

Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom

DÖRNYEI

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When trying to explain success or failure in second/foreign language (L2) learning, the term 'motivation' is often used by teachers and students alike. Indeed, motivation is one of the key learner factors that determine the rate and success of L2 attainment: it provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the L2 and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process. Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals.

This book takes a practical approach to teaching motivational strategies in the language classroom, and gives the teacher 35 motivational strategies that they can use with language learners.

Zoltán Dörnyei

Ikke til hjemlân

Faglokale for Engelsk

Læreruddannelsen Vordingborg
University College Sjælland

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motivational repertoire it is not the quantity but the *quality* of the selected strategies that matters. Rather than trying to acquire all the strategies at once, for most people – certainly for me! – it is more useful to take a selective and stepwise approach, choosing a few strategies that would suit your teaching style and learner group well. In the light of this, the Conclusion offers general guidelines and concrete suggestions on how to achieve this gradual move towards a motivation-sensitive teaching practice.

All the best!

1 Background knowledge

Language teachers frequently use the term ‘motivation’ when they describe successful or unsuccessful learners. This reflects our intuitive – and in my view correct – belief that during the lengthy and often tedious process of mastering a foreign/second language (L₂), the learner’s enthusiasm, commitment and persistence are key determinants of success or failure. Indeed, in the vast majority of cases learners with sufficient motivation can achieve a working knowledge of an L₂, regardless of their language aptitude or other cognitive characteristics. Without sufficient motivation, however, even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to attain any really useful language.

How true . . .

‘The more teaching I observe (well over 500 lessons, by dozens of different teachers, over the last ten years, I recently calculated) the more strongly convinced I become that Motivation is What Matters – if they gotit, ya laffin’, if they don’t, fergit it!’
(From an e-mail message from Christopher Ryan, a teacher trainer friend)

In this chapter I would like to introduce the scene of motivation research both in educational psychology and in the L₂ field. I will describe how various scholars have understood the notion of motivation in the past, what the contemporary trends are and how the theoretical knowledge can be turned into practical techniques to motivate language learners in the classroom. Last but not least, I will present a *taxonomy* of motivational strategies that will form the basis of the rest of the book.

Further reading

This book is intended to raise practical issues and make concrete suggestions for classroom practice rather than offer a comprehensive account of motivation theory. If you would like to know more about the theoretical background of the field, please refer to a recent summary, *Teaching and Researching Motivation* (Dörnyei 2001), which offers a comprehensive overview of the main issues and challenges in contemporary thinking about motivation. It also contains a detailed section on how to do research on motivation, providing guidelines for those who would like to conduct their own investigations. In addition, there is an up-to-date collection of 20 research studies that I have co-edited with Richard Schmidt from the University of Hawaii, *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition* (Dörnyei and Schmidt 2001), which contains contributions from international scholars from a wide range of motivational topics.

Within the field of educational psychology, I have found two books particularly useful: Jere Brophy's (1998) *Motivating Students to Learn* and Dale Schunk's (1996) *Motivation in Education*. Concise and up-to-date summaries are also provided in the *Handbook of Child Psychology* (Damon and Eisenberg 1998) and the *Handbook of Educational Psychology* (Berlin and Calfree 1996).

Because human behaviour has two basic dimensions – *direction* and *magnitude* (intensity) – motivation by definition concerns both of these. It is responsible for:

- the *choice* of a particular action;
- the *effort* expended on it and the *persistence* with it.

Therefore, motivation explains *why* people decide to do something, *how hard* they are going to pursue it and *how long* they are willing to sustain the activity.

All motivation theories in the past have been formed to answer these three questions but, quite frankly, none of them have succeeded fully. This is not very surprising, though: human behaviour is very complex, influenced by a great number of factors ranging from basic physical needs (such as hunger) through well-being needs (such as financial security) to higher level values and beliefs (such as the desire for freedom or one's faith in God). Can we blame motivational psychologists for not yet coming up with a comprehensive theory to explain the interrelationship of all these diverse motives?

Well said . . .

'Motivation, like the concept of gravity, is easier to describe (in terms of its outward, observable effects) than it is to define. Of course, this has not stopped people from trying it.'

(Martin Covington 1998:1)

1.1 Different approaches to understanding motivation

As discussed briefly in the Introduction, the term 'motivation' is a convenient way of talking about a concept which is generally seen as a very important human characteristic but which is also immensely complex. By using the term we can answer the question, 'Why does Rupert make such wonderful progress?' by simply saying, 'Because he is motivated', without the need to go into details about what factors have contributed to this overall commitment. And just as conveniently, if Rupert is reluctant to do something, we can easily explain this by stating that '*He isn't motivated*' rather than having to elaborate on all the forces that have contributed to his negative attitude. In other words, 'motivation' is a general way of referring to the *antecedents* (i.e. the causes and origins) of action. The main question in motivational psychology is, therefore, what these antecedents are.

You can probably imagine that when such a broad and important question as 'What causes behaviour?' is addressed, there is bound to be disagreement amongst scholars. Indeed, different schools of psychology offer very different explanations for why humans behave and think as they do, and there have been historical changes in our understanding of motivation, with different periods attaching importance to different aspects. In the first half of the twentieth century, the dominant views (such as Sigmund Freud's) conceptualised motivation as being determined by basic human *instincts* and *drives*, many of them being unconscious or repressed. Although such unconscious motives do not feature strongly in current motivational thinking, it seems clear that they play a significant role in our lives and therefore they are likely to be 'rediscovered' before long.

The middle of the twentieth century was dominated by *conditioning theories* related to behaviourist psychology, with a great deal of research

focusing on how stimuli and responses interplay in forming *habits*. Although many of the findings were based on experiments with animals – such as Pavlov's dog or Skinner's rats – rather than humans, much of the acquired knowledge is still relevant for the understanding of issues like the role of practice and drilling, positive and negative reinforcement, or punishment and praise in learning.

The 1960s brought about further important changes. Partly as a counterreaction to the mechanistic views of behaviourism, humanistic psychologists such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow proposed that the central motivating force in people's lives (unlike in rats' or dogs') is the *self-actualising tendency*, that is the desire to achieve personal growth and to develop fully the capacities and talents we have inherited. In his famous 'Hierarchy of Needs', Maslow (1970) distinguished between five basic classes of needs, which he defined as:

- *physiological needs* (e.g. hunger, thirst, sexual frustration);
- *safety needs* (need for security, order and protection from pain and fear);
- *love needs* (need for love, affection and social acceptance);
- *esteem needs* (need to gain competence, approval and recognition);
- *self-actualisation needs* (need to realise one's potential and capabilities, and gain understanding and insight).

These needs form a *hierarchy*, with the lower, physiologically based needs having to be satisfied first, before we can strive for the deeper happiness and fulfilment that comes from satisfying our higher-level needs.

The current spirit in motivational psychology (and in psychology in general) is characterised by yet another theoretical orientation, the *cognitive approach*, which places the focus on how the individual's conscious attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and interpretation of events influence their behaviour; that is, how mental processes are transformed into action. In this view, the individual is a purposeful, goal-directed actor, who is in a constant mental balancing act to coordinate a range of personal desires and goals in the light of his/her perceived possibilities, that is his/her perceived competence and environmental support. In other words, whether people decide to do something is determined first by their beliefs about the values of the action, and then about their evaluation of whether they are up to the challenge and whether the support they are likely to get from the people and institutes around them is sufficient. It's all supposed to be very rational . . .

An overview of contemporary approaches in psychology

Quite so!

