Language Learning Motivation

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Abstract: The importance of motivation has become increasingly important in recent decades, especially in the field of higher education. In order to find specific pedagogical implication of motivation for second language learners, the developmental processes should be studied. In this essay, the developmental stages of motivation and second language learning are explored by reviewing a wide range of journals and monographs. In the final section of the essay, some elaborated pedagogical implication for second language teachers are provided, and then teaching practitioners are encouraged to apply a plethora of motivating methods to facilitate their teaching.

Keywords: Motivation; Second Language Learning; Cognitive

1. Introduction

Generally, motivation is a term related to the "direction and magnitude of human behaviour that include the choice of a particular action, the persistence with it and the effort expended on it."[1] According to Albert, motivation refers to the trend of an animal participates in activities. This trend is the consequence of internal physiological phenomena and external signals and a process of ethical self-formation. (Clarke and Hennig, 2013) All the definitions above present that motivation is ubiquitous in education psychology venues. The notion that psychology and motivation is inseparable was attached importance to by scholars.

2. Development of L2 motivation

With the development of second language acquisition (SLA), motivation in language learning was investigated by an increasing number of scholars. In language learning region, motivation is a powerful conception which exploits by the integration of various practical and theoretical perspectives. Scholars consider the problem that why some language learners are successful while others are not? It relates to motivation. Motivation decides the effort paid by L2 learners in different periods to improve their L2 proficiency. (Saville-Troike, 2006) Schumann (1997) suggest that neurological mechanisms control motivation for L2 acquisition.

3. Social-psychological period

Social psychology period is the beginning of the exploration of motivation in language learning. Studies in social psychology period mainly focus on the psychological factors involved in motivation such as attitude's importance on language teaching and learning. However, one of the most important explorations is Gardner (1979, 1985) and Gardner and Lambert (1972). They maintain that motivation can be divided into either 'instrumental-oriented' or 'integrative-oriented'.

Instrumental motivation generates from learners who acquire the language to achieve actual goals such as promoting their economic status or.[2] As for integrative motivation, "it concerns the positive affective disposition towards the L2 community and the desire to achieve language proficiency in order to participate in and develop a sense of belonging to the L2 community."[3] Integrativeness refers to openness to identity with another language community, which means that SLA is not only the acquisition of word sounds or pronunciations but also behavioural and cognitive features of the other culture. Therefore, integrative motivation would facilitate learners' motivation to learn the language.[4] Gardner (1985) and Dörnyei (1990) point out that learners who are integratively motivated in language learning have a high probability of success compared with learners who are not. It means that individuals who are intend to identify with another national community

motivate more to acquire a language compared with individuals who do not. The reason for it may be the fact that learners' interests and desire in language learning might be sustained longer by psychological integration.[3]

Gardner and Lambert (1959)'s theory and research about language learning motivation is the dominant model in language learning motivation, but some scholars hold the opinion that this model confined in the social-psychological field and analyze motivation's influence on language learning in social environment aspect. This model defines motivation as two solid forms (instrumental and integrative) instead of shifting process overtime. Also, integrative motivation, which is highly praised in the traditional social-psychological period, was regarded loses explanatory power with English learning and teaching changed. However, Dörnyei (1994) points out that Gardner (1985) proposes five variables in motivation instead of simply integrative and instrumental motivation. "Gardner's (1985) extensive discussion (about five variables in language learner's motivation) will put an end to the misleading use of a simplistic integrative-instrumental dichotomy."[5] Therefore, the two misconceptions will lead to these limitations above naturally.

