

Attitudes of Japanese University ESL Learners: A Contextual Motivation Survey

Michael Greisamer

Abstract

Using contextual motivation as a base, this paper will discuss techniques for motivating students of English as a Second Language at Japanese universities. The paper consists of two sections: the first examines current theories of motivation, the second section analyzes the results of a recent survey on attitudes of Japanese university students studying English, focusing on techniques employing Dornyei's (2001) motivation strategies, and using the Motivational Teaching Practice Model (Appendix III). By opening channels to learners' requirements, this survey's analysis offers educators a better grasp on efficient, effective motivation of language learners.

Key words: contextual motivation, attitude, survey, intrinsic, extrinsic.

要 旨

本稿は、contextual motivation（雰囲気／環境上の動機）を基礎とし、日本の大学の第2言語学習者に対する英語学習への動機づけの方法を、二つのセクションに分けて論ずる。最初のセクションでは、現在の動機概念に影響を及ぼした理論を検証する。第2のセクションでは、今現在英語を学んでいる日本の大学生の姿勢を分析し、学習者の動機づけに焦点を当てる。

そして Dornyei (2001年) の動機戦略を用いて、実用的な案と教室での教授モデル (Appendix III) を提示する。この調査は、学習者の要求に対して道を開くものであり、教授者はこのデータを研究することによって、言語学習者に対する情緒的かつ効率的な動機づけの方法をよりよく理解することができる。

キーワード：動機づけ，雰囲気 的／環境的要因，外部的／内部的要因，姿勢，調査。

Introduction

The past few decades have brought increased interest in learners' motivation in the fields of L2 learning and language acquisition.

A number of studies have reported that motivation is one of the major determining factors in success in acquiring a second or foreign language (see Gardner, 1985; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Ryan & Deci, 1997). According to the rubric of "motivation in context," researchers posit motivation as an interactive experience between students and their environments. Environments, generally defined, include instructors, peers, activities, the content area, the instructional discourse, as well as the standards and beliefs of the participants. Motivation is influenced by numerous and overlying contexts. Examination of the influence of educational contexts range from macro views of "culture as context" (see Volet, 1999) to micro studies of dyadic interacting (see Rogoff, 1990; Wertsch, 1985).

Section 1

Defining Motivation

“Motivation” is a term frequently used in both education and research fields. Different interpretations of the definition of motivation depend on various psychological perspectives of human behavior. In spite of the numerous definitions of motivation that have been proposed, “it is rather surprising how little agreement there is in the literature with regard to the exact meaning of this concept” (Dornyei, 1998, p. 117).

Brown (1994; 34) gave the definition of motivation as “the extent to which you make choices about (a) a goal to pursue and (b) the effort you will devote to the pursuit.” Keller (1983) believed that ability and motivation are the major factors of variation in educational success. “Ability refers to what a person can do; motivation, to what a person will do” (Schmidt, Boraie & Kassabgy 1996; 11). Similarly, Johnson (1979; 283) offered the definition of motivation as the “tendency to expend effort to achieve goals.”

Relating motivation to L2 learning, Gardner (1985) proposed, “Motivation is a term which is often used with respect to second language learning as a simple explanation of achievement” (p. 10). Continuing, Dornyei (1998) indicated that L2 motivation was “a multifaceted construct, and describing its nature and its core features requires particular care” (p. 118). Gardner’s (1985) definition of motivation in language learning was the “effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language” (p. 10). Gardner (1985) defined the motivation to learn a L2 as “the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experiences in

this activity” (p. 10). Similarly, Dornyei (1998) conceptualized language learning motivation as including three components: motivational intensity, desire to learn the language and an attitude towards the act of learning the language.

THEORIZING MOTIVATION

Before suggesting techniques for motivating students, this paper will review theories and causes of students being motivated or unmotivated. There are literally dozens of theories of motivation in psychology. For example, behaviorism emphasizes the role of drive and reinforcement, and defines motivation as “the anticipation of reinforcement” (Brown 1994; 35). Cognitive psychology stresses motivation as a function of an individual’s thoughts rather than of some instinct.

As Dornyei (2000) maintains, ‘motivation theories in general attempt to explain three interrelated aspects of human behavior: the choice of a particular action, persistence with it, and effort expended on it. That is, motivation is responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity, and how hard they are going to pursue it’ (p. 521).

