

Motivation in Language Learning

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Abstract: Motivation has a great impact on second language learning, so it is important to have a good understanding of the theories of motivation and how motivation can affect second language learning. There are many motivation components in learners' motivation system and their motivation may change over time. In addition, the development of language learning motivation theory is also reflexive and constant. This essay will focus on the "socio-educational model of second-language learning" proposed by Gardner and L2 Motivational Self System developed by Dörnyei. Besides, various motivational techniques that can be used by teachers to motivate students to learn second language will be introduced. In the end of this essay, the comparison between their constructs will also be discussed to discover the development of L2 motivation theory.

Keywords: L2 Motivation Theory; Socio-Educational Model of Second-Language Learning; L2 Motivational Self System

1. Introduction

Motivation has been considered to have a great effect on language learning for many years, so it is important to understand its theories, and how they can be relevant to L2 learning and teaching. Because of the limited space, this essay will not introduce the development of L2 motivation theory in detail. The focus is on the main motivation constructs and frameworks proposed by Gardner and Dörnyei. After explaining some important motivation theories developed by these two influential researchers separately, the comparison between their constructs will be discussed to discover the development of L2 motivation theory.

2. Gardner's theory of L2 motivation

Gardner made a great contribution to the L2 motivation field by proposing the "socio-educational model of second-language learning" in 1975 with Smythe for the purpose of finding how individual variables and social contexts have an impact on the second language proficiency^[1]. The four basic components of this model are integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation, motivation and other variables^[2]. According to Gardner & MacIntyre (1991), integrative motive, which refers to a set of attitudes and motivation that relate to each other and influence different aspects of second language learning, plays a significant role in this model. Gardner^[3] argues that "motivation to learn a second language is influenced by group related and context related attitudes, integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation, respectively". Therefore, it can be considered that in Gardner's view, attitudes towards target language communities and social interaction can affect second language learners' motivation.

Besides, there are two motivation components proposed by Gardner: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. According to Gardner & Cantano (2000), integrative motivation is composed of integrativeness, attitudes towards the learning situation and motivation. Students who identify with the target language community, are motivated to learn other languages, and have positive attitudes towards learning situations are those who are integratively motivated^[2]. They may be more likely to put a great effort to learn a new language and achieve higher language proficiency than those who are not motivated in this connection. Although less research about instrumental motivation has been conducted, Gardner & MacIntyre (1991) found that it has sustained and favourable effects on language learning. Learners who are instrumentally motivated may learn language for some functional reasons, such as passing examinations or applying for a better job^[4]. In

general, Gardner believes that both integrative and instrumental motivation can be effective in leading students to learn language hard and achieve success.

Although the L2 motivation theory based on social psychological construct has been regarded as the foundation of other research in the L2 motivation field, Gardner's model was criticized for the lack of pedagogical applications. According to Guilloteaux & Dörnyei (2008), the main focus in Gardner's motivation model is on the components of motivation instead of the pragmatic approach to apply this knowledge in foreign language classroom. The framework is all about what is motivation or what composes motivation, and no guidelines are provided for teachers on how to motivate language learners.

3. Dörnyei's motivation framework

Dörnyei also has done much work in L2 motivation field. A process model of learning motivation has been developed by Dörnyei and Otto in 1998 specifically for educational application^[5]. In this model, motivation is composed of three distinct phases: "choice motivation" (preactional stage), in which process motivation is generated and leads to the choice of goal to be completed; "executive motivation" (actional stage), in which phase motivation is maintained and energizes ongoing action; and "motivational retrospection" (postactional stage), which concerns learners' evaluation of the completed action and their motivation for future action^[6]. Based on the three motivational phases of this process-oriented model, various components of motivational teaching practice are organized systematically by Dörnyei into 4 units: "creating the basic motivational condition", "generating initial motivation", "maintaining and protecting motivation", and "encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation"^[5]. Therefore, teachers can apply different motivational strategies in different phases to motivate students and improve their learning outcomes.

Besides, Dörnyei also proposed the L2 Motivational Self System, which may be the most influential L2 motivation model recently^[7]. It is a natural development of Gardner's theory and derived from self theory in psychology^[8]. This system consists of three components: Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience. The ideal L2 self is "an ideal future self-representation of the individual as a user of the L2", which means a successful L2 learner in the future^[7]. The second component ought-to L2 self refers to "the individual's perceived obligations and responsibilities to others", which concerns one's consciousness that it is obligated to fulfil others' expectations^[7]. The last component L2 learning experience is related to learners' direct learning environment and their learning experiences in the past^[7]. In a word, according to Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System, learners' motivation to learn a second language is composed of their visions to be a proficient L2 speaker, expectations or requirements of others, and their own successful learning experiences.

One of the benefits of developing this system is that it provides novel areas for motivating learners to learn language, and the new avenue is about using motivational strategies to promote learners' Ideal L2 Self^[9]. According to this theory, teachers can motivate students to learn second language by helping them construct their own ideal self-images, such as proficient L2 speakers, and encouraging them to narrow the gap between the current self and the ideal self.

4. Comparison and Development

Although Gardner's motivation model has been dominant and influential for many years, it still has limitations. This is why varied new motivation perspectives and frameworks were developed by Dörnyei later, which reflect the development of L2 motivation research. Because of the emergency of global English, the idea of integrating into a specific culture in Gardner's motivation theory may be challenged. In order to address these reservations reflected in the motivation model of Gardner, L2 Motivational Self System was proposed by Dörnyei (2005). This framework can explain learners' L2 motivation more effectively since it is not associated with any particular culture^[9]. Although L2 Motivational Self System is a relatively new concept, it is in fact a reconceptualization of the integrativeness proposed by Gardner^[9]. This means that the emerging system is developed based on the traditional motivation theory, and they are complementary. According to Dörnyei & Ushioda (2009), integrativeness is a broader construct than the definition developed by Gardner means, and it includes all the components in Gardner's model, including interactive and instrumental motivation. Learners can be described as having an integrative tendency in Gardner's term if their ideal self is related to the acquisition of a second language^[9]. The traditional instrumental motivation proposed by Gardner may also belong to ideal self, but it is divided into two types: "instrumentality-promotion" and "instrumentality-prevention", and the type related to the ideal L2 self is the former, which is about learning L2 to achieve career promotion^[6]. This means that if learners' ideal self is associated with professional

advancement, it may be appropriate to say that they have instrumental motivation. Another type of instrumental motive: “instrumentality-prevention”, which concerns learning L2 to pass examinations, is related to the ought-self [6]. Therefore, learners may also be described as having instrumental motivation if their ought self is related to not failing exams or disappointing parents. The above shows that Dörnyei’s framework accepts, contains and develops Gardner’s L2 motivation theories instead of disregarding them.

5. Conclusion

In summary, although motivation constructs proposed by Gardner and Dörnyei have some reservations, their theories of motivation in language learning make a great contribute to the development in this research field. Besides, to some extent, Dörnyei’s motivation framework reflects a development in comparison with Gardner’s motivation model.

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