4. The cognitive situated period

The limitations of the traditional second language approach to motivation have sparked vigorous discussion about the model of motivation. Based on both the advantages and disadvantages of Gardner's model, Crookes and Schmidt (1991) claim that Gardner's system has occupied so dominant status that other conceptions were ignored. Therefore, they adopted "a definition of motivation regarding choice, engagement, and persistence, as determined by interest, relevance, expectancy, and outcomes." [6]

During the cognitive situated period, scholars not only discussed strategies which might promote students' motivation in a positive way, but also recoginise motivation may have a negative influence on learners' language learning. These negative influences may relate to both individual's unpleasant experience and social environment factors.[7] Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) defined "various negative influences that cancel out existing motivation" as demotivation. It means that demotivated learners are those learners who have positive motivation to learn initially. However, they lose their motivation for some reasons afterward. Demotivation is a powerful negative component destroyed the learner's interest and willingness to learn but it does not mean that all of the positive factors are disappeared.

Another concept related to demotivation is amotivation. Amotivation is a constituent in Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Amotivation refers to the absence of motivation related to general outcome expectations that are unrealistic for some reasons. Amotivation and demotivation are two different conceptions, but in some situation, demotives can lead to amotives (e.g., classmates bully can reduce the learners' self-efficacy). [8]

5. Pedagogical implication

Motivational strategies can be defined in two aspects. The first one is teachers' intervention of learner's learning process in order to activate and raise students' motivation. Another interpretation of motivation strategies is that individual learners apply some self-regulatory strategies to help themselves maintain their learning motivation.[9] Scholars started to explore some effective motivational strategies since the 1990s. Evidence can be seem from the articles from Willam and Burden (1997) and Dörnyei (1994). They recommended several efficient strategies. However, in this period, motivational strategies simply confined in a narrow stage, most of the articles are about carrot-and-stick approach, which means that give students praises and punishment during the teaching process. Generally, scholars found that motivational strategy is a broader conception. In 2001, Dörnyei proposed the most influential and systematic framework of motivational strategies. Dörnyei(2001) divided motivational teaching practice into an nonlinear four component framework. Teachers should:

Providing fundamental excitation condition. This target can be achieved by providing an enjoyable and supportive atmosphere in the classroom, generating combinative study teams and establishing a good relationship with students.

Generating initial motivation, that is, encourage students to learn language by promoting their eagerness to succeed and help students be positive about their future language learning.

Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation through promoting accommodative attributions, giving effective feedback, rising learning satisfaction and proposing students' grades in a motivational way.

Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) conducted empirical research in 40 ESOL classroom in South Korea which involves over 1,400 participants. Based on Dörnyei(2001)'s strategy framework, they collected data by both quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (observation) research methods. The result of the research shows that language teachers' motivational strategies play an important role in students' motivation level.[9]   This research also maintains that language teachers' implication of motivational strategies is more important than an individual's motivated behaviour.

Figure A: Dörnyei(2001)'s strategy framework
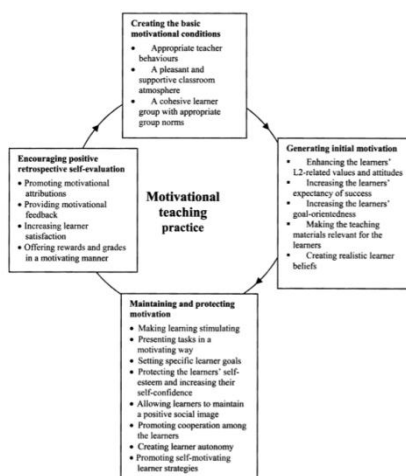
(Dörnyei, 2001, p. 29)

The last point in motivational strategies is that Dörnyei (2001) claims that quality motivational strategies are much important than the quantity. It means that language teachers should apply appropriate motivation strategies in the teaching and eliciting, enhancing, maintaing and reflection process. Teachers should choose motivational strategies selectively.

6. Conclusion

Language learning motivation is one of the most critical topics in the course of Language and the Learner. There are mainly four stages in the development of L2 motivation, these stages make progress increasingly and explore the topic of motivation in-depth.[10] Understanding these motivational theories is vital, however, for language teachers, how to apply motivational strategies in their classrooms is a lifespan problem.

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