The basic schema for mapping motivation is based on the work of Maslow’s (1970) pyramid of human needs, which progresses from the satisfaction of purely physical needs up through safety and communal needs, finally to “self actualization,” a state of reaching one’s fullest potential. After Maslow, Gardner *et al* have further examined motivations for language learning using a socio-psychological framework, to yield the “socio-educational model” (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993).

More recent researchers have challenged these theories' comprehensiveness by searching for other motives in foreign language learning. Dornyei (1994) argues that the socio-educational model overlooks specific cognitive aspects of motivation to learn. Indeed, contemporary research studies indicate that new cognitive variables such as need for achievement (Dornyei, 1990), attributions (Schmidt et al., 1996), self confidence (Clement et al, 1994), self-efficacy, and goal setting (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995) influence foreign language learning. These researchers also claim that in various settings based on the formal classroom, motivation towards foreign language learning seems to depend on divergent contexts, and to involve sub-components of Gardner's traditional integrative/instrumental orientations, as well as intrinsic orientation. (Clements & Kruidenier, 1983; Dornyei, 1990; Clement et al., 1994).

One of the dominant frameworks for contemporary psychological models is Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory, which posits intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Deci and Ryan (1985) held that intrinsic motivation is involved in doing something that is inherently interesting or pleasurable, and extrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it leads to a separate outcome. Self-determination is regarded as a prerequisite for any behavior to be intrinsically rewarding.

Traditionally, motivation has been regarded as a variable, momentary state that is aroused temporarily by environmental factors; or else a stable trait that is attributable to the individual person (Dornyei, 2000). The former state, focusing on situational characteristics that are externally controlled, such as rewards, has usually been termed extrinsic motivation, while the latter state, focusing on the individual

and performance of an activity for its own sake or personal pleasure, has been termed intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic Motivation

Dornyei's research has indicated the kinds of teaching strategies that educators can employ to develop and maintain their students' intrinsic motivation. Dornyei (2001) also makes the cogent point that 'the best motivational intervention is simply to improve the quality of our teaching' (p. 26). He shows in particular the need for 'instructional clarity' and refers to Wlodkowski's (1986) checklist for achieving this. This includes such obvious recipes as 'explain things simply' and 'teach at a pace that is not too fast and not too slow.' Teachers also need to accept that, rather than dwell on student's lack of motivation, it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that students are motivated and stay motivated. Using the learners' L1 occasionally to demonstrate a point or explain directions motivates learners by showing that you have an interest and can speak their language. As Section 2 will suggest, teachers should keep students interested and curious with activities and exercises which prove engaging for those particular students.

Extrinsic Motivation

However, not all activities are sufficiently original, challenging or aesthetic to be intrinsically motivating (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation involves "reasons that are instrumental to some consequence apart from inherent interest in the activity" (Noels, 2001, p.46)—in other words, external rewards. The external rewards can be

prizes, money, praise, good grades or even punishment avoidance (Brown, 1994). The rewards can also be deferred for an EFL learner, such as getting a better job, becoming able to emigrate, or the like.

Sansome and Harackiewicz (2000) note that human motivation does not follow from purely intrinsic or purely extrinsic dynamics, but rather from combinations, including constructs of contextual factors. Although many researchers continue to negatively regard rewards, and view learning as superior and more desirable when it results from what many be considered as intrinsic motivation, Hidi and Harackiewicz (2000) claim, conversely, that over the past two decades such negative evaluations of extrinsic motivations may have hindered the use of external intervention that could have created more equitable situations in the classroom for students who are hardly valuing school learning and academic accomplishment.

In the past, it was assumed that analyzing the situation or “context” was not essential to comprehend outcomes of motivation. “The concept of context has only recently spread into the field of motivation in educational research” (Gurtuer 2001). Today it is influenced by multiple and overlapping contexts. The concept of motivation in context means that we assume that it is an interactive experience, hinging on the influences of students and their environments on each other. As Urdan (1990) found, context includes features of the achievement environment, cultural factors and the multiple social contexts in which individuals operate. The impression of a given context on a particular student’s performance, attitude and motivation will vary with each student in that learning environment. This survey takes a close look at learner’s individual opinion and attitudes in order to better evaluate learner needs.

