A review of language learning motivation theories

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Abstract:

   This paper traces in brief the history of language learning motivation (LLM) by reviewing the main motivation theories and models that have affected its development. The paper commences with a brief discussion on the definition of the concept of motivation and on the emergence of the interest in LLM. It examines the complexity of LLM in light of the bulk of research in the field. Finally, the paper refers to some of the most recent perspectives on the nature of this concept.

Introduction

It is a well established belief among most researchers that motivation is crucial in students' learning. However, the concept of *motivation*, as will be illustrated below, proves complex since it takes a respectable number of different disciplines to arrive at a reasonable understanding of its different facets. General, educational, social, and cognitive psychology, as well as general educational and social theories and sociolinguistic theories have something to contribute for understanding LLM (language learning motivation) within a formal school context. The concept of motivation involves, in addition, neurobiological and physiological explanations. The complexity of the concept of motivation resides in its endeavours to explain individuals' actions and behaviour (Dörnyei, 2000 & 2001) which cannot be accounted for by one panaceic approach.

Research on students' LLM has recently mushroomed (see Dörnyei, 2001, 2005 and Dörnyei & Schmidt, 2001 for extensive reviews) and it remains a fertile area (Spolsky, 2000). The problem, as Dörnyei (1996) asserts, is not the lack of theories to explain motivation but rather the abundance of theories and models. However, the long history of research into LLM and the plenty of research and theorisation did not bring an end to the confusion

surrounding it and our knowledge of the subject remains uneven and inconsistent (Dörnyei, 2003). The main theories on LLM are examined in this paper preceded by a brief word on the complexity of the concept.

Motivation: basic definitions

Despite the unchallenged position of motivation in learning additional languages, there is, in fact, no agreement on the exact definition of *motivation* (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Dörnyei, (1998:117) comments, "Although 'motivation' is a term frequently used in both educational and research contexts, it is rather surprising how little agreement there is in the literature with regard to the exact meaning of the concept". Researchers still do not agree on its components and the different roles that these components play—individual differences, situational differences, social and cultural factors, and cognition (Renchler, 1992; Belmechri & Hummel, 1998). McDonough (1981:143) refers to the term ironically, calling it a *dustbin* that is used to 'include a number of possibly distinct components, each of which may have different origins and different effects and require different classroom treatment'. Dörnyei (2001:7), though less ironical but equally sharp, maintains that researchers disagree about everything that relates to the concept of motivation; viewing it as no more than an obsolete umbrella that hosts a wide range of concepts that do not have much in common. The complexity of motivation can be more appreciated if one takes into consideration that it is 'intended to explain nothing less than the reasons for human behaviour' (Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006).

At its beginnings the concept was examined and understood within a behavioural framework trying to understand 'what moved a resting organism into a state of activity', with heavy reliance on concepts such as instinct, drive, need, energisation, and homeostasis (Weiner, 1990). It was considered too complex to investigate directly, and much experimental research

conducted on animals was generalised to humans. Reward systems were the backbone of the approach for motivating individuals to show the desired behaviour (Williams & Bruden, 1997). This understanding of the concept was visibly not relevant to the educational context and this tradition continued to the sixties with the machine metaphor of motivation (Weiner, 1990).

The cognitive revolution started in the sixties and by the seventies it rendered irrelevant the behavioural mechanical approaches to motivation. Such positivist approaches lost support in philosophy because they simply did not work (Locke, 1996:117). In the *cognitive developmental theory* laid down by Piaget, motivation is perceived as 'a built-in unconscious striving towards more complex and differentiated development of the individual's mental structures' (Oxford & Shearin, 1994:23). With the advance of the cognitive approaches the field became more relevant to educational psychologists and the cognitive shift led to concentration on the individual's role in his or her own behaviour (Weiner, 1994). In other words, there has been a shift toward focusing on *why* students choose to engage in academic tasks instead of focusing on what they do and the time they spend doing so as has been the case with the behaviourist approach (Rueda & Myron, 1995). Concepts such as goal and level of aspiration, as well be discussed below, replaced the unconscious concepts of drive, instinct and the like. Individual differences were more highlighted with the introduction of psychological concepts like *anxiety*, *achievement needs* and *locus of control*. More cognitive concepts were developed during the seventies and eighties like *self-efficacy*, *learning helplessness* and *causal attributions*.

1.1.1 Language learning motivation (LLM)

Social psychologists were the first to initiate serious research on motivation in language learning because of their awareness of the social and cultural effects on L2 learning (Dörnyei, 2003)[1]. This interest was translated into the appearance of a number of models that stressed the affective aspect of language learning including Krashen's (1981) *Monitor Model* and Schumann's (1986) *Acculturation Model*.

