

Extending Language Motivation Research and Pushing it Forward

Review of *Contemporary Language Motivation Theory*:

***60 Years since Gardner and Lambert (1959)*,**

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Ever since Gardner and Lambert's (1959) seminal article on motivation in second language (L2) acquisition, ushering social psychological approach into L2 acquisition research, numerous studies have been inspired to delve into how social and contextual factors are related to motivation for L2 acquisition. This strand of research is still vibrant inasmuch as the learning contexts keep changing (e.g., increasingly frequent language contact, migration, and globalization) and the research methods are constantly being renewed. The volume under review is not only intended to celebrate the 60th anniversary of motivation research in L2 acquisition launched by Gardner, but also to extend his ideas into new emerging research territory. When reading the volume, we clearly sensed how his work is still advancing, and found "dozens of new research ideas waiting to be explored" (p. 3).

The volume consists of 14 chapters categorized under four titles, Second Language Development/Applied Linguistics, Social Psychology/Sociology, Historical/Methodological Issues, and Discussants. In the following sections, we will briefly summarize the gist of each part (in one paragraph), and present our thoughts on one or two topics discussed in these parts.

Motivations and Emotions

The first four chapters compose Part 1, illustrating how motivations/emotions are tied to language learning in different contexts. Tammy Gregersen and her colleagues systematically demonstrate how each major component of Gardner's model, integrativeness, attitudes towards the learning situation, and motivation, to some extent overlaps with PERMA, a framework of well-being in positive psychology, encompassing positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. Mercè Bernaus sketches out an overview on how teachers' and learners' motivation and attitudes play a crucial role in learners' academic success or failure in multilingual classrooms. It is indicated throughout her chapter that a positive multilingual classroom environment where learners' sense of identity and their whole personality are respected will be favorable for their development. In an attempt to examine how Gardner's socio-educational model is supported by positive psychology, Peter D. MacIntyre and his colleagues demonstrate that positive emotions, compared with negative ones, show a stronger association with motivated learners. The authors therefore suggest teachers foster positive classroom emotions to facilitate positive attitude towards language learning. James P. Lantolf and Merrill Swain, drawing attention to the inseparability between emotion and cognition, illustrate how the concept of *perezhivanie*, a term used by Vygotsky in his sociocultural theory to capture the dialectic unity between emotion and cognition, as well as between a person and the social environment, can be brought to bear on L2 development and teaching, thus validating the importance of affective dimension of motivation.

Emotions have traditionally been regarded as irrational factors and have been largely neglected in motivation research (Al-Hoorie, 2017). Even though Gardner's social educational model mentioned both positive and negative emotions, scholars have largely focused on negative ones (e.g., anxiety), with positive emotions remaining underexplored. However, a number of researchers, as Lantolf and Swain do, argue that emotions and cognitions are by no means separate entities, but are intimately intertwined (e.g., Pessoa, 2008; Schumann, 1997). The recent interest in emotions, including both positive and negative ones, can be seen in the "emotional turn" (White, 2018), catalyzed by the advent of positive psychology, with its basic commitments of facilitating well-being and learners' L2 success. Dewaele & MacIntyre (2019), the two forerunners of positive psychology in applied linguistics, suggest more attention be brought to positive emotions in foreign language classrooms instead of solely focusing on foreign language anxiety (FLA), which is mainly

predicted by the personality trait Emotional Stability and is less influenced by the teacher and peers, compared to the foreign language enjoyment (FLE), a typical classroom positive emotion, which is mostly decided by teacher-related factors.

Chinese L2 learners are well known for being reticent and reluctant to take part in classroom tasks (Shao & Gao, 2016). Being English teachers for years, we find positive psychology provides illuminating insights as to the importance of a positive classroom atmosphere for engaging L2 learners in classroom communicative tasks. One recent research project (Li & Xu, 2019), in which Xu, the second reviewer took part in, from a positive psychology perspective, found that Chinese high school learners experienced relatively high level of FLA but low level of FLE. In addition, the research revealed that learners' emotional intelligence was positively related to FLA and FLE. An emotional intelligence intervention was then implemented in the classroom, after which, learners were found to have significantly increased their FLE and decreased their FLA. Long & Xu (in press) adopted conversation analysis and stimulated recall protocol to investigate how a teacher created positive classroom atmosphere through teacher-students interaction. It was found that the teacher, by manipulating his gestures, postures, speech rate and prosodic packaging, and by invoking multiple identities, successfully engaged learners in classroom discussion. The findings underscore the vital role of teachers in creating positive classroom emotions.