Section 2

There have been many surveys pertaining to student attitudes and motivation in Japan. For example, Berwick and Ross' (1989) longitudinal study of first-year Japanese college students examined the correlation between learners' attitude and motivation with proficiency in English. Widdows and Voller's (1991) survey showed that learners were motivated to develop speaking and listening skills. These surveys have helped recognize the significance of motivation, yet lack input on the concept of contextual motivation. It was not until Pintrich, with results obtained from self-reported questionnaires, such as the Motivated Strategies of Learning Questionnaire (Pintrich, 1999), that researchers were convinced that students' motivations differ by contextual factors.

I and a group of colleagues administered our own survey (Appendix I & II) to 400 Japanese university students at the beginning of the fall semester (that is, the second semester of the academic year). The subjects include students from Kobe Shinwa Women's University and Osaka University of Commerce. Participants were non-English majors between the ages of 18-21 taking English as a required course. The first part of the survey consisted of biographical questions. The second part included a total of 16 questions using contextual motivational theory to determine current attitudes of students.

Questions were designed and outlined in English then translated into Japanese with anonymous input from several students. Unfortunately there is not a simple Japanese correlate for the English word "motivation": 動機 (douki) means "motive", and やる気があります (yarukigaarimasu) means "drive." Also 熱心 (nesshin) "ardor/eagerness" helped portray motivation in learning. All questions bore the

same answer scale (see Appendix I) from “Strongly agree” to “Disagree,” with space to elaborate a detailed reason as an option. The “reason” provided valuable feedback and data on individuals’ attitudes and motivation. Numerical data with mean and graph results are in Appendix II. To gain candid, non-biased answers, respondents were asked not to provide their name or student number.

Q1 and Q2 elicited the students’ self-assessment of their achievement to date. Q1 had the highest mean score at 3.62, (See Appendix II) yet many commented “English is too difficult” (25)¹, or “I cannot speak well” (20), or “My level is low” (18). Those who were relatively more motivated, realized the importance and usefulness of English, with comments such as, “When I went abroad, I couldn’t understand” (15), “I had fun talking in America” (5), or “I don’t like to study, but I want to speak” (10).

The survey’s Q3 to Q6 aimed to gather data on contextual motivation, regarding teachers, parents and peers. Many students commented positively when asked if their English teachers motivate them: “English is fun” (30). Other popular replies included “It depends on the teacher” (25) and “When the teacher shows effort” (15). Over seventy percent agreed to some degree that their native teacher motivates them more than their Japanese English teacher. They comment “real English is better” (40), or “native speakers have better pronunciation” (38). Some liked the different style of teaching and the association with the native instructor. “In addition to intelligence and aptitude, a desire to identify with or closely associate with members of the target culture was shown to promote second language acquisition” (Gardner and

1 Numbers in parentheses, after students comments represent the number that responded with the approximate reason.

Lambert, 1972, p. 24). On the contrary some respondents reported preferring Japanese teachers because they are easier to understand or they pay more attention to details.

Twenty four (24) students surveyed stated, "My parents think English is useful for my future." Unfortunately more than fifty percent disagree that their parents motivate them to study English, "Because they don't speak English" (39), or "They are not interested in English" (31).

Most responses to Q6 were noncommittal or disagreed that they are motivated by peers: "My friends can't speak" (24); "They don't like it" (15); or "My peers are not friendly" (4). Others agreed: "With friends it's more fun" (19); "My friends are motivated so I become as well" (17). Responses to Q7 suggest deferred goals are not a contributing factor to student's motivation: only nineteen percent agreed. Nevertheless, as shown in the third aspect of Dornyei's Motivational Teaching Practice Model, goals are an essential part of learning, so teachers must increase learners' goal-orientedness appropriately (see Appendix III).