However, the most influential model of LLM in the early sixties through the eighties of the previous century was that developed by Gardner, following studies carried out by him and associates. The model came to be known as the *Socioeducational Model* (Gardner, 1985). Gardner defined *motivation* as a 'combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable *attitudes* towards learning the language' (ibid:10). In his model, Gardner talked about two kinds of motivation, the *integrative* and the *instrumental*, with much emphasis on the former. The *integrative motivation* refers to learners' desire to at least communicate or at most integrate (or even assimilate) with the members of the target language. The *instrumental motivation* refers to more functional reasons for learning the language such as getting a better job, a higher salary or passing an examination (Gardner, 1985).

There are a number of components in the socioeducational model which are measured using different attitudinal and motivational scales in what Gardner called the AMBT (Attitude / Motivation Test Battery). *Integrativeness* is measured by three scales: attitudes towards the target language group, interest in foreign languages, and integrative orientation. *Motivation* is also

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[1] there were others who showed interest in LLM long before that but without systematic and focused research on LLM (see Horowitz, 2000)

measured by three scales: motivational intensity (the amount of effort invested in learning the language), attitudes toward learning the target language and the desire to learn the target language. *Attitudes toward the learning situation* which refer to the individual's reactions to anything associated with the immediate context in which learning takes place is measured by two scales: attitudes toward the teacher and attitudes toward the course.

However, it was the integrative motivation that was most stressed by Gardner and it was in fact the backbone of his model (figure 1). The role of attitudes towards the learned language, its speakers and the learning situation are all considered parts of the integrative motivation. In fact, the *integrative* aspect of the model appears in three different components: *integrative orientation*, *Integrativeness*, and *integrative motivation*. Gardner repeatedly stressed the differences among these components (e.g. Gardner 1985, 2001; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003) since confusion was often made between *orientations* and *motivations*. According to Gardner *orientations* refers to the set of *reasons* for which an individual studies the language; whereas, *motivation* refers to the driving force which involves expending *effort*, expressing *desire* and feeling *enjoyment*. The term *orientation* is problematic since it can also mean '*attitude* or *inclination*'. Still however, other understandings of the concept of orientation have been suggested. For example, according to the understanding of Belmsihri & Hammel (1998), and others in the field, orientations are long–range *goals* (more will be said below about the role of goals in motivation), which, along with attitudes, sustain student's motivation.
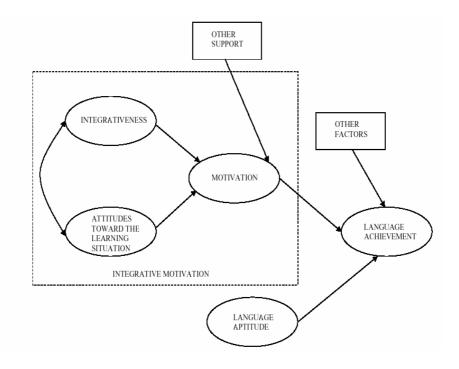
Figure 1 - A simple representation of the socioeducational model
Adopted from Gardner (2001). The dotted square represents the borders of
the integrative motivation

Criticism on the socioeducational model

The socioeducational model was subjected to serious criticism from a large number of researchers despite acknowledging the breakthrough that the model made in motivation research (e.g. Dörnyei, 1990, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Oxford, 1996; Belmechri & Hummel, 1998; and Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). Most criticism was raised against the concept of integrative motivation and its definition. The notion of integrative motivation has no parallel in mainstream motivational psychology (Dörnyei 2003a). The term has also been understood in different and sometimes contradictory ways by different researchers. The integrative motivation has been defined in a way in which almost every reason one can think of for studying the language of

the target community can fall within its range (Clement & Kruidenier, 1983). It has been noted for example that the orientation to travel, was considered instrumental by some but interpreted as integrative by others. In another example, it was noted that reasons such as *having friends who speak English,* or *knowing more about English art, literature and culture* could be classified as either instrumental or integrative depending on the intention of the respondent and his or her understanding. The same was the case with reasons like *listening to English music* (Keblawi, 2006) These approaches to the definition of the integrative motive, in particular, led to difficult communication and to different and sometimes contradictory research results (ibid).

Shaw (1981:112) claims that, in parts of the world where English is learned as a foreign language[2], the integrative motivation, in the way it is understood by Gardner, plays only a minor role in the popularity of English and since English is considered by many 'a bonafide international or intranational language which is not inseparably connected to any particular countries'. In many places learners do not have many opportunities to interact with the target language speakers. Similar arguments have been raised by other scholars (e.g. Krashen, 1981:28; McGroarty, 2001:72, Dörnyei, 2001; Chen, Warden & Chang, 2005) and reached by studied conducted by other researchers (e.g. Lamb, 2004; Keblawi, 2006). It can be noted as well that the instrumental motivation was not assigned a status that is congruent with its weight.