'With a hypothetical construct as broad and complex as motivation, there is always room for controversy and argumentation.'
(Raymond Włodkowski 1986:12)

Within the overall cognitive view of motivation that characterises the field today, we find a surprising number of alternative or competing sub-theories. In order to understand the reasons for this diversity we need to realise that the variety of motives that can potentially influence human behaviour is staggering. Let us think for a moment of a range of different reasons that, for example, could get a young woman, Jackie, who is sitting on a bench in a park on a lovely afternoon, to stand up and start running:

- She enjoys jogging.
- She has made a resolution that she will do some jogging every afternoon to improve her health.
- She would desperately like to lose some weight.
- Rupert appears jogging along the path and she wants to join him.
- Her athletics coach has just told her to get up and keep running.
- She is acting in a well-paid TV commercial advertising running shoes and the break is over.
- A black dog appears unexpectedly and starts chasing her.
- It has just started to rain.
- She realises that she has to fetch something from home quickly.

Obviously, the list is far from complete but it illustrates well that motivation is indeed an umbrella-term involving a wide range of different factors. This is why motivational psychologists have spent a great deal of effort in the past trying to *reduce* the multitude of potential determinants of human behaviour by identifying a relatively small number of key variables that would explain a significant proportion of the variance in people's action. In other words, the challenge has been to identify a few central motives that are simply more important than the others. Broadly speaking, different scholars have come up with different 'most-important' motives, and this is what differentiates between the various competing theories. Table 1 provides a summary of the currently dominating motivational approaches.

Looking at Table 1, it must be admitted that each position in itself is

Self-worth theory	Covington (1998)	Perceived self-worth	People are highly motivated to behave in ways that enhance their sense of personal value and worth. When these perceptions are threatened, they struggle desperately to protect them, which results in a number of unique patterns of race-saving behaviors in school settings. (see also p. 88).
Attribution theory	Weiner (1992)	Attributions about past successes and failures	The individual's explanations (or causal attributions) of why past successes and failures have occurred have consequences on the person's motivation to initiate future action. In school contexts ability and effort have been identified as the most dominant perceived causes, and it is has been shown that past failure is ascribed by the learner to low ability hindering future achievement more than failure that is ascribed to insufficient effort (see also pp. 118-122).
Self-efficacy theory	Bandura (1997)	Perceived self-efficacy	Self-efficacy refers to people's judgments of their capabilities to carry out certain specific tasks, and, accordingly, their sense of efficacy will determine their choice of the activities attempted, the amount of effort exerted and the persistence displayed (see also pp. 86-87).
Achievement motivation theory	Atkinson and Raynor (1974)	Expectancy of success; incentive values; need for achievement; fear of failure	Achievement motivation is determined by conflict approach and avoidance tendencies. The positive influences are the expectancy of success fulfillment and need for achievement. The negative influences involve fear of failure, the incentive value of successfull task fulfillment and the incentive value of success (see also pp. 57-58).
Expectancy-value theories	Brophy (1999), Eccles and Wigfield (1995)	Expectancy of success; the value of task	Motivation to perform various tasks is the product of two key factors the individual's expectancy of success in a given task and the value the individual attaches to success on that task. The greater the perceived likelihood of success and the greater the incentive value of the goal, the higher the degree of the individual's positive motivation (see also pp. 57-58).
MAIN MOTIVATIONAL TENETS AND PRINCIPLES	GOOD SUMMARIES	MAIN MOTIVATIONAL COMPONENTS	Table 1 Summary of the most well-known contemporary motivation theories in psychology

Attribution theory	Weiner (1992)	Attributions about past successes and failures	The individual's explanations (or causal attributions) of why past successes and failures have occurred have consequences on the person's motivation to initiate future action. In school contexts ability and effort have been identified as the most dominant perceived causes, and it is has been shown that past failure is ascribed by the learner to low ability hindering future achievement more than failure that is ascribed to insufficient effort (see also pp. 118-122).
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Table 1 Summary of the most well-known contemporary motivation theories in psychology

very convincing; indeed, few people would find fault with the argument that people will only be motivated to do something if they expect success and they value the outcome (expectancy-value theories), or that it is the goal that gives meaning, direction and purpose to a particular action (goal theories). Neither would we question the fact that people are generally motivated to behave in ways that puts them in a better light (self-worth theory) or that if we lack confidence about being able to carry out a certain task, we are likely to avoid it (self-efficacy theory). It is also reasonable to assume that our past actions, and particularly the way we interpret our past successes and failures, determine our current and future behaviour (attribution theory), and that we will be more motivated to do something out of our own will than something that we are forced to do (self-determination theory). Finally, no one can deny that our personal likes and dislikes – i.e. attitudes – also play an important role in deciding what we will do and what we won't (theory of planned behaviour). In sum, all the different theories make a lot of sense; the only problem with them is that they largely ignore each other and very often do not even try to achieve a synthesis. This leaves us with a rather fragmented overall picture.

Well said . . .

‘As a concept, motivation is a bit of a beast. A powerfully influential and wide-ranging area of study in psychology, motivation at its core deals with *why people behave as they do*. But in terms of mutual understanding and tightly controlled boundaries of application, motivation roams the field of psychology with almost reckless abandon. There are over twenty internationally recognised theories of motivation with many opposing points of view, differing experimental approaches, and continuing disagreement over proper terminology and problems of definition. . . . In the fields of instruction and learning this has led to some difficult problems – whom to believe, which theories to apply, and how to make sense out of this wealth of confusing possibilities. In general, instructors and trainers can find very few guidelines that suggest how to cohesively and consistently apply the most useful and practical elements from this extensive array of motivational information.’
 (Raymond Wlodkowski 1986:44–45)

What kind of motivation theory do we need for practical purposes?
 ‘Pure’ theories of motivation, that is, models that represent a single theoretical perspective and are therefore anchored around a few selected motivational factors, while largely ignoring research that follows different lines, do not lend themselves to effective classroom application. Classrooms are rather intricate microcosms where students spend a great deal of their life. Besides being the venue where students acquire skills and learn about the world, classrooms are also where they make friends, fall in love, rebel against the previous generation, find out who they are and what the purpose of life is . . . in short, where they grow up. So much is going on in a classroom at the same time that no single motivational principle can possibly capture this complexity (cf. Stipek, 1996; Weiner, 1984). Therefore, in order to understand why students behave as they do, we need a detailed and most likely eclectic construct that represents multiple perspectives. Although some key motives do stand out in terms of their general impact on learning behaviours, there are many more motivational influences that are also fundamental in the sense that their absence can cancel or significantly weaken any other factors whereas their active presence can boost student achievement.

Well said . . .

‘The real problem with motivation, of course, is that everyone is looking for a single and simple answer. Teachers search for that one pedagogy that, when exercised, will make all students want to do their homework, come in for after-school help, and score well on their tests and report cards. Unfortunately, and realistically, motivating students yesterday, today, and tomorrow will never be a singular or simplistic process.’
 (David Scheidecker and William Freeman 1999:117)

An overview of approaches in the second language field

Traditionally, motivation research in the L2 field has shown different priorities from those characterising the mainstream psychological approaches. This has been largely due to the specific target of our field: *language*. It does not need much justification that language is more than merely a communication code whose grammar rules and vocabulary can be taught very much the same way as any other school subject. In a

seminal paper written in 1979, the most influential L₂ motivation researcher to date, Robert Gardner, argued forcefully that a second foreign language in the school situation is not merely an 'educational phenomenon' or 'curriculum topic' but also a representative of the cultural heritage of the speakers of that language (Gardner, 1979). Therefore, teaching a language can be seen as imposing elements of another culture into the students' own 'lifespace'. In order to learn an L₂, say French, students need to develop a French identity: they need to learn to think French and – though only partially and temporarily – also become a bit French.

True!

'Learning a foreign language always entails learning a second culture to some degree, even if you never actually set foot in the foreign country where the language is spoken. Language and culture are bound up with each other and interrelated... People don't exist in a vacuum any more than club members exist without a club. They're part of some framework: a family, a community, a country, a set of traditions, a storehouse of knowledge, or a way of looking at the universe. In short, every person is part of a *culture*. And everyone uses a language to express that culture, to operate within that tradition, and to categorise the universe. So if you're planning to carry on some sort of communication with people who speak or write a given language, you need to understand the culture out of which the language emerges.'