Question eight (Q8) investigates extrinsic motivation of grades. More than fifty percent disagree that high grades motivate them with a lowest mean score of 2.4 (Appendix II). Many replied, "Grades don't matter as long as it's fun" (27). Over seventy percent feel that actual learning is more important than good grades: "Even I get good grades, if I can't speak it's pointless," (49); "Study is for my own purposes," or "It's important to understand on my own" (27). Responses to Q10 and Q11 suggest that teachers can strongly improve learner's motivation by rewarding learners with praise. Such extrinsic motivations—which,

not unlike a stop at Starbucks, offer a quick, sweet gratification—are popular among Japanese learners who report, “I look forward to a reward” (30), or “A reward gives me a reason to be motivated to finish” (19).

Q12 to Q15 deal with the native English teacher’s classroom. Seventy-seven percent of respondents agree that their classroom atmosphere is pleasant and relaxed. However, the responses from a disagreeing minority are worthy of note: “Classroom is too noisy” (18); or “Don’t like to pair with people I don’t know” (16).

For Q13; “My self confidence in communication increases by participating in class,” the most common responses were “I don’t know” (40) or “I can’t tell” (31). Building confidence is crucial, as displayed in the third aspect of Dornyei’s Motivational Teaching Practice Model (Appendix III). Japanese students not only tend toward modesty in their assessments of improvement and confidence, but moreover seem to have an “English Complex” complicated by their inexperience with English conversation. The native teacher, before s/he can start to transcend the language barrier, must also carefully bridge the cultural barrier—including negative self-assessments and other notions that can inhibit students’ learning.

If class materials are not relevant or interesting, it will be a battle to get positive results from participants. Fortunately only fifteen percent disagreed Q14, common comments included, “The materials are new and original” (22); “The materials are fun, easy to understand and do” (31); or “I like the materials because they are not from Japan.” (2).

As students seem to realize, if they do no homework, their ninety-minute, weekly language class can hardly improve communication markedly: “Homework helps me improve” (14); “It’s important to

study/prepare by myself" (7).

Conclusion

This paper has tried to provide an overview of contextual motivation and give a sample of students' reported attitudes. Through the data provided, this paper has highlighted that the concept of contextual motivation, akin to intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, are imperative for learners' progress. The results of this survey have shown that students are motivated and respond to a combination of motivational strategies. Trying to motivate Japan's language students can be a frustrating task, and can even be in vain unless a teacher endeavors to understand the relevant, specific effects of Japan's education system and culture.

If researchers want to explore just what "motivation in context" means they will need to move beyond and diversify the traditional methods and the traditional focus of motivational research. In the same way, researchers will have to look beyond the students alone and more into the context and their reciprocal effects.

It is often stated that bad teaching kills motivation and that good teaching brings out the best in learners. For teachers aiming to instill greater confidence in students, and help them to teach themselves, a knowledge of theory helps. Within the context of the classroom, it seems many teachers' foremost goal is to complete the syllabus. Many teachers devote very little time or effort to researching student motivation. But knowledge of student motivation and associated notions enables a teacher to facilitate learning environments well suited to students' psychological needs. Moreover, listening to and observing

students not only helps a teacher determine which tasks are challenging, interesting or boring, but attention also tends to improve students' respect for the teacher. In turn this benefits the association and the environment, which assists with motivation.

Appendix I Motivation Survey

年齢：a) 17-18 b) 19-20 c) 21-22 d) 23-24 e) 25-29 f) 30歳以上

性別：a) 男 b) 女

学年：a) 1年生 b) 2年生 c) 3年生 d) 4年生 e) 社会人

自分の英語のレベル：a) 初級 b) 中級の下 c) 中級 d) 中級の上 e) 上級
f) ネイティブ並み

英語学習の年数：a) 1年以下 b) 3年以下 c) 5年くらい d) 7年くらい
e) 10年以上 f) 15年以上 (どのくらい? 年)

英語圏に滞在したことはありますか? : a) いいえ b) 1ヶ月 c) 2ヶ月
d) 3ヶ月以上 e) 6ヶ月以上 f) 1年以上 (どのくらい? 年)

専攻： _____ 国籍： _____

a) から e) のあてはまるものに○印をつけて下記の質問に答えてください。なお、理由も記入してください。

a) 非常にそう思う b) そう思う c) ややそう思う
d) ややそうは思わない e) そうは思わない

1 私は英語の勉強に対して熱心です。 a b c d e

I am motivated to study English.

理由： _____

2 私は他の科目と同じくらい英語の勉強をやる気があります。 a b c d e

My motivation for English is about the same as other subjects.

