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Student and Teacher Motivation in Language Learning

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Motivation & Learning

• It seems "only sensible to assume that learning is most likely to occur when we want to learn."
  (Williams & Burden, 1997)

• "It is universally accepted that motivation plays a vital role in academic learning in general."
  (Dörnyei, 2006)

• "The truth of the matter is that about 99 percent of teaching is making the students feel interested in the material. The other 1 percent has to do with your methods."
  (Chomsky, 1988)
Motivation & Learning

- Foreign language teachers recognize the importance of motivation "both with regard to the motivation that students bring to the language classroom ... and the motivation that is generated inside the classroom through the choice of instructional activities."

(Ellis, 1994: 536)
What is motivation?

Motivation is what moves people to act (McDonough, 2007)

• In our context, this means …
  … learn an additional language
  … learn to teach a language
  … learn & improve our teaching

This involves four elements:

1) The reasons why we want to learn / teach,
2) the strength of our desire to learn / teach,
3) the kind of person we are, and
4) our estimation of what requires of us.
Motivational Orientations

Major reasons for learning an L2

- **Extrinsic motivation** (e.g., getting a degree, getting a better job, facilitate travel)
- **Intrinsic motivation** (e.g., genuine desire to become an active participant/member of the L2 group; develop empathy and desire to become familiar with the other)
- **Self-knowledge/betterment** (e.g., understanding of one’s own identity, become a better person)
Dimensions of L2 Learning Motivation

- **Social Dimension**
  (e.g., attitudes towards L2 community/speakers)

- **Physiological Dimension**
  (stimulus appraisal = novelty of stimulus, attractiveness, goal significance, coping potential, compatibility with self image)

- **Contextual Dimension**
  (setting, status, self-determination theory)

- **Temporal Dimension**
  (dynamic nature, change over time, process models)

- **Pedagogical Dimension**
  (influence of teacher, curriculum, materials, etc.)
So…

* we can say that…

… motivation is a complex, multi-faceted construct that involves intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for doing something,

… motivation is dynamic and in a constant state of flux, changing across time in response to individual and socio-cultural factors,

… motivation involves self-knowledge and a desire to better one’s self.
Motivational Strategies

- What strategies can we use to sustain / promote motivation in the classroom?

- Intrinsically motivating techniques (HDB, p.80-82)
And how about the teachers?

• Research to date has focused on student motivation, rather than teacher motivation.

• Language teachers’ motivations is “one of the most often overlooked areas in L2 teaching and learning” (Zhao, 2008; in Hildebrant & Eom, 2011).

• However, we know that teachers are a most important factor in generating, sustaining, and extending learners’ motivation. Therefore, a motivated teacher is likely to influence student motivation.
And how about the teachers?

- It has been argued that the teacher-learner relationship is THE most significant variable affecting students’ attitudes and motivation to learn an L2.

(Williams & Burden, 1997; Chambers, 1999; Dornyei, 2001)
Students often ascribe their success in L2 learning to a good teacher. Conversely, they also may harshly criticize unenthusiastic teachers.

Walker (2001; in Yau, 2010) reports that students expect teachers to be skilled, receptive, knowledgeable and flexible to their needs.

Students also expect teachers to act as coach, counselor and mentor.

More importantly, students expect a teacher to have undergone professional development.
Willingness to stay in teaching

- After interviewing 42 US teachers (general subjects), Walker and Barton (1987, in Yau, 2010) found that only 25% of females teachers and 16% of male teachers planned to stay in the professions (compared to 57% and 35%, respectively, in 1961).

Reasons:
- Low salary
- Low social prestige
- Heavy workload
Teacher Motivation

What motivates teachers to stay in the profession?

Intrinsic motives

- Internal enjoyment in teaching
- Interacting with students
- A good relationship with students
- Involvement in interesting subjects
- Fulfilling career targets
- Altruistic motives (service to society)
Teacher Motivation

What motivates teachers to stay in the profession?

Extrinsic motives

• Adequate workload (class size, contact hours, grading)
• Fair Salary
• Job security
• Interpersonal relationships with colleagues
• Adequate working conditions (work space, resources)
• Convenient working hours and holidays
• Institutional climate/culture (management, collegiality)
Teacher Motivation

• The weight that each one of the aforementioned factors has depends, to a great extent, on contextual factors.

• In general, studies suggest that intrinsic factors affect teacher motivation at a higher level than extrinsic ones.

• When intrinsic motivation is high, teachers tend to disregard negative extrinsic factors.

• Extrinsic motivation may be more important in the short term but it is not enough to sustain motivation (Pennington, 1995; Johnson, 1986).
Hildebrandt & Eom (2011) discuss the important role that professional development plays in teacher motivation.

They assert that teachers’ professional growth affects and is affected by motivational forces and that teacher professionalization is critical for the quality of education, as the quality of student language learning is inextricably tied to the quality of language teachers.
Professionalization & Motivation

• In their own research with more than 400 experienced, certified foreign language teachers in the US, Hildebrandt & Eom (2011) found that there are five major variables in teacher motivation for professionalization:

  [listed in in order of importance]

  1) Improved teaching motivation [intrinsic]
  2) Financial gain motivation (extrinsic]
  3) Internal validation motivation [intrinsic]
  4) Collaboration motivation [intrinsic]
  5) External validation motivation [extrinsic]
Professionalization & Motivation

- And what can we do to enhance our own professional development?
• And what can we do to enhance our own professional development?
  
a) Participate in professional associations.
  
b) Regularly read journals, periodicals, websites about language teaching and learning (and related fields).
  
c) Attend and present at teacher conferences, in-service workshops, and other professional development events.
  
d) Place your name on mailing lists of major textbook publishers and information clearinghouses.
  
e) Work on curriculum and textbook selection committees.
And what can we do to enhance our own professional development?

f) Conduct action research in your own classrooms.

g) Participate in peer-observation and feedback activities.

h) Work collaboratively with colleagues and other professionals in the field.

i) Seek more experienced colleagues as mentors and/or become a mentor to novice teachers.

j) Seek opportunities to participate in summer internships, apply to teacher development grants.
It’s all about finding our own ways of staying intrinsically motivated!
References
