A MOTIVATIONAL APPROACH TO LANGUAGE TEACHING

Dexter Da Silva

Abstract Research and theory in motivation in language learning/teaching have mainly focused on individual differences in the learner. It is argued here that it is time to change that focus to the learning/teaching situation. By looking at some activities, procedures, methods and techniques that teachers practise in the classroom, and analyzing them in terms of theories in educational psychology, this paper is a further attempt to help narrow the gap between research and theory in TESOL on the one hand, and practice, the work that teachers do, on the other. Following earlier writers, teachers' work is divided into four levels. It is argued that by putting the concept of motivation in the forefront, considering its accepted importance in the learning process, we can reassess our teaching, help to share our ideas and progress theory and research along lines that are more relevant to us, as teachers.

Background

There has been a solid history of theory and research in motivation in language learning, which Gardner and Lambert's (1972) early work stimulated, and which Gardner (1985) has continued developing in response to others working in this area. Yet Bagnole (1993) asks the most basic questions that confront language teachers: "What is

motivation?"; "Is it the teacher's job to instill motivation?"; "How is motivation translated into action?"; "What are the implications for materials and methodology?" This juxtaposition is not intended to reflect negatively on Bagnole. He was expressing an honest opinion which is representative of teachers in general. Neither is it to blame Gardner. He has been the force behind the recognition of the importance of motivation in language learning. My purpose is to highlight the proposition that research and theory in motivation in foreign and second language learning have, for all practical purposes, been too far removed from the day-to-day teaching╱learning context of language educators. Bagnole, the practitioner, as both a language teacher and learner, finds nothing, or very little, of practical use or interest, from Gardner, the researcher and theorist. It is not Gardner's starting point of social psychology that is the problem. In fact, one of his works' greatest achievements has been the recognition of the social context of language learning.

There are a number of reasons for this situation. One problem has been the narrow focus on individual differences in the language learner. Skehan (1989) shows this clearly when he divides the sources of motivation into those within the learning context and those which are the results of learning. These are then arranged in a two by two matrix with the added dimensions of 'inside' and 'outside' the individual. The goals of the learner, which he sees as being the results of learning, 'inside' the individual learner, are the focus of his work. The other dimensions in his matrix are completely ignored. This is appropriate for the focus of his book on individual differences, but this concentration on individual differences in goals has dominated theory and research in motivation in language learning. We need to direct

some attention to motivation in other areas, especially those areas within the learning/teaching context, such as syllabus design, teaching methodology, techniques, activities and materials, success and rewards.

Another problem has been the separation of practitioners, teachers working in the various areas of their work, from theorists and researchers. If teachers were to become more involved in theory in language teaching it would not only help to bridge the gap between theory and practice, but it would also result in an increase in teachers' commitment and motivation. Prabhu (1993) suggests that there is an urgent need for teachers to become more aware of their commonsense views and intuitions about teaching and learning in order for them to fulfill their potential as teachers and not merely act out routine lessons. I would also suggest that some action research on these 'theories' would go even further to narrowing the gap between research and theory, and practice, and between researchers and theorists, and practitioners.

A third problem has been the concept of motivation itself. It is used as a blanket term to cover so many different things that it is, in a sense, too commonly used to be useful. It explains everything and therefore nothing. Students are said to be motivated if they respond positively to what the teacher presents. This positing of the existence of motivation inside the learner explains no more than the outward behavior, the enthusiasm or other positive response the learner exhibits. I'm not arguing for the return of behaviorism. It has had its day. But to exploit the concept of motivation, we need to be specific about what it actually is. Crookes and Schmidt (1991) and my previous paper (1993) have tried to address these two problems by first, suggesting some

important principles and ideas from theories of motivation in general educational psychology. They both refer to Keller's (1983) four principles of motivation: interest, relevance, expectancy and outcomes or satisfaction. They then show how these can be applied to the foreign or second language teaching／learning context. Woolfolk (1993) refers to a particular type of motivation that is pertinent to education in general: the motivation to learn. Her description of its characteristics is very useful and relevant for teachers of TESOL in the areas of their work that I have referred to above. These characteristics are set out below in its original table form:

	Optimum Characteristics of Motivation to Learn	Characteristics that Diminish Motivation to Learn
SOURCE OF MOTIVATION	INTRINSIC: personal factors such as needs, interests, curiosity, enjoyment	EXTRINSIC: Environmental factors such as rewards, social pressure, punishment
TYPE OF GOAL SET	LEARNING GOAL: Personal satisfaction in meeting challenges and improving; tendency to choose moderately difficult and challenging goals	PERFORMANCE GOAL: Desire for approval of performance in others' eyes; tendency to choose very easy or very difficult goals
ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION	Motivation to ACHIEVE: mastery orientation	Motivation to AVOID FAILURE: prone to anxiety
LIKELY ATTRIBUTIONS	Successes and failures attributed to CONTROLLABLE effort and ability	Successes and failures attributed to UNCONTROLLABLE causes
BELIEFS ABOUT ABILITY	INCREMENTAL VIEW: Belief that ability is improvable through hard work and added knowledge and skills	ENTITY VIEW: Belief that ability is a stable, uncontrollable trait
TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT	TASK-INVOLVED: Concerned with mastering the task	EGO-INVOLVED: Concerned with self in others' eyes

(Woolfolk, 1993, p369)

So far I have taken for granted that teachers in general, and readers

of this paper in particular, are in agreement that motivation is an important issue. Supporting this, Nunan (1993) claims that the lack of motivation in students is by far the greatest concern of language teachers around the world in various teaching contexts. Cranmer (1991), in one of the few practical, teacher-reference books to directly address the issue, describes one of the roles of the teacher as motivator. According to him, the teacher can fulfill this role in a variety of ways: through his/her personality; through competence and confidence; by being able to interest the students; and by showing the students what they need, in reference to the syllabus and tests, to what they do not know and to situations in which they may need to function. In this paper I suggest that we need to go further than this and make our ideas about motivation central to our work. I accept that in many areas of language teaching, ideas based on the motivation of the learner have already been put into practice. The Communicative Approach, for example, while it is not explicit about this, is inherently based on the students' wants or needs or goals to use the language to communicate. In course and syllabus design, a needs analysis in essence focuses on the motivation of the learner. My argument is that by making explicit this realization of motivation as an important principle in our work, from designing a syllabus to planning daily lessons and testing, we would be helping teachers to make connections between theory and practice, and to apply, with more confidence, some of their own ideas about motivation in the learning situation.

Motivation and the language learning context

The context in which language learning takes place is generally considered to be of great importance. A general theory of learner

motivation in foreign or second language learning should therefore include the motivation or goals of the teacher, teaching tools and frameworks (methods, approaches, techniques and materials), and teaching plans (lessons, syllabi, courses, student evaluation), along with the motivations of the learner. It is also important to keep in mind the institution within which the teaching／learning occurs. Individual differences in the motivation of the learner, separate from the context in which the learning is done, gives us a one-dimensional look at a very complex situation. Problems or dissatisfaction in the learning／ teaching context, can be viewed as a conflict between or amongst goals. Realizing this may help teachers get over their first reaction to an unsatisfactory learning situation ("The students are not motivated") and to analyze the situation more closely.

Motivation in Practice

To address the practical side, it would be appropriate now to look at ways in which one can implement one's ideas and knowledge about motivation in learning into a particular teaching situation. In order to describe some practical aspects, I will use the four levels of the language learning／teaching situation that Crookes and Schmidt delineated and to which they relate motivational theory. These are the micro level, the classroom level, the syllabus level, and the long-term, out-of-class, informal level. These will be treated in reverse order. The broader context seems to me to be the level at which teachers start working on a particular class or group of students. It is also the level to which we should be constantly referring when working at the other levels. The smaller picture seems to be the levels at which we direct our daily work and 'hold' our students, in body as well as in mind.

Outside The Classroom (Long-term Learning)

The teaching situation I will refer to is my own, a private women's four-year college in Japan. Typically, at these institutions, arriving first-year students have vague ideas, if any, about their reasons for studying English. Their reasons might include 'liking English,' wanting to make friends overseas, wanting to understand songs or movies in English, wanting to work in the travel industry, or wanting to 'improve their English' or 'speak like a native.' They have even less idea about how to go about achieving their 'goals.' This is the area on which most theory and research has focused. It is also the level at which teachers have least control or influence. However, there are things that we can do.