(Douglas Brown, 1989:65)

Absolutely...

'There is no question that learning a foreign language is different to learning other subjects. This is mainly because of the social nature of such a venture. Language, after all, belongs to a person's whole social being: it is part of one's identity, and is used to convey this identity to other people. The learning of a foreign language involves far more than simply learning skills, or a system of rules, or a grammar; it involves an alteration in self-image, the adoption of new social and cultural behaviours and ways of being, and therefore has a significant impact on the social nature of the learner.'

(Marion Williams 1994:77)

Thus, language learning is a deeply social event that requires the incorporation of a wide range of elements of the L₂ culture. Accordingly, most research on L₂ motivation between the 1960s and 1990s focused on how the students' perceptions of the L₂, the L₂ speakers and the L₂ culture affect their desire to learn the language. This research direction was spearheaded and inspired by a group of social psychologists in Canada, most notably by Robert Gardner, Wallace Lambert and Richard Clément. Because their theory still represents one of the most influential approaches in the L₂ field, let us start our exploration of L₂ motivation by looking into it in a bit more detail.

The social psychological approach in Canada

It is no accident that L₂ motivation research was initiated in Canada. The country is one of the rare bilingual locations in the world where the population is 'officially' divided up to speakers of two powerful *world languages* (English and French). Therefore, the 'competition' between the two official Canadian languages has been particularly fierce. Robert Gardner and his colleagues have proposed that the knowledge of the other community's language might serve as a mediating factor between the two speech communities, which implies that the motivation to learn the language of the other community is a primary force responsible for enhancing or hindering communication and affiliation within Canada. This argument makes intuitive sense and also has turned out to be very saleable to government agencies, resulting in plenty of research money to sponsor work in the field! The initial results obtained by Gardner and Lambert (cf. 1972) were sufficiently powerful to stir up an international

interest, and very soon studies of a similar vein were conducted all over the world.

A key tenet of the Canadian social psychological approach is that attitudes related to the L₂ community (e.g. anglophone learner's feelings about the francophones) exert a strong influence on one's L₂ learning. This again makes good sense: as with my experience growing up in Hungary, few learners are likely to be successful in learning the language of a despised community. It is also assumed that language learners' goals fall into two broad categories:

- *Integrative orientation*, which reflects a positive disposition toward the L₂ group and the desire to interact with and even become similar to valued members of that community.
- *Instrumental orientation*, where language learning is primarily associated with the potential pragmatic gains of L₂ proficiency, such as getting a better job or a higher salary.

Although these two orientations have become widely known in the L₂ field, the most elaborate and researched aspect of Gardner's theory is not the integrative/instrumental duality but the broader concept of the '*integrative motive*'. This is a complex construct made up of three main components (see Figure 1 for a schematic representation):

- *integrativeness* (subsuming integrative orientation, interest in foreign languages, and attitudes toward the L₂ community);
- *attitudes toward the learning situation* (comprising attitudes toward the teacher and the course);
- *motivation* (made up of motivational intensity, desire to learn the language and attitudes towards learning the language).

As an important addition to Gardner's motivation model, Richard Clément (1980; Clément et al. 1994) has introduced the concept of *linguistic self-confidence* as a significant motivational subsystem, which is very much in line with the increasing importance attached to self-efficacy in mainstream psychological research (as discussed earlier).

The educational shift in the 1990s

The 1990s brought about a change in scholars' thinking about L₂ motivation. While no one questioned the significance of the socio-cultural dimension, the general message coming from various parts of the world was that 'there is more to motivation!'. In an influential 'position paper', Graham Crookes and Richard Schmidt (1991: 469) expressed this most explicitly:

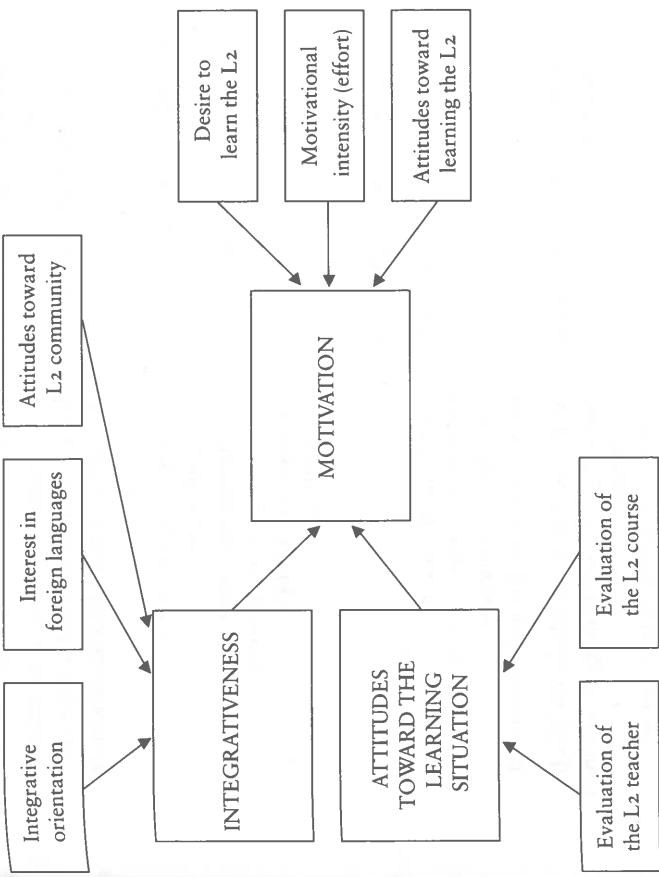


Figure 1 Gardner's conceptualisation of the integrative motive

Discussion of the topic of motivation in second-language (SL) learning contexts has been limited by the understanding the field of applied linguistics has attached to it. In that view, primary emphasis is placed on attitudes and other social psychological aspects of SL learning. This does not do full justice to the way SL teachers have used the term motivation. Their use is more congruent with definitions common outside social psychology, specifically in education.

That is, researchers in effect wanted to close the gap between motivational theories in educational psychology and in the L₂ field, claiming that by focusing so much on the social dimension, other important aspects of motivation have been overlooked or played down. As a result, several extended new L₂ motivation constructs were proposed, all of which provided some sort of a synthesis of old and new elements. To illustrate the new approaches, let me describe the two most elaborate frameworks from the period, by Dörnyei (1994) and Williams and Burden (1997).

Table 2 Dörnyei's (1994) framework of L2 motivation

LANGUAGE LEVEL	Integrative motivational subsystem Instrumental motivational subsystem
LEARNER LEVEL	<p>Need for achievement</p> <p>Self-confidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Language use anxiety * Perceived L2 competence * Causal attributions * Self-efficacy
LEARNING SITUATION LEVEL	<p><i>Course-specific motivational components</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interest (in the course) Relevance (of the course to one's needs) Expectancy (of success) Satisfaction (one has in the outcome) <p><i>Teacher-specific motivational components</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affiliative motive (to please the teacher) Authority type (controlling vs. autonomy-supporting) Direct socialisation of motivation * Modelling * Task presentation * Feedback <p><i>Group-specific motivational Components</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goal-orientedness Norm and reward system Group cohesiveness Classroom goal structure (cooperative, competitive or individualistic)

- The *Learner Level* involves individual characteristics that the learner brings to the learning process, most notably *self-confidence*, which reflects the influence of Richard Clément's work on the topic.
- The *Learning Situation Level* is associated with situation-specific motives rooted in various aspects of L2 learning within a classroom setting: *course-specific motivational components* (related to the syllabus, the teaching materials, the teaching method and the learning tasks); *teacher-specific motivational components* (concerning the motivational impact of the teacher's personality, behaviour and teaching style/practice); and *group-specific motivational components* (related to the characteristics of the learner group).