理由： _____

3 先生(日本人, ネイティブ共に)は英語をやる気にさせてくれます。 a b c d e

Generally my English teachers motivate me to learn.

理由： _____

4 日本人の先生よりネイティブの先生の方が私に英語をやる気にさせてくれます。 a b c d e

My Native teachers motivate me more than my Japanese teachers.

理由： _____

- 5 私の両親は英語の勉強に協力的です。 a b c d e
My parents motivate me to study English.
理由： _____
- 6 クラスメートや友達が私をやる気にさせてくれます。 a b c d e
I am motivated by my friends / peers.
理由： _____
- 7 私は将来の目標のために英語を勉強しています。 a b c d e
My motivation is for my future goals.
理由： _____
- 8 私の動機は高い評価を得ることです。 a b c d e
My motivation is to get good grades / high scores.
理由： _____
- 9 実際に勉強することは高い評価をとることより重要です。 a b c d e
Actual learning is more important than good grades.
理由： _____
- 10 先生からご褒美を約束された時はやる気がでます。 a b c d e
I am motivated when I am promised a reward from my teacher.
理由： _____
- 11 先生にほめられると、私はやる気がでます。 a b c d e
I am motivated when I am praised by my teacher.
理由： _____
ネイティブスピーカーのクラスの方へ質問 The native speaker's classroom.
- 12 教室の雰囲気は勉強がしやすく快適です。 a b c d e
The classroom atmosphere is usually pleasant and relaxed.
理由： _____
- 13 授業に参加する事で自分に自信がついてきます。 a b c d e
My self confidence in communication increases by participating in class.
理由： _____
- 14 授業の内容は興味のあるものです。 a b c d e
Usually class activities/materials are interesting.
理由： _____
- 15 宿題は、授業の予習、復習や英会話の上達に役立ちます。 a b c d e
Homework helps me improve my English and review/prepare for class.
理由： _____

16 他の語学より英語の方が自信があります。

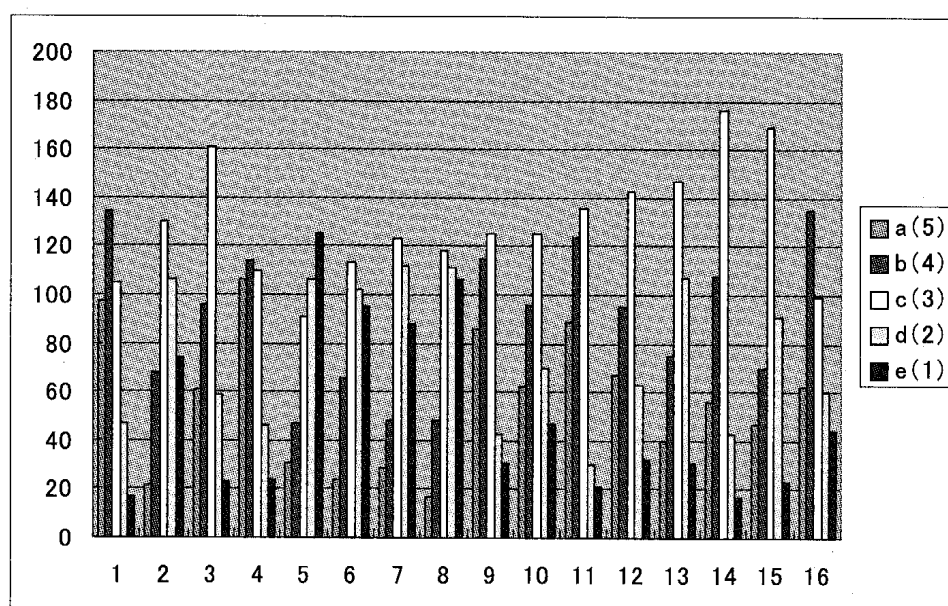
a b c d e

Compared with other second languages I am most confident
using English.

