# Teacher Motivation: The Next Step in L2 Motivation Research

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*Research in L2 motivation has evolved since Gardner and Lambert introduced the socio-educational model and highlighted the importance of attitudes and affect to the SLA process. Though the field expanded focus, little work has been done into L2 teacher motivation; instead, most studies have focused on student attitudes and motivation. This paper highlights the need for research into teacher attitudes and L2 teacher motivation in the ESL/EFL classroom.*

Research in second language (L2) motivation has gone through 4 distinct phases since the late 1950s: the *social psychological* period from the 50s until the 90s; the *cognitive-situated* period in the 90s; the *process-oriented* period at the beginning of the 21st century, and the current *socio-dynamic period* (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010, pp. 49–50). Closely related to behaviorist trends in psychology, L2 motivation research began with beliefs that are now considered outdated: that L2 motivation could be viewed as the response to an environmental stimulus; that language learning occurred in an environment where individuals were caught in transition between two cultures, which were possible to characterize in stereotypes (Ricento, 2005, p. 898). As psychologists adapted the cognitive approach, motivation studies began to focus more on the needs that drive learners' decisions, "the choices people make as to what experience or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort that they will exert in that respect" (Keller, 1983, p. 389). This was followed by the adoption of the constructionist view in both psychology and L2 motivation research, which "places even further emphasis on the social context as well as individual choices" (Brown, 2000, p. 161).

While the phases of L2 motivation research are closely related to learning motivation research in psychology, Dörnyei & Ushioda (2010) inform us that "the study of L2 motivation has evolved as a rich and largely independent research field, originating in a concern to address the unique social, psychological, behavioural and cultural complexities that acquiring a new communication code entails" (p. 49). Current research recognizes the role of the individual identity in an ever-changing social environment. In addition to considering the motivation of L2 learners, the authors tell us that current motivation studies recognize the "interactive relationship between teacher and student motivation" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010, p. 204).

L2 motivation research has evolved from macro-contextual views, viewing language learners and cultures as static entities that can be characterized and defined and seeing the SLA process as one of moving from one culture to the next, to increasingly micro-contextual views. The scope narrowed to consider the situations in which L2 learning was occurring and eventually the individual processes as they occurred. Currently, the perspective is becoming much more focused and, as a result, is viewing the complexity of L2 learners and the contexts within which SLA happens.

## STUDENT AND TEACHER ATTITUDES

Motivation research in SLA has determined a link between *integrative motivation (*the desire to integrate into a culture), *instrumental motivation (*desire to learn for practical reasons), and identification with an L2 culture as having a symbiotic relationship with students' language learning success. Most studies in this field have focused on the attitude and motivation that the student brings to the classroom or learning environment, while little work has been done on the attitude and motivation that the language teacher brings to the classroom. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2010) assert:

> While the fields of educational psychology and teacher education may currently be experiencing a zeitgeist of interest in teacher motivation (Watt and Richardson, 2008a), this does not seem to have filtered through yet to the L2 teaching and language teacher education context where the literature on teacher motivation remains scarce. (p.189)

An exception to this trend is Martha Pennington's 1991 seminal report on teacher motivation, in which she circulated a job satisfaction questionnaire to TESOL members (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010, p. 189). The questionnaire concerned job related non-linguistic factors, such as teacher autonomy in the classroom, opportunities for advancement, company policies, recognition, and working conditions. However, not one facet was related to teachers' attitudes towards the language, their students, or their students' language. In the same report, Pennington (1989) lists the attitudes, knowledge and skills necessary to become a successful ESL teacher, with the attitudes being:

> A belief in the importance of language teaching and an attitude towards students of empathy and interest, confidence in one's own knowledge and classroom skills, positive attitudes about the language and culture being taught, positive attitudes about the language and culture of the students, openness to new ideas about language, learning, teaching approach. (p. 170)

## TEACHER MOTIVATION

While Dörnyei and Ushioda (2010) inform us that a "teacher's level of enthusiasm and commitment is one of the most important factors that can affect learners' motivation to learn," they quote psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi as saying in 1997 that "he was not aware of a single study relating teacher's motivation to the effectiveness of his or her teaching and to the motivation of his or her students" (p. 170). They examine the limited work done in teacher motivation, stating that most research is done on teachers' career choice, "complexities during the teaching process," factors contributing to teacher stress and burnout, and student and teacher development" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010, p. 170).

Clearly, as the transition in focus has been made in L2 motivation research from the macro level (societal attitudes and conditions that create social distance) to the micro level (the individual learner in the language learning context), and eventually to the learner's identity in social

interactions, a need has developed to understand the role of L2 teachers in the classroom, the ones with whom learners have a great deal of social contact, and how that relates to student motivation and success. Attention can then be drawn to the role that teacher motivation plays in this process. Dörnyei (2003) concurs with this assertion, stating that "teacher motivation is an important factor in understanding the affective basis of instructured SLA, since the teacher's motivation has significant bearings on students' motivational disposition and, more generally, on their learning achievement" (p. 26).