Williams and Burden's framework of L2 motivation

- Williams and Burden's framework of L2 motivation
- Another detailed framework of motivational components was offered by Marion Williams and Bob Burden (1997) (see Table 3) as part of a larger overview of psychology for language teachers. They also considered L2 motivation to be a complex, multi-dimensional construct, but the grouping of the components followed different principles from the Dörnyei (1994) framework. The principal grouping category in the Williams and Burden construct is whether the motivational influence is *internal* or *external*, and within these two categories they distinguished a number of subcomponents, following some current themes in educational psychology.

A process model of language learning motivation

- Let me conclude the brief overview of the various motivation theories by presenting a model that I have been working on recently, which reflects a novel approach in L2 motivation research. The construct that I will describe below reflects the principles of a more general and elaborate model devised in collaboration with a friend, István Ottó (Dörnyei and Ottó 1998; Dörnyei 2000, 2001). The new element of the model is that it is based on a *process-oriented approach*. This means that it takes a dynamic view of motivation, trying to account for the *changes of motivation over time*. I believe that this is an important consideration, because when we talk about a prolonged learning activity, such as mastering an L2, motivation cannot be viewed as a stable attribute of learning that remains constant for several months or years. Instead, what most teachers find is that their students' motivation fluctuates, going through certain ebbs and flows. Such variation may be caused by a range of factors, such as the phase of the school year (e.g. motivation might decrease with time) or the type of activity that the

Dörnyei's 1994 framework of L2 motivation

- My 1994 model (see Table 2) is a good example of the 'educational approach', as it specifically focused on motivation from a classroom perspective. It conceptualised L2 motivation in terms of three levels:
- The *Language Level* encompasses various components related to aspects of the L2, such as the culture and the community, as well as the intellectual and pragmatic values and benefits associated with it. That is, this level represents the traditionally established elements of L2 motivation associated with integrativeness and instrumentality.

Table 3 Williams and Burden's (1997) framework of L2 motivation

INTERNAL FACTORS	EXTERNAL FACTORS
Intrinsic interest of activity	Significant others
• arousal of curiosity	• parents
• optimal degree of challenge	• teachers
Perceived value of activity	• peers
• personal relevance	The nature of interaction with significant others
• anticipated value of outcomes	• mediated learning experiences
• intrinsic value attributed to the activity	• the nature and amount of feedback
Sense of agency	• rewards
• locus of causality	• the nature and amount of appropriate praise
• locus of control re: process and outcomes	• punishments, sanctions
Mastery	The learning environment
• ability to set appropriate goals	• comfort
• feelings of competence	• resources
• awareness of developing skills and mastery in a chosen area	• time of day, week, year
Self-concept	• size of class and school class and school ethos
• realistic awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses in skills required	The broader context
• personal definitions and judgements of success and failure	• wider family networks
• self-worth concern	• the local education system
Attitudes	• conflicting interests
• learned helplessness	• cultural norms
• to language learning in general	• societal expectations and attitudes
• to the target language	• to the target language community and culture
Other affective states	
• confidence	
• anxiety, fear	
Developmental age and stage	
Gender	

students face. Therefore, it is my belief that it may be useful to include a time dimension – or a *temporal axis* – in a motivation model that is to be applied to school learning (cf. Dörnyei 2000).

Well said . . .
'within the context of institutionalised learning especially, the common experience would seem to be motivational flux rather than stability. (Ema Ushioda 1996:240)

The main assumption underlying our process-oriented approach is that motivation consists of several distinct phases (see Figure 2):

- First it needs to be *generated* – the motivational dimension related to this initial phase can be referred to as *choice motivation*, because the generated motivation leads to the selection of the goal or task to be pursued.
- Second, the generated motivation needs to be actively *maintained* and *protected* while the particular action lasts. This motivational dimension has been referred to as *executive motivation*, and it is particularly relevant to learning in classroom settings, where students are exposed to a great number of distracting influences, such as off-task thoughts, irrelevant distractions from others, anxiety about the tasks, or physical conditions that make it difficult to complete the task.
- Finally, there is a third phase following the completion of the action – termed *motivational retrospection* – which concerns the learners' *retrospective evaluation* of how things went. The way students process their past experiences in this retrospective phase will determine the kind of activities they will be motivated to pursue in the future.

In Figure 2, I listed the main motives that influence the learner's behaviour/thinking during the three phases. These motives include many of the well-known concepts discussed earlier in this chapter. What is important to note about these lists is that the different motivational phases appear to be fuelled by different motives. In agreement with other researchers (e.g. Heckhausen 1991, Williams and Burden 1997) I believe that it involves largely different considerations to deliberate the reasons for doing something and subsequently to decide on a course of action – that is, to *initiate motivation* – from *sustaining motivation*. Although I am not going to elaborate on these motives here, they will re-emerge later in this book because I have used the construct in Figure 2 as

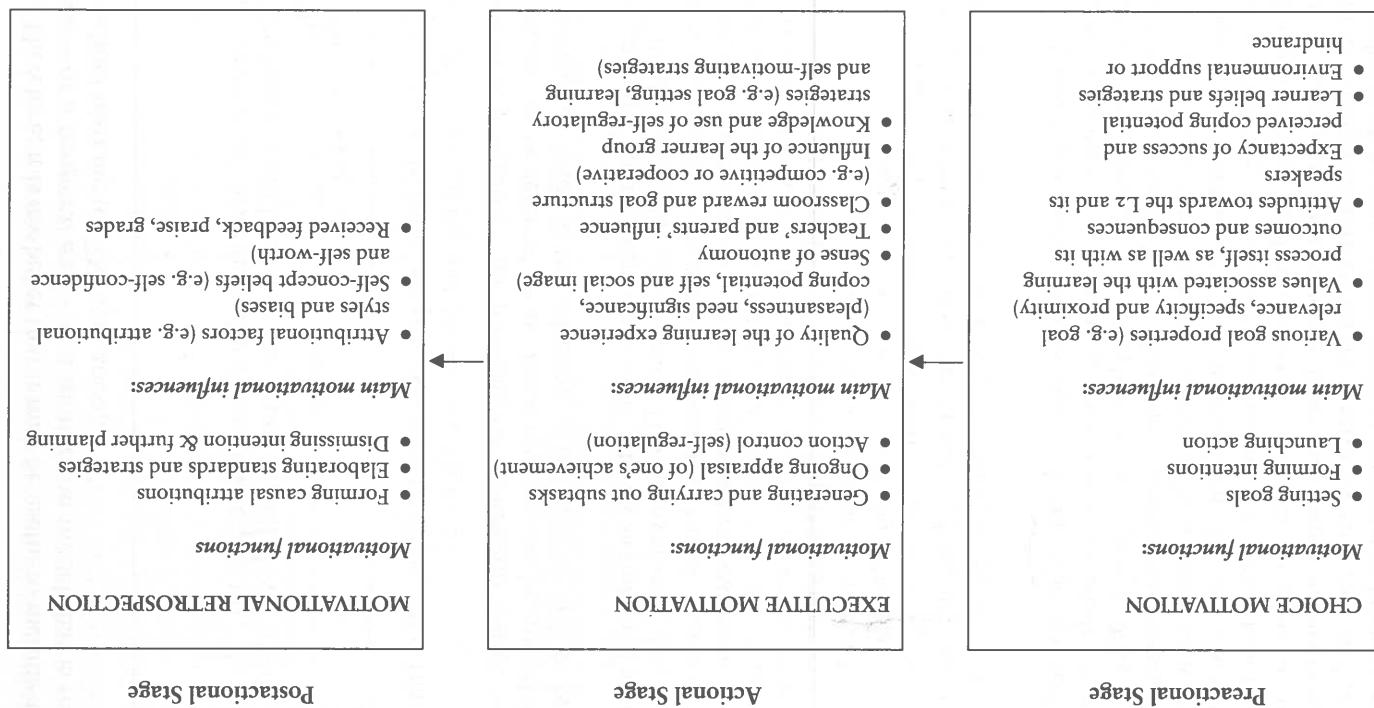
the basis for organising and presenting a systematic overview of motivational strategies. However, to provide some evidence of the process-oriented approach, let me mention here just one observation that many teachers might find familiar and which well illustrates the relevance of such a conception to the study of L2s.

