in classrooms, and this can even extend to the context outside classrooms. The literature demonstrates that several factors affect L2 learning motivation, including metacognition, self-efficacy, self-identity, vision, and self-confidence of the learners. Based on a small sample of interviews, Mezei (2014) observed that the motivational strategies and self-related concepts of both students and teachers can predict the motivation of students to learn. Furthermore, motivational teaching strategies were found to influence motivation for learning, L2 acquisition via self-regulation, and the ideal L2 self. The findings indicated that teachers' strategies to motivate learners should target the ideal L2 self and instrumental orientation, two aspects of student self-regulation, which are motivation for participating and control. Thus, intricate relationships exist between motivational self-related factors.

The positive effect of the deliberate implementation of pedagogical strategies to improve learners' motivation was demonstrated by Moskovsky, Alrabai, Paolini, and Ratcheva (2013) in a quasi-experimental study in a Saudi EFL context, even after controlling for pre-treatment



effects. The results were consistent with those published by Wilson and Phakiti (2016) in a tertiary ESL context in Australia. In addition, the work of Rahimi and Karkami (2015) in an EFL context demonstrated that classroom discipline affected motivation. Punitive disciplinary strategies negatively affected student motivation in classrooms.

In a review study, Al Kaboody (2013) emphasised the responsibility that teachers have to adopt appropriate strategies to ensure that their students maintain a high level of motivation. However, Proctor, Daley, Louick, Leider, and Gardner (2014) did not observe any relationship between intrinsic or extrinsic motivation and reading comprehension among students with disabilities. In the study conducted by Ting and Lynch (2016), the levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, goal orientation, and relationships with academic achievements in a basic class with extrinsic and an advanced class with both extrinsic and intrinsic motivational goal orientation were observed.

According to the results of a Columbian study conducted by Muñoz and Ramirez (2015), the capability of teachers to promote motivation depends on relatedness and their recognition of its potential benefits. However, teaching practices did not prove the existence of these beliefs among the teachers themselves. Meaningful teacher-student relationships were identified as the most important factor in promoting autonomy and competence towards achieving high levels of student motivation.

In his work on the aptitude of native English speakers to learn Chinese, Winke (2013) noted that the use of strategy and effective motivational approaches affected aptitude both directly and indirectly, with similar effects of aptitude, strategy use, and motivation on learning. Only the levels of predictive ability regarding the individual skills of reading, listening, and speaking were different for the three variables.

4. Conclusion

As evidenced by the literature and, in particular, by the use of diverse theories, there is a definite relationship between the types and factors of motivation. Sustained motivation through the course duration, intrinsic motivation, and decreasing self-efficacy beliefs may decrease motivation over time, while integrative motivation is commonly associated with achievement. Ultimately, motivation must be supported with the L2 learner's effort to ensure

achievement, and the fact should not be overlooked that cross-cultural variables and classroom social climate impact self-motivation when learning the language of another culture. Deliberate strategies to promote the motivation of students can be used by teachers. However, punitive disciplinary measures in the classroom may reduce motivation. Nevertheless, context plays a significant role in all these aspects.

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