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[2] Second language acquisition usually involves learning a second language in a context in which it serves as the main medium of communication whereas foreign language learning involves learning the additional language in a context where it is not so. This notion will be tackled below.

Another criticism coming from a constructivist approach to knowledge and learning poses serious questions to the socioeducational model, and to the other language learning models that stress the importance of the integrative component. The concept of integrative motivation presents serious hazards to individuals' identities as it implies that successful learners are those who wish to adopt a new identity and relinquish their own. Tollefson (1991:23) notes 'learners who wish to assimilate – who value or identify with members of the target language community – are generally more successful than learners who are concerned about retaining their original cultural identity' (as cited in Webb 2003:63). Similarly, Webb criticises this idea and states that '[i]n this context, the cultural identity of the second language learners is conceptualised as hazardous in the second language learning process' (ibid). In a similar vein, the positivist approach within which the socioeducational model was incubated was deemed insufficient to the understanding of learning English as an L2. Within this positivist approach the issues of teaching English as a foreign language were limited to functional and linguistic issues without much concern about the social and political dimensions it involves. In this regard, Pennycook (1995:41) observes:

> …we cannot reduce questions of language to such social psychological notions as instrumental and integrative motivation, but must account for the extent to which language is embedded in social, economical and political struggles'

However, before proceeding, I will point at further problems with the socioeducational model that, I believe, were not explicitly stressed by other researchers. Problems with defining the concept of *integrative* motivation were raised by many researchers (e.g. Belmechri & Hummel (1998), Crookes & Schmidt, 1991, Dörnyei 1994); however, there has not been direct reference to the striking contradiction in the model as it makes *motivation* part of the *integrative motivation* (see figure 4-2). Instead of

being part of *motivation* in general it actually encompasses it. This means perceiving the *part* as a subgroup of the *whole* which is an apparent logical contradiction. The other point is with the 'educational' part in the name of the model 'socio*educational*'. I believe that the term is partly misnomer. Although many pointed at the limitation of the model in giving practical advice to learners and teachers, no one explicitly remarked that there is not much 'education' in the socio*educational* model. The reasons for the inappropriate consideration of the educational dimensions of motivation might lie in the fact that Gardner himself was a psychologist and a statistician rather than a language teacher. Another logical reason might be the fact that the early versions of the model were developed and experimented within a college environment where the effect of teachers on learners is less visible. The model is often referred to as the sociopsychological model (e.g. Belmechri & Hummel, 1998; Dickinson, 1995:167). The *socioeducational* model relates, in fact, to sociology more than it does to education. Nevertheless, it gives attention, though not enough, to the effect of the learning context as can be seen in figure 1.

As has already been argued the socioeducational model has been confined to the dichotomy that has been delineated between the integrative and instrumental motives. Other potential motives were thus excluded and it is now time to explore the main ones that have been identified in literature.

Expanding the concept of language learning motivation: The cognitive revolution

It is important to emphasize at this stage that LLM researchers called for expanding and rectifying the socioeducational model rather than degrading or eliminating it (Dörnyei, 1990, 1996; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Oxford, 1996). Below is a description of some of the key psychological theories that have caught the attention of LLM researchers and how they were employed

by them. These theories are part of the cognitive revolution that took place in psychological research from the seventies onward. Three of the theories on motivation that are currently prominent and that are relevant to LLM are presented below. These are *the self-determination theory; the attribution theory*, and *goal theory*.

The Self Determination Theory

The self-determination theory is one of the most influential theories in motivational psychology (Dörnyei, 2003). According to the theory, developed by Deci and his associates, '[t]o be self-determining means to experience a sense of choice in initiating and regulating one's own actions' (Deci, Connell, & Ryan,1989:580). This is referred to as *autonomy*. The theory distinguishes between two kinds of motivations: *intrinsic* and *extrinsic*. The first refers to an individual's motivation to perform a particular activity because of *internal* rewards such as joy, pleasure and satisfaction of curiosity. Whereas in *extrinsic* motivation the individual expects an *extrinsic* reward such as good grades or praise from others. In line with the notion of *autonomy* and *intrinsic motivation,* the self-determination theory offers a very interesting look at motivation by setting a different agenda for language teachers. Rather than focusing on how people (e.g. teachers in the classroom) can motivate others, the focus should be on 'how people can create the conditions within which others can motivate themselves' (ibid).