In adult language courses it is not at all uncommon to find people who soon drop out because they realise that they cannot cope with the day-to-day demands of attending the classes and completing the home assignments. What is interesting from our point of view is that some of these learners will decide later to re-enrol in the course; in fact, some learners repeat this cycle several times (which reminds me of anecdotes about married couples who get divorced and then re-marry more than once). Why does this happen? From a process-oriented perspective this behaviour is explainable: enrolling in a course is motivated by ‘choice motivation’, but the ongoing work that is required during the language course is energised by ‘executive motivation’; in the case of drop-outs this latter source of motivation is insufficient. However, once a person has dropped out, the everyday realities of the coursework will be soon forgotten and the more general considerations about the importance of L2 learning become dominant once again – in other words, the person is back to square one and ‘choice motivation’ comes into force again. The reason why such cycles do not go on ad infinitum (although I have seen people who have quit and then re-started their L2 studies in a seemingly never-ending sequence . . .) is that during the third phase of the motivational cycle – ‘motivational retrospection’ – most such learners will sooner or later draw the necessary conclusion that even though they value knowing an L2, for various reasons they cannot cope with the actual demands of attending a course.

1.2 Motivating people

A lot has been written on student motivation both in psychology and in L2 studies. Most of this material, however, has been directed at researchers to facilitate further research, rather than at practitioners to facilitate teaching. One reason for this gap between theory and practice is the different nature of the principles that people find useful in educational and research contexts. The kind of knowledge teachers can use best is straightforward and unambiguous, along the lines of ‘If you do this, you’ll get this’. Psychologists, however, are not very keen on making black-and-white statements because when it comes to humans, there are very few rules and principles that are universally true, regardless of the actual context and purpose of the learning activity. It

Figure 2 A process model of learning motivation in the L2 classroom



would be great to have absolute rules such as the ones we find in the natural sciences but in the social sciences nothing is so straightforward and almost everything that has been written in the motivational literature has also been questioned by others. Therefore, motivation researchers in the past have been rather reluctant to come out with sets of practical recommendations for teachers.

Let's face it... .

'Large numbers of students are rejecting school as a means for improving their lives. Many start by becoming truants at the age of 13 or 14, and then dropping out officially at their first opportunity. Others endure their school years with sullen, glassy-eyed looks on their faces as they slouch in their desks without books, pens, or paper. With two or three notable exceptions, few books are written to help teachers understand these students or deal with the problems of student apathy.'

(James Raffini 1993:xi)

the person is likely to choose the particular course of action. Sometimes simply providing a good opportunity is enough to do the trick. Whatever form it takes, however, the motivating process is usually a long-term one, built 'one grain of trust and caring at a time' (Scheidecker and Freeman 1999:126). In classroom contexts, in particular, it is rare to find dramatic motivational events that – like a lightening or a revelation – reshape the students' mindsets from one moment to another. Rather, it is typically a series of nuances that might eventually culminate in a long-lasting effect.

Well said... .

'there are no magic motivational buttons that can be pushed to "make" people want to learn, work hard, and act in a responsible manner. Similarly, no one can be directly "forced" to care about something... . Facilitation, not control, should be the guiding idea in attempts to motivate humans.'

(Martin Ford 1992:202)

During the last decade, however, things have started to change. More and more articles and books have been published with the word 'motivating' in their title (see the 'Further reading' box at the end of this section), and some of the best-known motivation researchers and educational psychologists have turned their attention to classroom applications. It is as if a new spirit had entered the profession, urging scholars to 'stick their neck out and see what we've got'. And, luckily, what we've got is nothing to be ashamed of. There is a growing set of core knowledge in motivation research that has stood the test of time and which can therefore be safely translated into practical terms. This book is intended to summarise this knowledge. Before launching into the discussion of practical motivational techniques, let me briefly address three general points:

- What exactly do we mean by 'motivating' someone?
- What is the relationship between 'motivating' teaching and 'good' teaching?
- Whose responsibility is it to motivate learners?

What does 'motivating someone' involve?

Motivating someone to do something can involve many different things, from trying to persuade a person directly to exerting indirect influence on him/her by arranging the conditions or circumstances in a way that

Who can be motivated? Most discussions about motivating techniques are based on the idealistic belief that 'all students are motivated to learn under the right conditions, and that you can provide these conditions in your classroom' (McCombs and Pope 1994:vii). Unfortunately, this assumption is not necessarily true in every case. Realistically, it is highly unlikely that everybody can be motivated to learn everything and even generally motivated students are not equally keen on every subject matter. Yet, my personal belief is in accordance with the spirit of the above statement in that I think that most students' motivation can be 'worked on' and increased. Although rewards and punishments are too often the only tools present in the motivational arsenal of many teachers, the spectrum of other, and potentially more effective, motivational strategies is so broad that it is hard to imagine that none of them would work.

Motivating teaching

I remember a recent experience with a postgraduate student who was writing her MA thesis on how to motivate learners. When she gave me the first draft of the manuscript, I was puzzled to see that a great deal of the material concerned effective teaching in general rather than motivational practices. When I thought about this, however, I realised that she was right in a way. Sometimes the best motivational intervention is

Table 4 Włodkowski's (1986: 42) Instructional Clarity Checklist

-
1. Explain things simply.
 2. Give explanations we understand.
 3. Teach at a pace that is not too fast and not too slow.
 4. Stay with a topic until we understand.
 5. Try to find out when we don't understand and then repeat things.
 6. Teach things step-by-step.
 7. Describe the work to be done and how to do it.
 8. Ask if we know what to do and how to do it.
 9. Repeat things when we don't understand.
 10. Explain something and then use an example to illustrate it.
 11. Explain something and then stop so we can ask questions.
 12. Prepare us for what we will be doing next.
 13. Give specific details when teaching or training.
 14. Repeat things that are hard to understand.
 15. Use examples and explain them until we understand.
 16. Explain something and then stop so we can think about it.
 17. Show us how to do the work.
 18. Explain the assignment and the materials we need to do it.
 19. Stress difficult points.
 20. Show examples of how to do course work and assignments.
 21. Give us enough time for practice.
 22. Answer our questions.
 23. Ask questions to find out we understand.
 24. Go over difficult assignments until we understand how to do them.
-

Section 4.2), whereas others may require extra attention and time (e.g. presenting self-motivating strategies – cf. Section 4.8). Given the reality of constant time pressure in many school contexts, the question of 'Whose job is it to improve motivation?' is a valid one. The current situation is not very promising in this respect: by-and-large, promoting learner motivation is nobody's responsibility. Teachers are supposed to teach the curriculum rather than motivate learners, and the fact that the former cannot happen without the latter is often ignored. For example, I am not aware of a single L2 teacher training programme worldwide in which the development of skills in motivating learners would be a key component of the curriculum.

So, whose responsibility is it to motivate learners? My guess is that it is every teacher's who thinks of the *long-term* development of his/her students. In the short run, preparing for tests might admittedly produce better immediate results than spending some of the time shaping the motivational qualities of the learner group and the individual learners. However, few of us teachers have entered the profession with the sole objective of preparing students for tests . . . Besides, motivational training might be a very good investment in the longer run, and it may also make your own life in the classroom so much more pleasant. As Scheidecker and Freeman (1999:9) succinctly put it, the real reward for motivating teachers is not on pay-day, 'it is when their passion is caught by the students. That is a big-time return on anyone's investment.'