Given the salient presence of reticence and anxiety experienced by Chinese L2 learners, it is better not to solely assume cultural accountability (e.g., Confucian culture) for the phenomenon (Shao & Gao, 2016), but to situate learners in their specific classroom contexts and to promote their participation by creating positive classroom environment. Positive psychology provides new insights to look at L2 learner motivation. However, such questions as how teachers' emotional intelligence influences L2 learners, how positive psychology informs classroom interaction/discourse research, and what are the long-term effects of these interventions warrant further examination.

Social Aspects of Motivation

Part 2 deals with social psychological/sociological aspects of motivation. Sara Rubenfeld and Richard Clément present how L2 acquisition, mainly in bilingual/multilingual contexts, is influenced by macro-social context and influence intergroup (between first language group and L2 group) relations. Jorida Cila and Richard N. Lalonde explicate that the motivations underlying baby-naming in a multicultural context in Canada involves considerations of complex factors, which correspond to integrative and instrumental motivations. Bonny Norton explores how investment, a sociological construct, complements motivation, which is a psychological construct focusing largely on measurement, by bringing in issues of power to explain L2 learning/teaching/research. Norton claims, learners being silent in the classroom might be highly motivated, but simply invest little in L2 learning, which can be attributed to such factors as teachers ignoring the learner's multi-faceted identities and their future imagined communities, power relations between teachers and learners, teacher identities, etc.

With the ever-intensifying globalization, wide spread of technology use and, subsequently, the frequent language contact, multilingualism is becoming a norm over the world (García, 2017). As a result, Gardner's concepts such as integrative motivation (defined as identification with the target language community and a desire to integrate into it) have been gradually losing its explanatory power because English seems to have become an integral part in people's life, and therefore the "target language community" for English learners seems to be a blurred concept. In addition, the

“bi/multilingual turn” in L2 acquisition (Ortega, 2014) problematizes taking nativeness as the target of L2 learning, and regarding foreign language learners as emergent bilinguals. Against this background, it seems to be more viable to adopt an identity perspective to capture L2 learner motivation (Douglas Fir Group, 2016), taking various social and contextual factors into consideration and regarding L2 learners as real persons and L2 users (Xu & Long, 2020), rather than simply as L2 learners, using L2 to relate themselves to the social world.

Ushioda (2011) underscores the importance of enabling learners to invoke their current selves and identities when they interact in L2 with others so as to help them “visualize themselves as competent L2 users in the future” (p. 203). Citing Richards’ (2006) classroom discourse research, she powerfully demonstrates how L2 learners’ motivational engagement could be enhanced when their transportable identities (defined as latent and implicit identities which can be invoked in interactions, such as when students invoke their real life identities in language classrooms) were engaged in the classroom interaction. While concurring with Ushioda, we would like to go further to suggest teachers, especially in foreign language contexts, navigate and model the way how transportable identities can be engaged in classrooms to demonstrate that they are real persons rather than simply language pedagogues ignoring language in social use, and that L2 is a means of, and a kind of resource for, self-expression. Such discursive acts not only mediate power relationship between teachers and learners, but also help learners realize that there are concrete role models (L2 teachers) relating L2 to real life and communicating real meaning rather than focusing solely on textbooks. In one of our research projects (Long & Xu, in press), the teacher alluded to, and negotiated with his students a variety of his transportable identities (an English learner, a person who dislikes the subject Analogue Electronics, a single man, etc.), promoting learners’ participation and investment in classroom and enabling them to realize “that is real English, full of emotion and with intonation” (learners’ response to our stimulated recall interview). We claim that teachers, by modelling language use rather than simply language learning, can serve as concretely available role models that ignite learners’ vision and facilitate their construction of the ideal L2 self (Dörnyei, 2009).

By enabling learners to engage in real language use, we are at the same time confirming their language user and thus their (emergent) bi/multilingual identities (García & Li, 2014), allowing them to realize “what they learn becomes part of what they are” (Little, 2004, p. 106) and that L2 is an important part of their semiotic repertoire they can invoke any time they wish, which in turn builds their L2 confidence and helps them reduce the distance between their current self and future ideal self.