Noels (2001), referring to Vallerand (1997) and later works by Vallerand and colleagues, classify the two types of motivations, within education, into different categories. The intrinsic motivation (IM) could be one of three kinds: IM-Knowledge (the pleasure of knowing new things), IM-Accomplishment (the pleasure of accomplishing goals), and IM-Stimulation (the pleasure sensed when doing the task). The extrinsic motivation has also

been classified along a continuum of three categories according to the extent to which the goals are self-determined (see also Deci & Ryan, 2000:236). *External regulation* refers to actions that individuals pursue and that are determined by sources that are external to the individual, such as tangible benefits and costs. If learning the language is made for such an external incentive and this incentive is removed the activity of learning will halt. The second, less external regulation, is *introjected regulation,* which refers to activities performed due to some external pressure that the individual has incorporated into the self. This is still not a self-determined activity since it has an external rather than an internal source. An example is a person who learns the language in order not to feel ashamed if he does not know it. At the end of the continuum, resides the *identified regulation*. Individuals who possess such a regulation are driven by personally relevant reasons, such as that the activity is important for achieving a valued goal. Individuals who learn an L2 because they think it is important for their educational development, for example, all fall within this category. Another concept that is fundamental to the self-determination theory is the concept of *amotivation* (Deci & Ryan, 2000:237). *Amotivation*, or *learned helplessness*, is the situation in which people lack the intention to behave. They see no relation between the efforts they make and the outcomes they get. This happens when they lack self efficacy or a sense of control on the desired outcome. In this case, the learner has no goal and thus possesses neither intrinsic nor extrinsic motivation to perform the activity (Noels, et al, 2001).

A review of a number of studies on the relevance of the self-determination theory to educational settings conducted by Deci et al. (1991:342) has shown that self-determination, as shaped by intrinsic motivation and autonomy, leads to desired educational outcomes that are beneficial to both individuals and to society. Research on LLM demonstrate that the self-reported intrinsic motivation correlates positively, among other things, with general

motivation, self efficacy, end of training speaking, reading proficiency, and negatively with anxiety (Ehrman, 1996).

Noels and colleagues (2000, 2001) were more focused and elaborated in utilising the self-determination theory in researching LLM. Noels, et. al. (2000) conclude after presenting the outcomes of some studies that there is some evidence that the distinction between intrinsic/extrinsic motivation has the utility to explain differences in outcomes. Studies conducted by Noels and colleagues (Noels, 2000, 2001) demonstrated that the intrinsic motivation is enhanced when teachers allow more autonomy to learners, are less perceived as controlling by them, and provide encouraging feedback. In their study, Noels et. al. (2000) demonstrated, among other things and using factor analyses, that the different subscales in the self-determination theory can be statistically distinguished: 'Reflecting a self-determination continuum, the correlations between subscales, suggest that one can distinguish between amotivation, less self-determined forms of motivation (external and introjected regulation), and more forms of self-determined motivation (i.e. identified regulation and IM [intrinsic motivation]'. In a later study, McIntosh & Noels (2004) examined the relationship between concepts from the self-determination theory with the need for cognition and language learning strategies. They found, among other things, a significant and positive association between *need for cognition* and self-determination in L2 learning. They concluded that 'people who enjoy effortful thinking for its own sake also take an L2 for self-determined reasons (i.e., out of choice and pleasure)'.

However, the existence of a self-determination continuum is not well-established. The distinctions that Noels and associates make between the different extrinsic regulations and the different intrinsic motives are not theoretically clear. In addition, new recent research within the frame of the

self-determination theory suggest that such a continuum does not exist. Vandergrift (2005) wanted to examine the relationship between motivation and proficiency in L2 listening among adolescent learners of French as L2. The framework adopted for studying motivation was the self-determination theory with the sub-classifications suggested by Noels and associates. Among the other findings, Vandergrift found that 'no distinct simplex pattern, reflecting a continuum of increasing self-determination [was] apparent' and concluded that the self-determination framework as theorized by Noels and colleagues cannot be generalised for adolescent learners. Such a generalisation can only be made as to the broad categories of *extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation* and *amotivation.* In a recent experimental study on college students Vohs et. al. (2008) found that offering too many choices to individuals may lead to negative effects on self-regulation. It found for example, that this might lead to less self regulation, less willingness to engage in an activity and less persistence on performance.

Goal theories

Goals are fundamental to the study of motivation but the definition of *goal* is not spared any complexity. Originally, the concept of goal has replaced that of need which was introduced by Maslow's hierarchy of needs[3] (Dörnyei, 2001). Goal theories focus on the reasons or purposes that students perceive for achieving (Anderman & Midgley, 1998). There are four mechanisms by which goals affect individuals' performance:

- Goals serve a directive function as they direct attention and effort toward goal-relevant activities and away from irrelevant activities
- Goals have an energising function and they help individuals regulate their effort to the difficulty of the task.

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[3] For a review of Maslow's famous hierarchy the reader is referred to Williams & Burden (1997) p. 33-35.

- Goals positively affect persistence.
- Goals affect action indirectly by leading to the arousal, discovery, and/or use of task-relevant knowledge and strategies.

