

A Review of Literature on the Effect of Motivation on Learners' Impact on L2 Acquisition

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Abstract. The study of motivation has consistently been a focal point and primary focus within the realm of educational psychology research. It stands as the cornerstone of understanding the psychological mechanisms driving students' learning processes. However, the existing motivation theories, while intricate, are often limited in their scope. There is an imperative need for an overarching theory capable of comprehensively explaining the current state of affairs. From the initial conceptualization of motivation to the subsequent formulation of fundamental principles and the evolution of various motivational theories, the depth of research on motivation has continuously expanded. Within this research, it has been observed that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation exert a profound influence on second language acquisition. Recognizing the pivotal role of motivation in language learning is crucial, as it equips educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers with effective strategies to enhance learners' motivation and optimize their language learning experiences. In this paper, the authors aim to review existing motivation theories with the aspiration of contributing to the future advancement of motivation research.

Keywords: Second language acquisition, motivation, research methods.

1. Introduction

Second Language Acquisition (SLA), as a multi-disciplinary field of study, has received a lot of attention since its inception. Within this broad and diverse field of research, individual differences are a topic of great interest because of the key role they play in understanding the complexity of language learning. Individual differences research explores the diversity that learners exhibit in acquiring a second language, which can encompass a variety of aspects including, but not limited to, speed of language learning, level of academic achievement, use of learning strategies, affective attitudes, and so on. Differences in these areas are not only apparent, but critical to the understanding of second language acquisition.

The existence and impact of individual differences are widely recognised in the field of second language acquisition. Different learners show significant differences in acquiring a second language depending on their individual characteristics and learning environments. These differences can be traced to the interaction of various factors, including biological factors, cognitive abilities, socio-cultural factors, and learning strategies. Therefore, individual differences research plays a crucial role in gaining a deeper understanding of second language acquisition. It helps academics to understand learners' needs and challenges more comprehensively and to provide more effective methods and strategies for second language education and teaching. The continuous development of this field will further broaden our understanding of language acquisition and diversity, providing a wide range of prospects for future research. The authors can expect to see more in-depth studies on how individual differences shape second language acquisition, leading to more personalised and targeted educational support for second language learners.

This review will review the main areas and trends of research on individual differences in motivation, looking at the influence of motivation on second language acquisition from three

perspectives: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and other motivations, covering biological factors, cognitive abilities, socio-cultural factors, and learning strategies. At the same time, the authors focus on how individual differences in motivation can be used in second language education and teaching, and how to develop more personalised educational policies based on learners' individual characteristics. By exploring these issues in depth, the authors will be able to better understand the role of individual differences in second language acquisition and provide valuable insights for future research and practice in the field of second language education.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Studies of Intrinsic Learning Motivation in a Second Language Context

The several iterations of Gardner's socio-educational theory [1, 2] have influenced language motivation theories for second language learning the most. Although Gardner's perspective, which emphasizes individual differences, forms part of motivation, it also takes into account psychological issues, diverse linguistic communities, and formal and informal learning contexts. While emphasizing that motivation encompasses both internal psychological mechanisms and psychological components, Dornyei emphasizes the social aspect of motivation [3]. Schuman views motivation from a neurological perspective based on how language acquisition and sensory appraisal are related [4, 5]. The traditional theory of accomplishment motivation, as forward by J.W. Atkinson, contends that there are two different forms of achievement motivation: the desire for success and the need to avoid failure [6]. He put out the expectancy-value hypothesis, which holds that people are inherently curious learners who want to comprehend their surroundings and overcome obstacles. Based on his research, the authors can conclude that intrinsic learning motivation leads to autonomous task planning for learners with achievement motivation, and this type of learner is correspondingly more powerful, i.e., intrinsic learning motivation is directly proportional to second language acquisition ability.

Studies have linked disparities in the second language's pragmatics to either observable learner performance or students' desire to master the target language for knowledge presentation. The research carried out by Takahashi is noteworthy not only for being the first to analyze the impact of motivation on another language's pragmatics, but also for its attention to a variety of particular problems [7]. Takahashi studies how motivation influences students' attention when they are processing particular discourse elements, as opposed to figuring out how motivation explicitly clarifies the consequences of individual variations in learners' second language use [8]. Takahashi's concept of motivation includes motivation based on neurobiology as stimulus evaluation, where attention is the mediating variable for motivational behavioural factors. Motivation is related to learners' use of cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies, which involves a lot of questions about how to deal with the allocation of attentional resources during input. Based on the above research, it is clear that intrinsic learning motivation provides positive and negative feedback to learners' cognition of new things, and that there is a positive relationship between good and bad results and their allocation of attention.