Firstly, we can help students set goals or clarify their goals. A long-term goal of achieving a certain score or level on a recognized proficiency test such as TOEFL or STEP, the local Japanese test of English proficiency, gives students something concrete to aim for. It also helps students to see some improvement in their language learning and some progress towards their ultimate goal. In a university environment, students are usually given a grade comparing them with other students on various tests or tasks. Having an 'outside' test helps students become aware of their own improvement and helps to put their English classes, which may be taught by many teachers acting separately, into a wider context. It may also, in Woolfolk's words, help students to build an 'incremental view' about their ability and to set 'learning,' as opposed to 'performance,' goals. In other words, it makes an implicit statement to students that they should take some responsibility for their language learning.

In helping students achieve these goals outside the classroom, we can try to develop students' language learning strategies. A correlation between motivation and the number of learning strategies used, is recognized by theorists in the area of learning strategies training. Which causes which is not clear, but it may not be a simple one-way causal relationship. It may be that by recognizing the different ways in which they can exploit the opportunities for improving or practising their language ability, students may perceive that they have more control over their learning than they had previously thought. Control over one's success is an important consideration in motivational theory.

The Syllabus Level

As mentioned before, in designing courses it is already common to analyze the needs of the students. Not doing so can result in conflict. For example, a teacher whose focus is helping the students 'integrate' into the community, may come into 'political' conflict with students who have 'instrumental' goals; or a teacher who aims to help the students be able to communicate in 'real-life' situations may experience reluctance on the part of the students who only want to pass a written grammar test. A complete breakdown may occur if a teacher walked into an ESP class for engineers with a lesson plan for airline attendants.

At universities in Japan, this is the level in the teaching situation that requires the teacher to be most open to ideas of motivation. It is said by almost all those involved in university education, including the students themselves, that university students have no motivation. Most people claim that students regard university as a four-year holiday

after the hell of entrance examinations and before the commitment of working in a company. We need to be very wary of this simplistic assessment. It is an overgeneralization and carries the danger of leading to reduced achievement. It is my strong belief that students perform according to teachers' expectations.

After a needs analysis based on the students' language capabilities, a teacher may conclude that the students need to learn to be able to put their years of learning grammar into practice in a functional or communicative way. These are the students' language needs for communication at some time in the future. For most students these are long-term needs. Their immediate needs are more urgent and exist within the university environment.

Some of these immediate needs are not related to language learning, nor even to learning in general. We can ignore these needs or we can try to understand them. One way of attempting to understand them may be by using Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs. On this hierarchy, needs on the lower levels have to be met before those on the higher levels. In ascending order, these needs are labeled: biological／physiological, safety, belongingness／love, esteem, intellectual, aesthetic and self-actualization. Language learning would seem to satisfy the higher level needs. This is not intended as an excuse for students not fulfilling our expectations. The point I am trying to make is that we can attempt to avoid conflict with, or even attempt to exploit, their belongingness needs (club and circle activities) and self-esteem needs, while targeting their needs for achievement and success at the higher levels. Some people may consider this to be irrelevant or may not agree with Maslow's ideas about motivation.

The important thing though is to take into consideration the entire teaching／learning environment.

Apart from these non-learning goals, we need to recognize that in universities in Japan, English, as well as being a language used for communication, is just one of their academic subjects. Relating the content of the course to their other subjects, especially their major subject, is an obvious way of responding to their immediate needs, if in fact their other subjects have a focus. Other vague goals of wanting to travel, developing friendships, learning the culture, can be used to build a content-based course around a variety of themes, or one broad theme such as 'International Issues.' Content-based courses in themselves can be seen as meeting the goal of 'acquiring knowledge' which Dornyei (1990) posits as a goal of students of English as a foreign language. In a university environment addressing this goal makes even more sense. It would also be appropriate, if possible, to give students a choice, an important concept related to 'interest' and 'relevance,' of content, skills, and task.

Tests play an important part at universities. They enable the teachers to give the students a grade. They should also be seen by the teacher as very useful tools in course design. If students can see that the tests or assignments, on which their grades are based, are 'tasks' that are relevant to what they have been studying, in other words, are recognizable to the students as 'achievement' tests, the students are more likely to attribute their success or failure on the test to their own effort. This, according to Woolfolk, optimizes motivation to learn. Task-based learning recognizes the effects that focusing on and completing a task have on learners.

Even the most thorough and well-meaning needs-based course must be 'sold' to the students. The important thing is that students can see the course as a response to their wants or needs. Involving the students directly in the design of their course, as in the learner-centered approach, bears the most promise from a motivational point of view. It is also usually impractical, especially in a situation such as a university in Japan, where the teacher is seen as the expert, and where the student goals, as stated before above, are at best unclear. But student involvement is not impossible. Student interest and perception of relevance can be 'created,' after a large part of the structure and components of the course has been planned. This can happen at the classroom level.