While much of the discussion above, and also in L2 motivation research, is focused on learning English in the multilingual world, another feature that characterizes the multilingual world, learning languages other than global English (LOTEs), is largely underexplored. Given the different status enjoyed by English and LOTEs, how the motivations involved in learning them differ from each other, and whether current theoretical models of L2 motivation are capable of explaining the motivation processes of leaning LOTEs warrant further investigation. Perhaps, new understandings, and possibilities will be generated by refining the current theories and methods by drawing on transdisciplinary insights in other related fields in future studies (Duff, 2017).

Historical and Methodological Issues of Motivation Research

Part 3 addresses historical and methodological issues of motivation research. Rebecca L. Oxford highlights the importance of diversified research methods and data to delve deeper into

individual learners' motivational dynamics. Ema Ushioda describes how qualitative inquiry offers a complementary set of perspectives to the prevailing quantitative paradigm of motivation research. She attaches importance to viewing "second language learners as uniquely individual and complex 'people'" (p. 203) and situating them "in particular social, cultural and historical contexts" (p. 203). Paul F. Tremblay illustrates the potential of multilevel modeling to allow the introduction of a new kind of design incorporating multilevel data structure for researchers to investigate how those different levels of variables influence learners' motivation and their achievement. Jennifer Claro, after briefly reviewing Gardner's concept of integrativeness and Dörnyei's ideal L2 self, argues that the latter cannot replace the former in that integrativeness represents learners' identification with an external referent, whereas the ideal L2 self is usually used to represent an internal one. John Edwards emphasizes the importance of the historical contextualization of the social psychology of language, relating it to a wide range of disciplines when tracing its development, and suggesting that researchers go beyond their narrow specialities and extend their inquiries to other disciplines so as to broaden the knowledge in this area.

L2 motivation research has a long tradition of a quantitative paradigm seeking to generalize likely motivational patterns across certain populations of L2 learners and associate these patterns with linguistic or nonlinguistic outcomes. However, along with the trend of "social turn" in applied linguistics since the middle 1990s, there has been a call for more situated and process-oriented research in L2 motivation field. As a consequence, qualitative research began to enter the field. At the same time, more and more mixed methods have also been adopted, perhaps to offset the respective limitations of quantitative and qualitative methods. It should be noted that as long as we rely on self-report data, we might still feel incapable of capturing the situated and dynamic nature of motivation in that in most cases, the data collected might fall outside the temporal, physical, and social contexts which interact with participants' motivation (Ushioda, 2019).

To address this issue, more innovative research designs and methods are employed, such as idiodynamic method (e.g., MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015), Q methodology (e.g., Watts & Stenner, 2012), etc. For example, MacIntyre & Serroul's (2015) idiodynamic method videotaped participants' conversations when they were completing communicative tasks, and asked them to rate their motivations when watching the videos on a second-by-second basis, which was followed by stimulated recall interviews in which students were asked to explain their motivational peaks and valleys. Guo et al. (2020) made some adaptations to this method to make it more classroom-friendly, in which learners audiotaped their ten-minute communicative conversations by themselves and were then required to rate their motivations, when they were listening to these recordings, on a minute-by-minute basis on a sheet of A4 paper with ten bar-shaped figures printed on it, and at the same time briefly write down their comments for their ratings. After this process, retrospective focus group interviews were conducted to get a more comprehensive understanding of students' task-situated motivation. These innovative methods will generate much sharpened and nuanced insights on learners' motivational ups and downs and will continue to feature future motivational research.

Going beyond self-report, other designs and data can also be employed to capture alternative perspectives that are filtered through learners' subjective perceptions. These might include ethnography, which can be used to delve into learners' unconscious attitudes towards L2, classroom discourse data and conversation analysis which might be used to uncover strategies teachers or learners exploit to motivate others, etc. However, such methods remain largely untapped and merit experimentation in future research (Ushioda, 2019).

Dynamic and Contextualized Language Motivation

The last part presents scholarly discussion about the socio-educational model. Phil Hiver and Diane Larsen-Freeman, showcase how the chapters in the volume on language motivation reflect principles of complex dynamic systems theory (CDST), and claim that a CDST perspective allows researchers to see “both new, previously unseen things and things previously seen but not apparent” (p. 298). Elaine K. Horwitz underlines how Gardner’s studies opened new horizons for L2 motivation research by taking contextual factors into consideration and laying the foundation for qualitative research questions.