(Locke and Latham 2002:706-7)

There are two goal theories that have been particularly influential in the study of motivation: the *goal setting theory* and the *goal orientation theory* (ibid). The goal setting theory was mainly developed by Locke and Latham (1990) within industrial and organizational psychology with frequent references to workplace settings (Pagliaro, 2002). The goal setting theory is built on three fundamental pillars (Locke, 1996):

- it is philosophically sound for it is in line with the philosophical theories that assumes individuals' control of their actions;
- it is in line with the introspective evidence revealing that human action is normally purposeful; and
- it is practical

According to the theory, people must have goals in order to act since human action is caused by purpose and for action to take place, goals have to be set and pursued by choice (Dörnyei, 1988). The theory suggests that goals have two aspects: internal and external. They are ideas (internal aspect), and they refer to the object or condition sought (external). Ideas serve as guides for obtaining the goals (Locke, 1996). There are a few conclusions that Locke et. al. (1981, in Oxford & Shearin, 1994) reach after reviewing research on goal-setting. They conclude, among other things, that goal-setting and performance are related; that goals affect the performance of the task, the energy expended, the strategies used and its duration and maintenance. The goal-setting theory suggests that there are three main characteristics of goals that cause them to differ: *difficulty*, *specificity* and *commitment*. Research based on the goal setting- theory reveals that there are particular relations

among these different characteristics that can enhance individuals' motivation:

- The more difficult the goal, the greater the achievement (easy tasks do not give a sense of achievement)
- The more *specific* or *explicit* the goal, the more precisely performance is regulated (general goals like 'do your best' do not really cause individuals to do their best).
- The highest performance is yielded when the goals are both specific and difficult.
- Commitment to goals is most critical when they are *specific* and difficult (commitment to general or vague goals is easy since general goals do not require much commitment and vague ones can be 'manipulated' to accommodate low performance).
  - High commitment to goals is attained when the individual is convinced that (a) the goal is important and (b) attainable.

(Locke, 1996:118-119, emphasis added; see also Locke & Latham, 2002)

In addition, it has also been found that 'goal setting is most effective when there is *feedback* showing progress in relation to the goal' (ibid:120, emphasis added). Another finding shows that 'goals affect performance by affecting the direction of action, the degree of effort exerted and, the persistence of action over time' (ibid). It, thus, appears that the quality of individuals' performance is largely affected by goals.

A number of researchers on LLM such as Oxford & Shearin (1994) and Dörnyei (1994) have embraced the goal setting theory in some of their works. Dörnyei incorporated the goal setting theory into his 1998 model on LLM. The appeal of the theory is not without genuine reasons. It offers measurable parameters and the possibility of autonomy for the student (Pagliaro, 2002). However, Pagliaro warns against a careless application of

the theory that has developed within a workplace context on language learning. In the former context, work is needed for living whereas in the latter students are not subject to these needs.

Since mastering a language is not a goal to be achieved within a short time, Dörnyei (1994) suggests that planners set subgoals (*proximal subgoals*) that can be achieved within a short time. Such subgoals might have a powerful motivating function for they also provide learners with feedback on their progress. They can, once achieved, increase self-efficacy and motivation. Van Lier (1996:121), cited by Pagliaro (2002:20) warns against an exclusive focus on goals since concentration only on future goals, particularly the long-term goal of mastering the language, might distract teachers' attention from the fact that learners' intrinsic enjoyment and innate curiosity are both vital sources of motivation.

Unlike the *goal-setting theory*, the *goal orientation theory* was developed in a classroom context in order to explain children's learning and performance (Dörnyei, 2001:27), and it might now be one of the most vigorous motivation theories within the classroom (Pintrinch & Shunck, 1996). According to this theory, an individual's performance is closely related to his or her accepted goals. An important contribution of the theory resides in its distinction between two types of goal orientation (Ames & Archer, 1988; Ames, 1992): *performance* vs. *mastery (or learning)* orientations. Learners possessing the first orientation, are primarily concerned with looking good and capable, those possessing the second are more concerned with increasing their knowledge and *being* capable. A rather interesting distinction is suggested by Dweck (1985:291) in Williams & Burden (1997:131), 'Put simply, with performance goals, an individual aims to look smart, whereas with the learning goals, the individual aims to becoming smarter'. A strategy called the *attunement strategy* (ibid, 132) based on the goal orientation

theory in which teachers negotiate and discuss with students all aspects of the work proved successful in increasing language learners' motivation in primary schools in Netherlands and England (Hasting, 1992 in ibid).