理由： _____

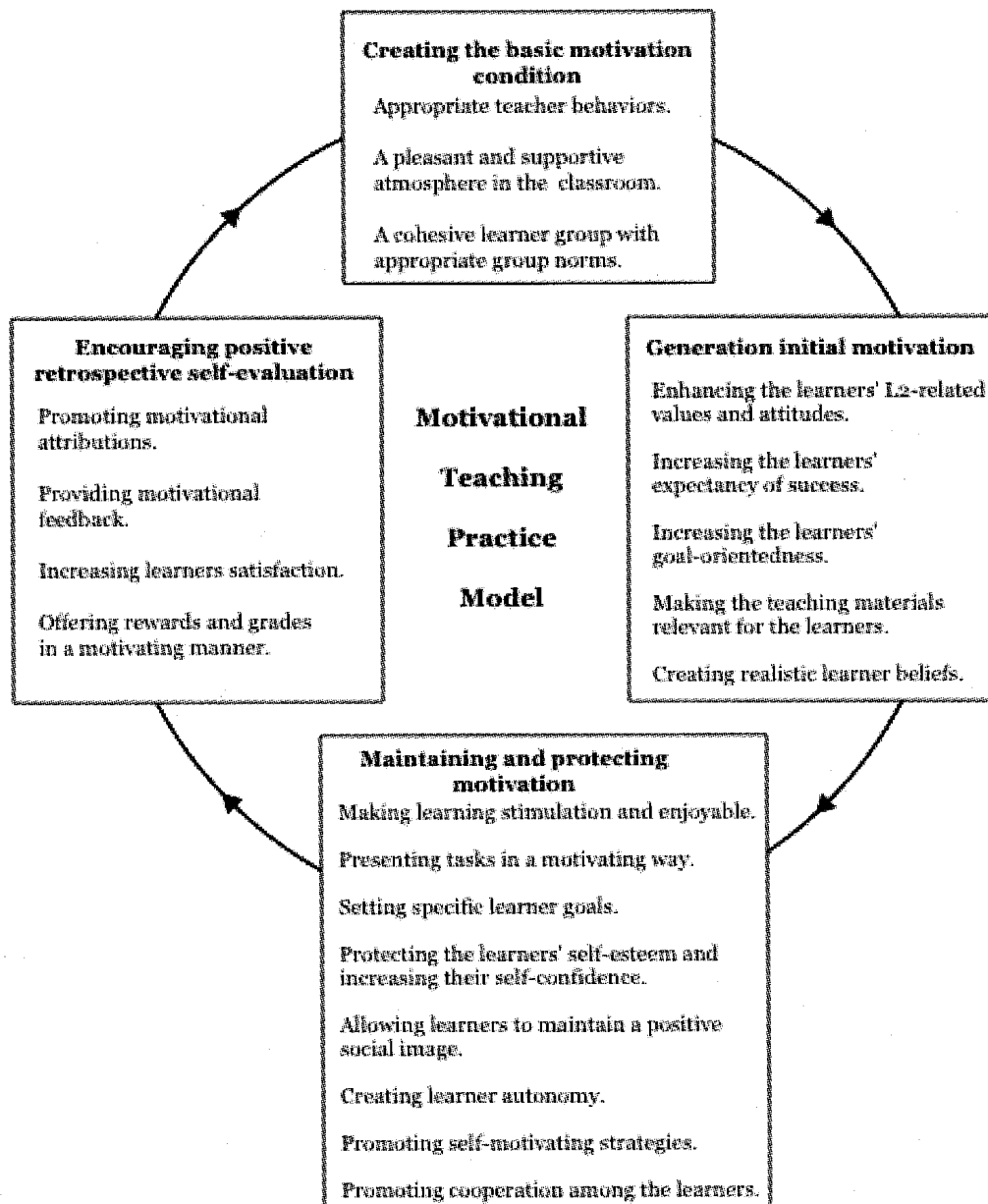
Appendix II Survey Results

	a(5)	b(4)	c(3)	d(2)	e(1)	Total	mean
1	97	134	105	47	17	400	3.62
2	22	68	130	106	74	400	2.65
3	61	96	161	59	23	400	3.28
4	106	114	110	46	24	400	3.58
5	31	47	91	106	125	400	2.38
6	24	66	113	102	95	400	2.56
7	29	48	123	112	88	400	2.55
8	17	48	118	111	106	400	2.40
9	86	115	125	43	31	400	3.46
10	62	96	125	70	47	400	3.14
11	89	124	136	30	21	400	3.58
12	67	95	143	63	32	400	3.26
13	40	75	147	107	31	400	2.97
14	56	108	176	43	17	400	3.36
15	47	70	169	91	23	400	3.07
16	62	135	99	60	44	400	3.28



Appendix III

The Components of Motivational Teaching Practice in The L2 Classroom.