Watt and Richardson (2008) explain that limited work on teacher motivation has explored "career choice among teachers, the complexities during teaching, and important factors that impact on the development of teachers and their students" (p. 405). Other topics, such as teachers' relationships with their students, as well as teacher and student identity, still remain relatively uncharted. The need for research into these issues has been identified, and Praver & Oga-Baldwin (2008) have noted that "Especially important to the issue of EFL/ESL teacher motivation is the recognition and appreciation of the teacher's home culture and value for her or his skill as a teacher".

Up until this point, we have been examining how language learners are inspired to learn and what fuels and maintains this inspiration. Ryan and Deci (2000) highlight the importance of preserving this inspiration, noting that, "Unlike unmotivated people who have lost impetus and inspiration to act, motivated people are energized and activated to the end of a task" (p. 54). Dörnyei (2001b) defines motivation as the force 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. 8). The concepts applied to language learners with regard to L2 motivation are equally applicable to L2 teachers, and that the "factors that motivate teachers are the same as those that motivate students" (Oga-Baldwin & Praver, 2007, p. 881).

## WORK MOTIVATION

An important difference does exist between teacher motivation and student motivation, namely that, for teachers, teacher motivation is synonymous with work motivation. In the larger field of motivation studies, work motivation is "a broad construct pertaining to the conditions and processes that account for the arousal, direction, magnitude, and maintenance of effort in a person's job" (Katzell & Thompson, 1990, p. 144). Scholars researching motivation in educational contexts first turned to the work motivation theories of Maslow and Herzberg for perspective (Gheralis-Roussos, 2003, p. 65). Herzberg identifies two factors that affect motivation to work, motivators, which are synonymous with intrinsic motivating factors, and hygiene factors, which are not part of the essential nature of the job and include the environment, interpersonal relations and working conditions; according to this theory, "satisfaction depends on motivators while dissatisfaction results from the absence of sufficient hygiene factors." (Shoaib, 2004, p. 46). It is interesting to note, however, that unlike other jobs, interpersonal relations are inherent to the teaching profession, as teachers must interact with both coworkers and their pupils (Nias, 1981). Researchers, including Barnabé and Burns, have noted other differences between business work environments and the teaching environment, including organizational structure and assessment practices (1994). So, while work motivation research could provide

some insight into teacher motivation, the need arose to examine teacher motivation in its own context.

## TEACHER MOTIVATION AS A TOPIC IN L2 MOTIVATION STUDIES

Numerous motivation researchers explain that teacher motivation can be conceptualized and understood by considering various related theories that focus on:

- Expectancy-value,
- Self-efficacy,
- Goal-setting,
- Goal orientation, and
- Self-determination.

More than many other careers, teaching is a profession whose practitioners are paid more in intrinsic rewards than financial ones. In some cultures, teachers are regarded with great respect, while in others they are subject to a considerable amount of criticism; however, teachers are almost universally paid less than other professionals with similar educational qualifications, a problem that both keeps many qualified professionals from entering the profession and forces many to leave it (Macdonald, 1999, pp. 842–43). Those who choose teaching usually understand this and accept it when making the decision to pursue a career in education.

When considering the decision to pursue a career in education, contextual factors and other extrinsic components usually take a back seat to the intrinsic components. Pennington (1995) asserts that many people go into teaching for intrinsic rewards and intellectual satisfaction in their subject area, work process, and human interaction. Oga-Baldwin and Praver (2008) add to this, stating, "Teachers generally believed their jobs to be stimulating and fun. Additionally, most reported that they had a good relationship with their students and were able to help them to enjoy the subject" (p. 887). If the value of knowledge is inherently accepted by teachers' intrinsic motivation to pass on that knowledge, it would be fair to assume that, or at least to question if, teachers are intrinsically motivated to learn. Likewise, we can assume that language teachers enter the profession with a similar respect for knowledge and intrinsic motivation to share it.

After citing Deci and Ryan as associating autonomy, relatedness, and competence to intrinsic motivation while claiming teachers' sense of efficacy to be paramount, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2010, p. 175) synthesize the characteristics of the intrinsic motivation to teach as "the inherent joy of pursuing a meaningful activity related to one's subject area of interest, in an autonomous manner, within a vivacious collegial community, with self-efficacy, instructional goals and performance feedback being critical factors in modifying the level of effort and persistence" (p. 175)

## Dissatisfaction In Teaching

In a study of secondary teachers' perceptions of working conditions in five countries, Menlo, Marich, Collet, Evers, Fernandez, and Weller Ferris (1990) determined that, "the development of warm, personal relationships with students is the second-strongest influence on professional life quality for US teachers" as well as for teachers in almost all of other countries studied (p. 245). In researching the job satisfaction of ESL/EFL teachers, Martha Pennington (1995) agreed that intrinsic motivation and interpersonal relations provided teachers with the bulk of their support, but that teachers almost universally complained of pay and other extrinsic elements of their work (p. 80). Poppleton and Riseborough (1990) explain that compensation is a factor of job satisfaction that affects all other aspects of the job, stating, "Pay does not have absolute importance in relation to job satisfaction but, if it is perceived to be good…all other aspects appear to have relatively less significance" (p. 219).