Further reading

During the preparation of this book I have used many sources. Very useful and comprehensive overviews are provided by Jere Brophy's (1998) *Motivating Students to Learn* and Raymond Włodkowski's (1986) *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn*. I have found further valuable material in Brophy (1987), Burden (1995), Canfield and Wells (1994), Covington (1998), Galloway, Rogers, Armstrong and Leo (1998), Good and Brophy (1994), Jones and Jones (1995), Keller (1983), McCombs and Pope (1994), Pintrich and Schunk (1996), Raffini (1993, 1996) and Scheidecker and Freeman (1999). In the L2 field, I am aware of the following works that offer practical motivational ideas and recommendations: Alison (1993), Brown (1994), Chambers (1999), Cranmer (1996), Dörnyei (1994), Dörnyei and Csizér (1998), Oxford and Shearin (1994), and Williams and Burden (1997).

simply to improve the quality of our teaching. Similarly, no matter how competent a motivator a teacher is, if his/her teaching lacks instructional clarity and the learners simply cannot follow the intended programme, motivation to learn the particular subject matter is unlikely to blossom. Having said that, it is clear that this book cannot cover everything about good teaching. Table 4 contains an inventory of the components that make up instructional quality according to motivational psychologist Raymond Włodkowski. The techniques listed there are to illustrate the kind of teaching methodological issues which are really important with regard to motivating teaching but which this book is not going to cover.

Whose responsibility is it to motivate learners?

Some of the motivational techniques are closely related to subject-matter teaching (e.g. how to present tasks in a motivating manner – cf.

1.3 Motivational strategies

Motivational strategies are techniques that promote the individual's goal-related behaviour. Because human behaviour is rather complex, there are many diverse ways of promoting it – in fact, almost any influence a person is exposed to might potentially affect his/her behaviour. Motivational strategies refer to those *motivational influences that are consciously exerted to achieve some systematic and enduring positive effect*.

With respect to the various strategies promoting classroom L₂ learning, there are several ways to organise them into separate 'themes'. We could, for example:

- focus on the *internal structure* of a typical language class and cluster the strategies according to the various structural units (e.g. strategies to present new material, give feedback, set up communicative tasks or assign homework).
- design a primarily *trouble-shooting guide* in which some particularly problematic facets of the classroom's motivational life are listed and suggestions are offered on how to handle these (e.g. how to deal with student lethargy; lack of voluntary participation; or anti-learning influences of deviant children).
- focus on *key motivational concepts* – such as intrinsic interest, self-confidence or student autonomy – and use these as the main organising units.
- centre the discussion on the *main types of teacher behaviour* that have motivating effects (e.g. showing a good example and modelling student behaviour; communication and rapport with the students; consciousness raising about self-regulated strategies; or stage managing classroom events).

Although I believe that all these approaches have their merits, I have chosen to follow a fifth approach which focuses on the different phases of the process-oriented model described earlier (cf. Figure 2 in Section 1.1). The model has been specifically developed for educational applications and it offers an important advantage over the other approaches: *comprehensiveness*. When deliberating on the structure of this book, it seemed to me that following through the motivational process from the initial arousal of the motivation to the completion and evaluation of the motivated action is in many ways more logical than making somewhat arbitrary decisions about which central themes the material should be built around.

Key units in this process-oriented organisation include:

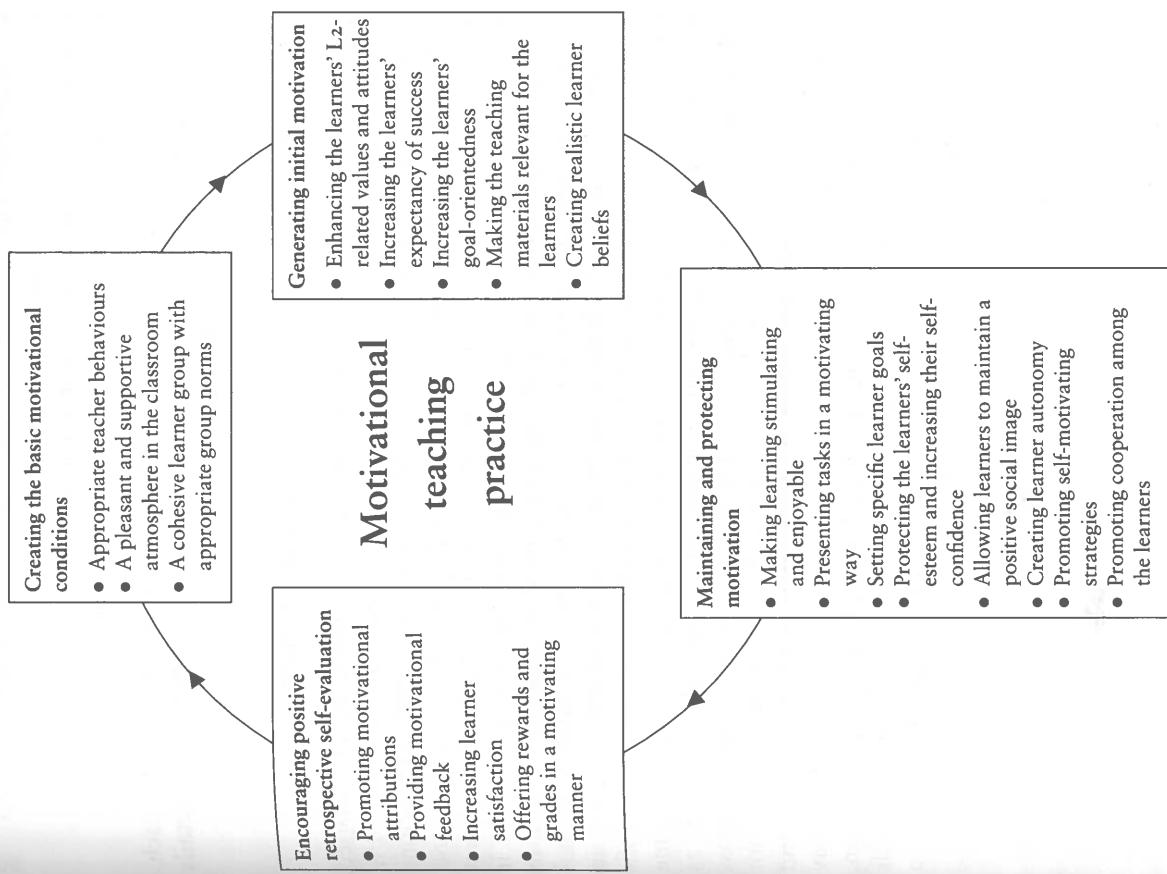


Figure 3 The components of motivational teaching practice in the L₂ classroom

2 Creating the basic motivational conditions

- Creating the basic motivational conditions.
- Generating initial motivation.
- Maintaining and protecting motivation.
- Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation.

These four motivational aspects will be discussed in one chapter each.

Figure 3 contains a schematic representation of the system, with details of the sub-areas that will be covered.

Final words: not every strategy works in every context!

Finally, I would like to make a point which cannot be emphasised enough: motivational strategies, even those which are generally the most reliable, are not rock-solid golden rules, but rather suggestions that may work with one teacher or group better than another, and which may work better today than tomorrow. This is particularly true if we consider how varied language learning situations are worldwide. It is unlikely that, say, a group of immigrant mothers studying French in Canada will benefit from exactly the same strategies as primary school learners of English in Hong Kong or university learners of Latin in Sweden. Differences amongst the learners in their culture, age, proficiency level and relationship to the target language may render some strategies completely useless/meaningless, while highlighting others as particularly prominent. Please bear this in mind when you come across something in the book which you think is culturally biased or does not make sense from your perspective. All I can say is that the strategies and techniques described below have been found to work with many teachers and groups before and are therefore worthy of consideration.