The twenty-first century is marked by a “dynamic turn” (de Bot, 2015) in applied linguistics in general, and in motivation research in particular (Boo et al., 2015). Inspired by CDST, L2 motivation is reconceptualized as an emergent, dynamic and context-dependent system, which experiences constant change and subjects to perturbations. Against this backdrop, Guo et al. (2020), by situating learner motivation in a micro-context of a 10-minute group communicative task, found that there existed multiple levels of motivational ebb and flow when learners engaged in the task in real time. Overall, the learners displayed four patterns of motivational dynamics when completing their tasks, dramatic fluctuation, stable motivation with little variability, ever increasing motivation, and moderate fluctuation. However, when examined at the group level, the motivational dynamics exhibited variability to different extents, with some groups showing striking within-group variability while other groups displaying minor differences or similar motivational changes. Guo et al. (2020) also probed into variables resulting in the afore-mentioned dynamics. A plethora of variables were found to affect learners’ task motivation, which were categorized into linguistic (language problems), behavioral (e.g., the act of listening to others), cognitive (e.g., whether it is easy to generate ideas or not), motivational (e.g., aspiring to use English for communicating meaning), and contextual (e.g., the atmosphere of active participation).

Guo et al.’s (2020) research demonstrates how a CDST approach to language learner motivation allows researchers to acquire nuanced understanding of the complexity of variables affecting the moment-by-moment motivational dynamics. What is worth noting is that the research, rather than delving into motivational processes through reductionism, adopted a holistic, relational systems and ecological perspective, which enabled the researchers to explore a wealth of different variables coming into play during learners’ task completion, and thus to capture the dynamically interconnectedness among learners, and among learners and their sociocultural environments. Such an orientation is beneficial for teachers to align their pedagogical measures with their local teaching contexts. For instance, realizing that learners tend to become demotivated when they are listening to their group members, teachers can conduct a group interaction strategy training (Xu & Kou, 2018) to help learners develop skills in active listening and skills that facilitate even and smooth turn-taking in group conversations. A further example is that given the fact that contextual factors may also considerably influence learners’ motivation to participate in classroom tasks, teachers need to take many factors into consideration when they are grouping or pairing learners for tasks such as interlocutor familiarity (Xu et al., 2019), learner personality (introvertedness or extrovertedness), and so on.

Horwitz’s suggestion that “always consider the learning of specific languages in specific contexts” (p. 306), combined with CDST framework render substantial possibilities for researchers, and also teachers, to explore, in a contextualized manner, factors affecting learner motivation on a moment-by-moment basis, and then help teachers make locally contingent pedagogical decisions to

motivate their learners. CDST perspective, coupled with a rich diversity of research methodologies, promises an exciting and productive environment for motivation research in the upcoming years (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015).

Conclusion

Taken together, the volume not only offers enlightening insights as to the developing trajectory of socio-educational model, but also relates it to a wide variety of new ideas and new research areas, thus presenting huge research and practical potential for readers to explore. First and foremost, it equips readers with powerful theoretical and methodological instruments to conduct research on motivation in L2 learning/teaching. The volume vividly illustrates how motivation research can be extended to other theories and concepts such as sociocultural theory, CDST, positive psychology, identity/identification in multilingual/bilingual and globalized contexts and other interdisciplinary fields, all of which are burgeoning research areas with promising future. These theories and concepts, combined with rigorous, diversified and updated research methods (Chapters 8, 9, 10) will help readers investigate the highly contextualized, dynamic, and emergent motivation, and generate illuminating findings that will benefit language teaching/learning. Based upon this analysis, we believe what further adds to the volume's value is its cutting-edge insights, which find resonance with recent trends and latest development in applied linguistics such as "dynamic turn" (de Bot, 2015), "bi/multilingual turn" (Ortega, 2014), "emotional turn"(White, 2018), and "a transdisciplinary framework for SLA in a multilingual world" (Douglas Fir Group, 2016). These latest insights, coupled with the inspiring suggestions with regard to future directions and novel designs provided by the chapters in the volume will allow readers to discover what is previously undiscoverable. Finally, the chapters in the volume provide room for language teachers to find answers to more applied questions about "how teachers can facilitate language acquisition in the classroom" (p. 307), and are helpful for engendering "new, positive interventions used to motivate the learning process with sensitivity to learners" (p. 35). Such a practical orientation allows teachers to make constant calibration and adaptation in response to students' needs, creating an optimal classroom climate for learners' motivation and engagement.

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