Remuneration is not the only demotivating factor negatively affecting teachers' satisfaction and motivation. A study by Dinham and Scott asserts that declining teacher satisfaction is a worldwide problem in education (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010, p. 180). Among the negative influences on teacher motivation that systematically undermine and erode the intrinsic character of teacher motivation" are stress, a lack of autonomy in the classroom, a sense of efficacy, and a career structure providing opportunities for professional development and advancement (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010, p. 180). Pennington (1995) identified:

> A pattern among teachers of high satisfaction in terms of the intrinsic rewards of the work itself and relationships with co-workers, and low satisfaction in terms of the extrinsic factors of pay and promotion, as well as some other aspects of employment which are extrinsic to the work and which can interfere with job performance and the achievement of psychological satisfactions. (p. 67)

Dörnyei and Ushioda's summary of the teacher motivation construct built upon Pennington's foundation by adding intrinsic aspects of teaching that decreased teachers' job satisfaction and consequently their motivation to teach. It should be noted that the factors they identified did not include any mention of relationships with students. The six factors Pennington (1995) highlighted were:

- The exceptionally high stress level.
- The increasing restrictions of teaching autonomy (by externally imposed curricula, tests, methods and other directives).
- The fragile self-efficacy of practitioners, most of whom are undertrained in areas concerning group leadership and classroom management.
- The difficulty of maintaining an intellectual challenge in the face of repetitive content and routinized classroom practices.
- An inadequate career structure to generate effective motivational contingent paths.
- The economic conditions that are usually worse than those of other service professions with comparable qualifications (p. 187).

With all of these factors at play, it should come as no surprise that Kottler, Zehm, and Kottler (2005) warn that "burnout is a professional hazard," as many of the negative aspects of the teaching profession can lead to a loss of motivation and job satisfaction (p. 111). This loss of motivation can manifest itself in many ways, such as depersonalizing the relationships with students and coworkers or becoming cynical about the job. Additionally, burned out teachers suffer from emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and dissatisfaction with their own personal accomplishments (Suslu, 2006). Pennington (1995) warns of the consequences of stress and burnout on teachers; citing a study by Travers and Cooper, she claims that, "Rather than being comparable to the psychological profile of other professionals, the mental health profile of U.K. school teachers appears more comparable to that of individuals suffering medically diagnosed psychological disorders" (p. 102–3).

One of the most notable results of this burnout is that "academic performance and achievement, both their own and the students', are affected" (Pennington, 1995, p. 90). Whether it is stressed out teachers who demotivate students or vice versa, as Shoaib (2004) would suggest in saying "teaching students who lack motivation is one of the main sources of stress facing teachers today," the two elements seem to exist in a symbiotic relationship, each feeding the downfall of the other (p. 61). Various studies "(Pennington, 1991, 1995, Pennington & Ho, 1995; Doyle & Kim, 1999, Kim & Doyle, 1998 and, Kassabgy et al., 2001)" have demonstrated that language teachers are no different from other teachers in terms of motivation and are just as likely to suffer from stress and burnout (Gheralis-Roussos, 2003, p. 97).

## L2 TEACHER MOTIVATION

While there is a lack of research on teacher motivation and a paucity of research on L2 teacher motivation, three studies directly relate to the topic of this dissertation. The first, by Martha Pennington was an attempt to accurately describe teacher satisfaction and the working conditions of ESL teachers, primarily in US and British contexts. Her work was the result of two studies by Pennington and Riley, where random members of TESOL were sent the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) and others were sent the Job Descriptive Index (JDI). They reported some benefits unique to ESL teaching, namely "travel opportunities, interaction with people from other cultures and teaching creatively" (Shoaib, 2004, p. 83). The results of the surveys showed that, as with other content area teachers, ESL teachers were "satisfied with the intrinsic nature of the job. Conversely, they claimed to be dissatisfied with the external factors, namely their pay and advancement prospects, as well as with supervisory, policy and procedure matters" (Gheralis-Roussos, 2003, p. 97). Pennington also reported that "like others in education fields but in contrast to certain non-professionals, those who work in ESL do so to satisfy higher level psychological needs that are often not well compensated financially" (Pennington, 1995, p. 136).