To turn to McCombs and Pope (1994) again: 'We have seen this approach work, and we are excited about its possibilities. We invite you to explore this perspective with us' (P. vii).

Final words: not every strategy works in every context!

Motivational strategies cannot be employed successfully in a 'motivational vacuum' – certain preconditions must be in place before any further attempts to generate motivation can be effective. In my experience, the following three motivational conditions in particular are indispensable:

- appropriate teacher behaviours and a good relationship with the students;
- a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere;
- a cohesive learner group with appropriate group norms.

Of course, the three conditions are interrelated because, for example, you cannot have a pleasant classroom climate if there is tension between you and the students, but it is useful to look at them one by one.

2.1 Appropriate teacher behaviours

In 1998, Kata Csizér and I conducted a survey (Dörnyei and Csizér 1998) among Hungarian teachers of English to find out what they thought of various motivational techniques and how often they used them in their own teaching practice. In order to even out the different personal views, we included a relatively large number of practitioners ($N = 200$) from diverse contexts (ranging from primary school instructors teaching beginners to university lecturers teaching English majors) and then summarised their responses. The survey revealed that the participants considered the teacher's own behaviour to be the single most important motivational tool. Furthermore, the results also exposed that this 'tool' was one of the most under-utilised motivational resources in the teacher's classroom practice. A year later I was interested to read a study by Gary Chambers (1999) that was conducted in a different context, amongst British secondary school learners of

German, and which led the author to the same conclusion: of all the factors that were hypothesised to contribute to the pupils' positive or negative appraisal of L2 learning, the teacher came out on top for all the age groups surveyed.

From an interview with a trainee teacher of English . . .

'When do you think that things started to change?'

'You mean, when did I decide that I wanted this for my career? Well, I started to like English when I was in high school. I started to enjoy it a little bit more because of a teacher I had. She was really, ah, a role model for me, you know. The way she taught us, it was really great. And that made me love this language and that made me understand that, "OK, now I want to be an English teacher".'

(Adapted from Silva 2001)

These results, of course, only confirm what most experienced teachers already know, namely that almost everything a teacher does in the classroom has a motivational influence on students. Because this book is primarily about what you as a teacher can do to motivate your learners, the issue of appropriate teacher behaviours will be regularly addressed throughout. Here, I will discuss four general points. The teacher's:

- enthusiasm;
- commitment to and expectations for the students' learning;
- relationship with the students;
- relationship with the students' parents.

Enthusiasm

Who have been your most influential teachers? Who do you still remember as someone who has made a difference in your life? These are the questions that American psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997) has addressed in a thought-provoking article, and his answer was that it is the enthusiastic ones. The ones who love their subject matter and who show by their dedication and their passion that there is nothing else on earth they would rather be doing. They are the 'nurcuses' whose involvement in their areas of expertise is so excessive that it is bordering on being crazy. Students might make fun of this dedication but deep inside, argues Csikszentmihalyi, they admire that passion. Such a commitment towards the subject matter then becomes 'infectious', instilling in students a similar willingness to pursue knowledge.

Well said . . .

'Young people are more intelligent than adults generally give them credit for. They can usually discern, for instance, whether an adult they know likes or dislikes what he or she is doing. If a teacher does not believe in his job, does not enjoy the learning he is trying to transmit, the student will sense this and derive the entirely rational conclusion that the particular subject matter is not worth mastering for its own sake.'

(Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi 1997:77)

Many scholars share Csikszentmihalyi's belief that enthusiasm for one's specialisation area and the ability to make this enthusiasm public rather than hiding it is one of the most important ingredients of motivationally successful teaching. Projecting enthusiasm is related to the more general process of *modelling*, which is a very effective method of teaching various things by setting an example, and there is no reason why this example could not involve motivational factors such as effort expenditure, positive attitudes and interest in the subject (cf. Brophy and Kher 1986). On the other hand, we must also bear in mind that different cultures consider the expression of personal feelings – such as enthusiasm – differently, and what would be a highly motivating personal example in one country might be looked upon as rather 'uncultured' in another.

It is also important to stress that projecting enthusiasm does not mean pep talks, theatrical performance or tears in our eyes when we utter the words 'Shakespeare' or 'past conditional'. Rather, as Good and Brophy (1994) argue, it means that we clearly identify our reasons for being interested in the topic and then *share* these with the students. Dramatic salesmanship might work if you are that sort of person but low-key, sincere statements will be just as effective.

Strategy I

Demonstrate and talk about your own enthusiasm for the course material, and how it affects you personally.

More specifically:

- Share your own personal interest in the L2 with your students.
- Show students that you value L2 learning as a meaningful experience that produces satisfaction and enriches your life.

Commitment to and expectations for the students' academic progress

In his/her position of group leader, the teacher embodies the class spirit. Broadly speaking, if you show commitment towards the students' learning and progress, there is a very good chance that they will do the same thing. It is important that everybody in the classroom should be aware that you care; that you are not there just for the salary; that it is important for you that your students succeed; that you are ready to work just as hard as the students towards this success. Of course, these phrases do sound a bit trite, just like the three Musketeers' motto, 'All for one and one for all!'. However, my experience is that this aspect of teacher behaviour cannot be overemphasised because students are extremely sensitive to the cues coming from the teacher.

There are many ways of expressing that the students' learning matters to you. They include:

- offering concrete assistance;
- offering to meet students individually to explain things;
- responding immediately when help is requested;
- correcting tests and papers promptly;
- sending learners copies of relevant/particularly interesting articles;
- arranging extracurricular instructional programmes/opportunities;
- encouraging extra assignments and offering to assist with these;
- showing concern when things aren't going well;
- allowing students to call you at home when they have a problem (Hmm. . .);
- being available for overtime (Hmmm. . .).

If students can sense that the teacher doesn't care . . .

' . . . this perception is the fastest way to undermine their motivation. The spiritual (and sometimes physical) absence of the teacher sends such a powerful message of 'It doesn't matter!' to the students, that everybody, even the most dedicated ones, are likely to be affected and become demoralised.

Brophy argues, 'To the extent that you treat students as if they already are eager learners, they are more likely to become eager learners. Let them know that they are expected to be curious . . .' (p. 170).

Teacher expectations

The need to expect learners to show interest in order for this to really happen is an example of the more general issue of *teacher expectations*. It has been shown by a convincing amount of research that it is not enough to be merely committed to the students' academic progress, you also need to have sufficiently high expectations for what the students can achieve. For example, in one of the most famous experiments in educational psychology, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) administered an intelligence test to primary school children at the start of the academic year. Teachers were told that the purpose of this test was to predict which students would 'bloom' intellectually during the academic year. The researchers, however, deceived the teachers because instead of providing them with the true test scores, they identified 20 per cent of the sample as potential 'intellectual bloomers' randomly, that is, regardless of their actual intellectual potential. The results of the experiment were quite remarkable: by the end of the year there were significant differences between the 'bloomers' and the control students whereas at the beginning of the year they were similar in every respect except in the way they were labelled by the researchers.

Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) explained the emerging difference by arguing that the (false) information about the students created differential teacher expectations concerning them and these expectations acted as *self-fulfilling prophecies* in that students lived up to them (this effect has also been referred to as the 'Pygmalion effect' after Bernard Shaw's play). In other words, if you yourself believe that your students can reach high levels of achievement, there is a good chance that they will too. However, if you have low expectations about how much your students can cope with, they will probably 'live down' to these expectations. This means, for example, that ability grouping is a dangerous practice because teachers who are to teach the low-ability groups are bound to be influenced by this knowledge, which may send the children on an ever downward spiral of low achievement and low expectations.