Attribution Theory

The attribution theory of student motivation was largely influential in the 1980s (Dörnyei, 2003). The uniqueness of the theory stems from its ability to link individuals' achievements to past experiences through the establishment of *causal* attributions as the mediating link (ibid). The theory does not look at the experiences that people undergo but at how they are *perceived* by people themselves (Williams & Burden, 1997:104). In a broad brush, the theory hypothesises that the reasons to which individuals attribute their past successes or failures shape to a great extent their motivational disposition (Dörnyei, 2001). In a school context, learners tend to ascribe their failure or success (*locus of causality)* to a number of reasons: *ability* and *effort, luck, task difficulty*, *mood*, *family background*, and *help* or *hindrance* from others. The previous can be placed on a continuum of *internal* vs. *external* reasons depending on whether the individuals see themselves or others as the *causes* of their actions. *Locus of control*, on the other hand, refers to peoples' perception of how much they are in *control* of their actions. In a classroom environment, the importance of the kind of attribution is of special significance. If, for example, learners attribute their failure to a lack of ability (*internal cause* over which they have no control), then their motivation to learning the language is likely to decrease or even vanish completely. If, on the other hand, they believe that their failure is the result of their laziness or lack of effort (*internal cause* over which they have *control*), then they have good chances to increase their motivation if they double their efforts.

Research implementing aspects of the attribution theory has been limited despite its recognized importance, partly as, Dörnyei (2003) points out, because it does not easily render itself to quantitative research. Dörnyei summarises the findings of some qualitative studies that were conducted by Ushioda (1996b, 1998) and by Williams and Burden (1999). The first found that maintaining a positive self concept and belief in personal potential in the face of negative experiences depended on two *attributional reasons*: success attributed to personal ability or other internal factors (e.g. enough effort) and failure to temporarily shortcomings that can be overcome (e.g. lack of effort or time to spend). The latter found differences between ages: 10-12 years old attributed success mainly to listening and concentration, older learners mentioned a variety of reasons including ability, level of work, circumstances and the influence of others.

A critical appraisal of motivation theories

Research on motivation is not devoid of problems. As noted above the complexity of researching motivation starts with its definition and the definition of the many constructs that have been linked to it and the relationships among them. Despite the many breakthroughs that have been accomplished, research on language learning motivation is still occupied with the questions of 'why', 'how' and 'what' that accompanied it since its inception. In what follows I will try to shed light on some of the major challenges and complexities that have accompanied research on LLM.

Overlap between theories and constructs

As noted in the review above, the long history of motivation research has witnessed the development of many motivation theories, each of which has made its contribution. However, the plethora of theories has at the same time raised some challenges and some researchers have highlighted the fact that

these theories overlap and render motivation too much a complex phenomenon. These similarities have been blamed for some of the inconsistencies found in LLM research.

One of the similarities that has often been highlighted is that between the *integrative* and *instrumental* motivation (from *the socioeducational model*) on the one hand and the *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation (from *the self-determination theory*) on the other hand with some researchers seeing no difference between them (e.g. Soh, 1987). Both the *integrative* and the *intrinsic* motives refer to motives that involve enjoyment and inner satisfaction. Gardner (1960) notes 'integratively oriented ... enjoy the foreign speech sounds, grammatical rules, etc.', (note also the similarity with *need theories* that also emphasise *satisfaction* with meeting needs). The *instrumental* and *extrinsic* motives involve behaviour that is driven by forces external to the individual. Still, however, the differences between the integrative and the intrinsic are more evident than those between the extrinsic and the instrumental.

The goal orientation theory and *attribution theory* have much in common as the main constructs in the two theories can be easily linked. It is possible to see that the constructs of *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation in the *self-determination theory* correlate with constructs of *task goals* and *ability goals* in the goal-orientation theory respectively. Both intrinsic motivation and task goals relate to deeper and more durable learning; whereas, extrinsic motivation and ability goals tend to yield less profound learning. The two concepts again correlate in one way or another with the *integrative* and *instrumental* motivation respectively as has been shown above.

The link between *the goal-setting theory* and the *self-determination theory* can be found in the construct of *autonomy* in *the self-determination theory* and the concept of *commitment* in the *goal setting theory*. *Commitment,*

according to the *goal-setting theory* can be best yielded when the individual is *convinced* of the importance and attainability of the goals. It can be said that *autonomous* individuals are those individuals who are *convinced* of the significance of their actions.

The attribution theory can be linked in one way to the *self-determination theory*. When the behaviour is self-determined, individuals perceive the *locus of causality* to be internal. When, on the other hand, the behaviour is controlled, the locus of causality is external (Deci et al., 1991). In this sense, the more the behaviours are perceived as self-determined the more are the chances individuals feel they have control over them.

Another similarity can be found between *commitment* to attainment of goals in goal theory and *motivation intensity* in the socioeducational model as both refer to individuals' desire to sustain their efforts in order to achieve their goals or the outcomes they expect from themselves or others expect from them.