The Classroom Level

The beginning lessons of a course and the opening stages of a lesson are very crucial times for relating the relevance or importance of what is to follow, to the students. Brainstorming activities to elicit student knowledge and interest is a very common and effective way of doing this. They can be done in a variety of ways, and student responses can usually be categorized and shown to be closely related to what the teacher has previously prepared. In a learner-centered situation, students' responses not predicted by the teacher would be used as the basis for future lessons. This relating of the content of courses and lessons to the interests or needs of the students is crucial to student motivation.

The methods, techniques, activities and materials used in the classroom should, and often do, take into consideration the motivation of the

students. Activities such as games and songs, and colorful, attractive materials are obvious examples of motivation in practice in the classroom. Another important idea is change. A variety of activities keeps classes from becoming routine. It is also appropriate to consider motivation in our use of method or approach. Teachers often strongly identify with one method, even though they may be eclectic and use activities and ideas associated with other methods. Their identification with the 'right' methodology seems to be based on what their training has taught them or what their peers value. Style and techniques are often, even unconsciously, carried over from their own teachers. But there is quite a lot of defensiveness and righteousness about methodology even though there is not much solid evidence to prove the superiority of one method over another. Considering the importance of motivation, it is surprising that it has not played an explicit part in the large amount of writing on teaching methodology. I suggest that the effectiveness of one method over another may have more to do with it meeting the needs or goals of the students, and its fulfilling the other characteristics of motivation above, than is generally considered. The motivational aspects of a method could be considered its most important characteristics.

The Micro Level
At this level attention is the key variable. Of course we all hope that our students pay attention to us or the task at hand and not look out the window or just pretend to pay attention while dreaming of being at the beach. To achieve this we try to make our lessons interesting, lively or exciting, or be an authority figure. We try many ways which suit our style of teaching or personality to get their attention on the lesson and not on something else. Getting students' attention focussed

on what's happening in the class is one thing. Even with 'motivated' students often what we are trying to teach and what the students are learning are quite different. Focusing the students' attention, actively, on a particular point is another problem. We can try to set up a situation so that the students feel the need to learn some grammar point or vocabulary in order to be able to express an idea or opinion or to be able to ask a question to which they really want to know the answer to. It's easier to do this with beginners than intermediate or advanced learners because of the beginner's need for almost any language forms or lexical items. At higher levels, particular needs are more difficult to pinpoint and to be agreed on by both teacher and learner. Wajnryb describes a classroom procedure, called Dictogloss, that is based on getting the students focused on particular grammar points, those that the students make errors on. She is explicit about the motivational aspect of using student error to grab their attention. Dictogloss has other motivational aspects such as responding to learners' perceived needs. However, in terms of attention, it is the procedure that is important. Before the 'teaching' or error analysis stage occurs the students are engaged in a reconstruction of a text. It is the mistakes they make on this that become the focus of teaching. This pre-teaching stage is what really directs the students' attention. It is my belief that not enough of this kind of activity, geared at grabbing the students directed attention, occurs. This is especially so in 'good' classes of motivated students where teachers do not have to think or do much to gain the students' attention over other things. This directed attention is often considered enough. But attracting students' active, selective attention is very important in any class, and more emphasis on the importance of this kind of activity should be made, especially before a typical 'presentation, practice and produc-

tion' lesson. Activities which create confusion, mystery, suspense or heightened awareness are very important in focusing students' attention onto particular language forms.

Conclusion

Most teachers share a belief in the importance of motivation and many use very creative techniques and procedures directed at creating or focusing student motivation. However, there is not enough connection of what happens in the classroom with writing and research in motivation in TESOL. Perhaps it is the case that motivation is not focused on because it is considered to be so important. It may be that it is taken for granted that teachers will use the tools available to them, such as materials, methods, techniques in a motivating way. The idea of motivation is allowed to permeate the teaching∕learning environment but little attention is directed to it. However, the ideas above are expressed in the belief that, firstly, we can gain some insights into the teaching∕learning process by using the concept of motivation as the central idea, and secondly, that by sharing our ideas of motivation and the ways we try to implement them in our classrooms, we can reevaluate the ideas or principles of teaching we hold, from a different perspective. In doing so, we would be helping to develop our teaching practice, to build bridges between it and theories of motivation in TESOL, and to direct some research in this area.

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