Takahashi's finding is supported by related research on the relationship between motivation and attention in second language acquisition, which agrees with Takahashi's study and shows that although intrinsic learning motivation is related to directing learners' attention with respect to the target language functions used by the learners, the sample size used for this finding is small and its accuracy needs to be further verified [9]. Based on his study, the authors can conclude that intrinsic learning motivation leads learners to create their own unique patterns of attention allocation, and that these different patterns of attention lead to different results in filtering everyday language use, i.e., intrinsic learning motivation leads to differences in the target language pragmatic functions of learners.

Additionally, studies have indicated that changes in student enthusiasm for foreign language acquisition are predominantly driven by the classroom atmosphere for learning [10]. Giving students the freedom to choose their own learning resources and approaches, providing them with feedback

that emphasizes self-improvement, and providing training in strategies for learning are all factors that contribute to increasing their intrinsic motivation in the classroom. In contrast, activities like exams and responding to questions on their own in the language of target in class will make students more anxious and are therefore not helpful for the growth of learning motivation [11-13].

In China, scholar Li Jingguang believes that students' intrinsic motivation to learn English can be further stimulated through continuous improvement of teaching; setting a realistic and reasonable learning goal so that they can achieve it through their own endeavours; and strengthening communication with students to create a harmonious and relaxed classroom teaching environment [14]. According to Shan Wei, because of the complexity and dynamism of motivation in second language acquisition, teachers must place them in a specific socio-cultural educational context in order to conduct comprehensive, dynamic and applied research [15].

2.2. Studies of Extrinsic Learning Motivation in a Second Language Context

The authors contend that students who are more motivated by intrinsic factors generate an initial enthusiasm in learning, whereas students who are motivated by extrinsic factors tend to view language acquisition primarily as a method of obtaining rewards or achieving specific objectives. Extrinsic motivation is motivation linked to stimuli other than the task itself, and is caused by some human-made influences in the external environment, such as material or mental rewards and punishments from teachers and parents, e.g., money, penalties, grades, and so on. In their proposed self-determination theory, extrinsic motivation coexists with intrinsic motivation, which may either undermine intrinsic motivation or contribute to it.

From the standpoint of extrinsic motivation, four domestic scholars—Gao Mingxing, Qiao Ling, Liu Lu, and Zhu Junyi—have examined the connection between individual characteristics and second language learning, but with different emphasises [16-19]. At the Confucius Institute of the University of the Philippines in Bulaca, Gao Mingxing looked into and analyzed the motivation of Chinese students [16]. Qiao Ling synthesised the research results of scholars at home and abroad, briefly sorted out the current situation and history of research on learning motivation, and took Ding Anqi's book *Empirical Research on Chinese as a Second Language Learners* as an example, analysed how the author conducted research on learning motivation of long-term Chinese language learners at Beijing Foreign Studies University, and drew conclusions and inspirations on the basis of the investigation process and results [17]. Focusing on the research results of domestic scholars, Liu Lu argues that learners' own factors and external environmental factors have an important influence on second language acquisition motivation, and proposes strategies to stimulate second language acquisition motivation in this way [18]. Zhu Junyi takes international students in higher vocational colleges and universities as the research object, adopts the "Belt and Road" international students' second language acquisition questionnaire as the research method, analyses and draws the relevant conclusions, and then proposes the relevant methods to stimulate students' learning motivation [19].

2.3. Studies of Other Learning Motivations in a Second Language Context

Gardner and Lamber initially looked at language acquisition motivation from the perspective of social psychology, and they divided it into integrative and instrumental types of motivation. Integrative motivation really consists of mastering the language's functions and interacting with speakers of the target language [20]. Students with purely integrative motivation learn English as a hobby or interest. They aspire to communicate with others in the newly learnt language. Generally speaking, integrative motivation is more stable and long-lasting in the learning process. Instrumental motivation focuses on some of the benefits of mastering the language. Students with purely instrumental motivation study hard to achieve a certain goal. Many college students choose to major in English mainly because there are certain requirements for English proficiency in many workplaces. As a result, they are prone to learning fatigue, so instrumental motivation is often not stable and lasting enough in the learning process.

3. Conclusion

The authors found that the data sources on the influence of extrinsic motivation on L2 learners are old and geographically limited, and the survey scales and theoretical foundations used have not been updated for a long time, so the results have certain limitations. Meanwhile, in the process of reviewing previous studies, it can also be concluded that the essence of extrinsic motivation is still an internal motivation for learning.

Understanding and applying motivational factors in second language education and teaching can help teachers and educational policymakers to better meet learners' needs and improve teaching effectiveness. Teachers should set clear learning goals, personalise education, stimulate students' interests, give them rewards and recognition, and create a positive learning environment. In conclusion, understanding and applying motivational factors is the key to improving the effectiveness of second language education and teaching. Teachers and educational policymakers should take into account students' individual differences and adopt different strategies to stimulate and sustain their learning interests and motivation to help them acquire a second language better.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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