Innovative perspectives on motivation

In an earlier thorough study of middle and high school students' language learning motivation (Keblawi, 2006), I have discussed some of the new perspectives on motivation that may pose serious questions to the LLM theories and models reviewed above. However, these perspectives might simultaneously open new horizons to LLM research in particular and motivation research in general. With the help of findings from the Keblawi's study and other studies in the field, I intend to sharpen a number of conclusions that might enhance our understanding of the concept of motivation and the relationships among its many facets. These findings are summarized in the following paragraphs sometimes accompanied by examples from the worlds of language learners.

More about motivation complexity

In the first place, it can be noted that a learner might have *mixed motives* in the sense that he or she can be simultaneously motivated by different motives (see Oxford, 1994). In fact statements like 'I like the language and it is also important' are often articulated by some learners. This finding gives support to the notion that one should not assume that learners can have one type of motivation. Keblawi (2006) has shown, for example, that seeking high marks can involve instrumental, intrinsic and achievements motives at the same time, depending on how the leaner perceive such a stimulus. Pursuing higher studies can have instrumental aspects (boosting one's chances of a better career) as well as intrinsic ones (feeling the satisfaction of knowing things and of being an educated person). Thus, the line being followed by some researchers to delineate acute borders among the different motives (e.g. Gardner and associates) and within each motive (e.g. Noels and colleagues) proves an elusive task, though it does not mean that these motives are identical. The complexity of motivation cannot be appreciated without recognising the interrelations and interrelations between the different motives and their components.

In addition, it cannot assumed that one type of motivation, however stimulating it might be, is enough for fully motivating learners. For example, to 'foster sustained learning, it may not be sufficient to convince students that language learning is interesting and enjoyable; they may need to be persuaded that it is also personally important for them' (Noels, et. al, 2000). Having a variety of motives available for the learner is preferable to having only one because at different times learners can benefit from the different motives as their modes, thoughts and their perception of their surroundings can change from one time to another.

Motivation dynamicity and contextuality

The last point gives rise to the *dynamicity* of motivation. Many learners stress that their motivation is not the same at all times as it changes in accordance with the ways in which they perceive the context where learning takes place and on their moods as well. That is to say, sometimes they feel more motivated and less at others. This view contradicts the positivist approach which assumes that motivation is static and the other theories that stem from it. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the critical approach to social psychology (see a review in Rogers, 2003) which assumes that individuals' attitudes are not necessarily static and they can change from one context to another. Following a similar line, it can be postulated that individuals' motivation can be context-dependent as well.[4]

Keblawi (2006) talks about two kinds of contexts that might affect learners' motivation: the general learning context and the more specific one. The former refers to the sociolinguistic, socio-cultural and socio-political status of the language and its speakers in addition to the needs for learning it. Some of these aspects have been addressed by models that stress the social aspects of language learning like Gardner's socioeducational model Schumann's acculturation model. The different cultural and social contexts in which learning an L2 takes place might significantly affect how motivation is understood, how it operates and how language learning occurs (e.g. Clément & Kruidenier, 1983; Noels & Clément, 1989; Watkins, 2002). One of the most contextual differences that has often been highlighted is that between learning and L2 as a *foreign* language and learning it as a *second* language.

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[4] On the idea of contextuality in philosophical and cognitive sciences, see Gershenson (2002). For a thorough discussion on the complex relationship between motivation and attitude refer to Keblawi (2006).

Yet, one of the most important developments in the study of L2 learning was the increasing awareness of the effects of the immediate learning context. This trend was a direct outcome of the cognitive revolution in the understanding of LLM. Here teachers' role, in particular, the general school climate, the learning materials and the relationships among language learners are seen as crucial elements that affect language learning. This interest in what happens in the formal learning context necessitates a separate discussion that is beyond the scope of this study. A thorough discussion of some of these immediate contextual elements can be found in Dornyei (2003) who also developed with another associate a LLM that takes such elements into consideration (Dornyei & Otto, 1998).

Strongly related to the learning context is the concept of *language learning demotivation*. Roughly speaking this concept refers to the many contextual factors that are external to the learner (e.g. negatively perceived teachers, materials and methods) and cognitive forces that are within the learner (e.g. beliefs about and perceptions of the language) that might negatively affect his or her motivation. Such forces might erode motivation and may eventually lead to its total loss. For some recent references to this concept see Falout & Maruyam (2004), Dornyei (2005), and Keblawi (2005).

Motivation circularity and the notion of resultative motivation

In his LLM model, Gardner (1985) considers motivation as the independent variable and achievement in the target language as the dependant variable (see figure 1 above). The higher an individual is motivated, the higher are his or her achievements. Gardner (2000) attempting to establish statistical evidence through complicated statistical procedures contends, 'it seems logical to conclude that the differences in integrative motivation are responsible for the variation observed, even though correlation does not mean causation' (p. 21).