(from the *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom* by Z.Dornyei, 2001, p.29)

References

- Boekaerts, M. (2001). *Motivation, Learning, and Instruction*. International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Brown, D. (1987). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.

Clement, R., Dornyei, Z, & Noels, A. (1994). *Motivation, self-confidence, and group cohesion in the foreign language classroom*. Language Learning, vol. 44, (p. 416-449).

Clement, R. & Kruidenier, B. G. (1983). *Orientations in second language acquisition: I. The effects of ethnicity, milieu, and target language on their emergence*. Language Learning, vol. 33, (p. 273-290).

Dornyei, Z. Kormos, J. (2000) *The Role of Individual and Social Variables in Oral Task Performance*. Language Teaching Research Journal.

Dornyei, Z. & Swan, M. (2001). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom*.

Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Gardner, R. C. and W. E. Lambert. (1972) *Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning*. (p. 24) Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House.

Gurtner, J. (2001). *Towards a Multilayer Model of Context and its Impact on Motivation*. (p. 189-208). New York: Elsevier Science Ltd.

Harackiewicz, J M., Barron, K. E., Tauer, J. M., Carter, S. M, & Elliott, A. J. (2000). *Short-term and long-term consequences of achievement goals in college: Predicting continued interest and performance over time*. Journal of Educational Psychology, vol. 90, (p. 317-331).

Harp, S. F., & Mayer, T. E. (1997). *The role of interest in learning from scientific text and illustrations: On the distinction between emotional interest and cognitive interest*. Journal of Educational Psychology, vol. 89, (p. 93-103).

Hidi, S. (2000). An interest researcher's perspective: The effects of extrinsic and intrinsic factors on motivation. In C. Sansome & J. M. Harackiewicz (eds.), *Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation: The search for optional motivation and performance* (p. 310-340). San Diego: Academic Press.

Hidi, S., Renninger, K. A., & Krapp, A. (1992). *The present state in interest*

research. In K. A. Renninger & S. Hidi & A. Krapp (Eds.), *The Role of Interest in Learning and Development* Chapter 17. Hillsdale, NJ.; Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. (1979). *Conflict in the classroom: Controversy and learning*. Review of Educational Research, vol. 49, (p. 280-238).

Keller, John M. (1983). *Development and Use of the ARCS Model of Motivational Design*. Journal of Educational Media, vol. 15 (p. 200-210).

Kormos, J. & Dornyei, Z. (2000). *The role of individual and social variables in oral task performance*. Language Teaching Research, vol. 4, (p. 275-300).

Maslow, Abraham H. (1970). *Motivation and Personality*. Second Edition. Harper and Row.

Noels, K. A. (2001). *Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and Integrative Orientations of French Canadian Learners of English*. Canadian Modern Language Review, (p.46).

Noels, K. A. (1999). *Perceptions of teachers' communicative style and students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations*. Modern Language Journal. vol. 83, (p. 23).

Pintrich, P. R. (1999). *The role of motivation in promoting and sustaining self-regulated learning*. International Journal of Educational Research. vol. 31, (p. 459-470).

Rogoff, B. (1990), *Apprenticeship in Thinking: Cognitive Development in Social Content*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Schmidt, Richard. (1996). *Foreign language motivation: Internal structure and external connections*. In R. Oxford (ed.), *Language Learning Motivation: Pathways to the new century*. (p. 10-69) Honolulu: University of Hawaii Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center.

Sansome, C., & Harackiewicz, J. M. (eds.).(2000). *Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation: The search for optimal motivation and performance*. San Diego: Academic Press.

Urdan, T. (1999). *"Foreword"*. In M. L. Maehr & P. R. Pintrich (eds) *Advances in Motivation and Achievement: The Role of Context*. vol. 11. (p. IX-XI). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Volet, S. (1999). *Learning across Cultures: Appropriateness of Knowledge Transfer*. vol. 31 n7, (p. 625-43) *International Journal of Educational Research*.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.