Pennington (1995, p. 109) made five recommendations to alleviate the stress created by negative external work factors:

- An orderly and smoothly functioning environment.
- Clean, adequately lit, sufficiently large, and well-equipped work spaces, including offices and classrooms.

- Textbooks, teaching equipment and other teaching resources which are plentiful, in good condition and up-to-date.
- Reasonable work responsibilities in terms or workload and nature of teaching assignment.
- Moral and work support from administrators.

It should be noted that none of these recommendations addressed issues with interpersonal relations between teachers and students or between teachers and their coworkers, as it was reported that the intrinsic nature of teaching was what provided the most job satisfaction. In fact, her final recommendation for "the use of employment action plans to improve teacher motivation through serious attention to teacher development, career structure, and academic structure" only applied to extrinsic factors in ESL work (Doyle & Kim, 1999, p. 35).

Another related study into teacher motivation and satisfaction was done by Terry Doyle and Young Mi Kim and was concerned with ESL teachers in the US and EFL teachers in South Korea. Rather than solely relying on questionnaires, Doyle and Kim used a combination of surveys, written comments and semi-structured interviews. While they credited Pennington with laying the groundwork, they criticized her work for not examining "the underlying social, cultural, and political factors which diminish teacher motivation and cause dissatisfaction and low morale," stating that "a critical approach is necessary" to do so (Doyle & Kim, 1999, p. 35). Again, as with Pennington and others, Doyle and Kim found out that the factors that curbed teacher satisfaction primarily related to extrinsic aspects of the work. Viewing the occupation through a critical theory perspective, they concluded that the negative factors "pertained to the *political nature* of the curriculum and the state-mandated tests, which some teachers felt to be limiting their autonomy and consequently their motivation" while teacher satisfaction primarily could be accredited to the intrinsic factors of teaching (Gheralis-Roussos, 2003, p. 100).

The third study that most directly correlates to this dissertation is that of Amel Shoaib, who addresses the topic of EFL teacher motivation in Saudi Arabia through semi-structured interviews with thirty female Saudi EFL teachers. In attempting to "map out the teacher motivation terrain" in Saudi Arabia to make recommendations to Saudi institutions for improving teacher motivation, "she distinguishes three main levels where motivational change can be made: *the teacher level, the managerial level* and *the ministerial/institutional level"* (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010, p. 192). Within these three levels, Shoaib (2004, p. 194) identified different motivational strategies (Table 1).

Again, the most noticeable characteristic of her recommendations was the fact that, aside from the first recommendation to teachers to self-regulate or self-motivate, none of her advice dealt with intrinsic aspects of teaching. Rather, all suggestions of the advice related to extrinsic factors in teaching, again suggesting what other researchers have found, that teachers, language and others, find their motivation in the classroom when dealing with students and their subject material.

In establishing L2 teacher motivation as a topic worthy of research, it is important to recognize teacher motivation as "one of the most important factors that can affect learners' motivation to learn. Broadly speaking, if a teacher is motivated to teach, there is a good chance that his or her students will be motivated to learn" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010, p. 170). Noels turns to

Gardner's research that "has demonstrated that students' positive attitudes toward their L2 teacher are generally linked to motivation and achievement" and the resulting positive rapport between teachers and students leads to improvements in students' "linguistic self-confidence" (Noels, 2003, pp. 103–104). Exploring this phenomenon, Knowles (2007) turns to research by Deci and Ryan that shows that motivated, stress-free teachers "are more likely to allow their students more autonomy. In turn, the more autonomous students are, the more intrinsically motivated they have been found to be" (p. 3).

It has been established that teacher motivation and student motivation exist in a mutually beneficial relationship, where healthy interactions are to the benefit of everyone involved, both for the teachers to derive enjoyment from their work and students to succeed in their studies. Since it has been demonstrated teachers' primary sources of job satisfaction come from the intrinsic nature of their work, working with students, it is logical that we might examine how teachers build rapport with their students.

Table 1

Shoaib's Motivational Strategies

| Teacher Level | Managerial Level | Ministerial / Institutional Level |
|---|---|---|
| ➢ Applying self-regulatory strategies<br>➢ Attending formal/professional activities<br>➢ Aiming for a further degree | Developing a system for collaboration and team work between language teachers<br>Providing appropriate specialised in-service training for language teachers<br>Recognizing and appreciating language teachers' efforts and hard work | 1. Allocating more funds to the educational system<br>2. Restricting the regulative nature of the system<br>3. Allowing the participation of teachers in curriculum design |

## CONCLUSION

Little research has been done to explore the role of L2 teacher attitudes and motivation and the role that they play in the L2 classroom, and the work that has been done has primarily focused on factors extrinsic to the nature of the work itself. However, as the field of L2 motivation research continues to evolve to consider more micro-contextual aspects of language learning, we should begin to see more work in this area.

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