This notion has been justifiably challenged by a number of scholars and by a number of empirical findings. Dörnyei (2001:198) expresses caution as to the relationship between LLM and achievement[5] for a direct cause-effect cannot be assumed between the two. The relationship can at best be indirect since *motivation* is the antecedent of *action* rather than of *achievement* itself. Dörnyei and Otto's (1998) cyclic model assumes that the relationship between motivation and achievement is not linear since the positive feedback that one gets after achieving his or her goal might lead him or her to pursue a new goal. There are, in addition, a host of other factors that affect motivation, such as learners' ability, learning opportunities, and the instructional quality of the learning task. The dual relationship is also recognized by the self-determination theory.

Harter & Connel (1984) maintain that 'improved learning will have the additional effect of further enhancing intrinsic motivation, thereby creating a kind of positively synergistic effect' (cited in Dickinson, 1995:172). Williams (1994:78-79), presenting a constructivist approach, contends that it is impossible to establish whether motivation leads to successful achievement or whether success leads to higher motivation, or whether it is a mixture of both, or whether both are affected by other factors . In fact, there has been a title given to motivation that results from success in language learning and it is referred to as the *resultative motivation* (Ellis, 1997:75). However a word of caution is necessary here since learners' success alone is not a guarantee for increased motivation. Learners who strive for learning (i.e. mastery) goals are more likely to benefit from their success than learners who strive for performance goals (Dwick (1986 in Dickinson,

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[5] Similar arguments have been raised as to the relationship between attitudes and achievement. See McLaughlin (1987) and Baker (1992)

1995). From an achievement theory perspective, (see a review in Oxford & Shearin, 1994) the need for achievement can *itself* be the *motive* for choosing to do things. In addition, the relationship between motivation and achievement can vary because of the different contexts in which the learning process takes place (Csella, 1999).

Empirical research, even that conducted by Gardner and his associates, gives evidence to the dual relationship between the motivation and achievement. Inbar, Donitsa-Schmidt & Shohamy (2001) and Donitsa-Schmidt, Inbar, & Shohamy (2004) found that Jewish students who learned Arabic showed more positive attitudes towards Arabic and its speakers and were more motivated to study it despite the much political tension between Jewish and Arabs. Tremblay, Goldberg, & Gardner (1995) demonstrated that relative success in learning Hebrew resulted in more positive attitudes towards learning Hebrew, while lack of success resulted in slightly (though not significantly) less positive attitudes. Earlier, Gardner and Smythe (1975a in Gardner, 1985) showed that students who spend more years studying French had more positive attitudes towards the French Canadian. Janssens & Mettewie (2004), report findings of their research which they carried out in Brussels (where some speak French or Dutch, while others are bilingual). In their research, they compared the attitudes and motivation of students to learning the language of the other. They concluded that the daily contact in school settings where students from the two communities learn together - compared to monolingual settings– had positive influence on (1) students' attitudes towards the second language and its linguistic community, (2) their attitudes towards bilingualism and (3) their motivation to learn the second language.

Conclusions and future trends

This paper has attempted to shed light on LLM through reviewing some of the most influential theories and models in the field. The three main theories that have been reviewed are the *self-determination theory*, *goal theories* and *attribution theory*. In addition, there has been a critical reference to one of the most common models on LLM; namely the socioeducational model. In this review, regard has been given to the origin of the theories and models and to the findings reached by some of the most eminent scholars who implemented them.

Following this review, it has been possible to draw attention to some important conclusions on LLM that researchers should consider. In the first place, it has been demonstrated that despite the consensus on the importance of motivation in L2 learning, there is in fact little agreement as to its definition, components and relationships with other psychological concepts. Motivation can be understood differently by people coming from different contexts. Moreover, there are many ways in which the different theories, models and constructs of LLM overlap. The complexity of motivation has also been shown in other ways. Motivation can be circular since it can both affect achievement and be affected by it and this has often been referred to as the *resultative motivation*. Individuals can also be simultaneously influenced by different motives and individuals' motivation can go up and down depending on individuals' conception of the context in which learning occurs. These conclusions open the gate the wide for further enquiry into the nature of LLM and the different many contextual elements that might affect it.

Some of the above conclusions have serious ramifications not only on the way motivation should be understood, but also on the way it should be

researched. A number of researchers in the field have argued for the incorporation of more qualitative research methods into the study of LLM as they acknowledge the complexity of the concept which cannot be fully appreciated following only a quantitative research paradigm.

Research into LLM remains, thus, a fertile area that is likely to accompany us for generations to come, posing more perplexing questions that researchers will have to tackle in order to arrive at a more satisfactory understanding of the concept.

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