Jere Brophy (1998) adds a further important ingredient to the commitment issue. He emphasises that in our communication with the students we should take it for granted that the students share our enthusiasm for learning. We should make explicit references to this. In this way, as

Strategy 2*Take the students' learning very seriously.*

More specifically:

- Show students that you care about their progress.
- Indicate your mental and physical availability for all things academic.
- Have sufficiently high expectations for what your students can achieve.

Good relationship with the students

I don't think it requires much justification to claim that it is important for a motivating teacher to have a positive relationship with the students on a personal and not just on an academic level. In fact, a lot of the previous section could be simply copied here by replacing the phrase 'care for the students' learning' with 'care for the students as real people'. Teachers who share warm, personal interactions with their students, who respond to their concerns in an empathic manner and who succeed in establishing relationships of mutual trust and respect with the learners, are more likely to inspire them in academic matters than those who have no personal ties with the learners. Of course, this again is a highly culture-sensitive issue.

Well said . . .

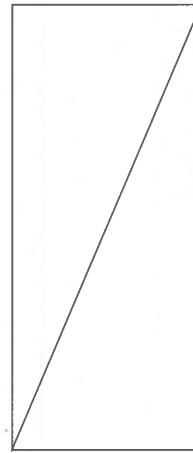
'Building trust in a classroom is a slow process and results from many small incidents in which the teacher has responded honestly and dependably. It is easy to trust "trustable" students, but it is the "untrustable" students who need systematic trust-building experiences. . . . While some students may occasionally abuse their trust, they need repeated opportunities to learn and practise this character trait.'
(James Raffini 1993:145–6)

Developing a personal relationship with the students and achieving their respect is easier said than done. It is a gradual process built on a foundation whose components include the teacher's:

- acceptance of the students,
- ability to listen and pay attention to them,
- availability for personal contact.

Acceptance

Acceptance is one of the three linchpins of Carl Rogers' humanistic psychology (the other two being 'empathy' and 'congruence'), which has been very influential in the development of student-centred teaching in general (cf. Rogers and Freiberg 1994). It involves a non-judgemental positive attitude, something like the way we may feel towards a relative, for example an aunt or uncle, who has his/her shortcomings but whom we know well and is one of us. It is not to be confused with approval; we may accept a person without necessarily approving of everything he/she does. It is a bit like 'loving the sinner, not the sin'. Let me include here an illustration of what acceptance involves that I have heard recently (and sorry if you are already familiar with it). It is about a picture not unlike the one below. The question was: 'What can you see?' When I first saw this picture, I saw a black line across a white rectangle. But the person who presented the picture said that it was, in fact, two white triangles next to each other . . . If you accept someone, you try and focus on the white triangles rather than the black lines.

**Ability to listen and pay attention to students**

According to Wlodkowski (1986:28), *listening* to a person is the 'single most powerful transaction that occurs between ourselves and another person that tells that individual that we accept him as a human being . . . The way we listen tells learners more than anything else how much consideration we are really giving them'. That is, students need to feel that you pay personal attention to them. Of course, everybody will understand that with a whole class to look after, you cannot spend too much time with individual students, but there is a whole variety of small

gestures that do not take up much time which can convey personal attention and can touch the lives of every student in some way (cf. Burden 1995:224; Raffini 1996:182). For example:

- Greet students and remember their names.
- Smile at them.
- Notice interesting features of their appearance (e.g. new haircut).
- Learn something unique about each student and occasionally mention it to them.
- Ask them about their lives outside school.
- Show interest in their hobbies.
- Express in your comments that you've thought about them and that their individual effort is recognised.

- Refer back to what you have talked about before.
- Recognise birthdays.
- Move around in class.
- Include personal topics and examples about students in discussing content matters.
- Send notes/homework to absent students.

Availability

Availability is a difficult issue at a time when most teachers around the world are overburdened and pressed for time. There is no question that individual personal contact with the students can do wonders to our relationship with them. But how can we find the time necessary for this? Well, even if we do not have much extra time, we might be able to do some of the following:

- Join students for lunch in the school canteen (if there is one).
- Join students in the playground.
- Chaperone school events.
- Give them your home telephone number for times when they need assistance.
- Give them your e-mail address (if you work in an area where the internet is available) and encourage them to write to you.
- Set a weekly slot when you are in your office/staff room in case someone wants/needs to talk to you.

Strategy 3

Develop a personal relationship with your students.

More specifically:

- Show students that you accept and care about them.
- Pay attention and listen to each of them.
- Indicate your mental and physical availability.

Good relationship with the parents

Something we may easily forget is that our good relationship with the students also depends on our good relationship with their parents (this section, of course, does not much apply to adult education). For most children their parents' opinion matters, and therefore parents can be powerful allies in any motivational effort. Brophy (1998) points out that one of the most distinctive features of teachers who have been successful with hard-to-reach, at-risk students is that they reach out to these students' families, get to know them, keep them informed of what is going on at school, and involve them in decision-making. In other words, they enlist the parents as allies in their attempts to make a difference in the children's lives. Such a collaborative relationship might be hard to establish to start with, but – in Brophy's experience – most parents care about their children's success at school and will respond positively if they feel that the teacher is acting in their children's best interest. In fact, the reason why many parents fail to perform their supportive role is because – due to a lack of positive models in their own childhood – they simply do not realise the importance of such support or know how to provide it.

Gardner (1985) further argues that with regard to L₂ learning the parents also play a 'passive role', which involves *indirect modelling* and communicating their attitudes towards L₂ learning and the L₂ community. Children are normally well aware of what their parents *really* think of the L₂ and its speakers. Gardner presents evidence that this passive role can be very powerful even at times when 'the parent seemingly supports the child's academic progress (e.g. checks their homework). If the parent harbours latent negative/critical attitudes towards the L₂ community, the child is likely to pick up the negative message, which will undermine motivation. This is often the case with the children of those expatriates who compare their often temporary home unfavourably

with their home country and do not make any attempt to learn the L2 of the host nation themselves. Even if they would like their children to master the local language, this may not actually happen because of the conflicting messages the children receive.

Strategy 4

Develop a collaborative relationship with the students' parents.

More specifically:

- Keep parents regularly informed about their children's progress.
- Ask for their assistance in performing certain supportive tasks at home.

The ideal classroom climate . . .

It is easy to tell when the 'pleasant-and-supportive-classroom-atmosphere' is there – you can sense it after only a few minutes' stay in the particular class. There is no tension in the air; students are at ease; there are no sharp – let alone hostile – comments made to ridicule each other. There are no put-downs or sarcasm. Instead, there is mutual trust and respect. No need for anyone to feel anxious or insecure. Scheidecker and Freeman (1999:138) have summarised very expressively the essence of the classroom with a motivational climate for learning: When one watches students enter such a classroom, 'one gets an overwhelming sense that the students shed emotional baggage at the doorway'. This is an 'emotional safe zone'.

2.2 A pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the classroom

Language learning is one of the most face-threatening school subjects because of the pressure of having to operate using a rather limited language code. Learners are forced to 'babble like a child' which might just be the last straw for some whose personal identity is already unstable or damaged. In a language class learners need to take considerable risk even to produce relatively simple answers/statements because it is all too easy to make a mistake when you have to pay attention to pronunciation, intonation, grammar and content at the same time. No wonder that language anxiety has been found to be a powerful factor hindering L2 learning achievement (MacIntyre 1999; Young 1999). The solution, according to the general consensus amongst motivation researchers, is straightforward: We need to create a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere. Indeed, in the Hungarian teacher survey mentioned before, the importance of the classroom climate as a motivational tool was rank ordered second (after the teacher's own behaviour) amongst all the motivational dimensions. So the question is: how can we create a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere?

The psychological environment of the classroom is made up of a number of different components. One of these, the *teacher's rapport with the students*, has already been discussed. A second constituent, the *students' relationship with each other*, will be addressed in the next section, along with the question of classroom rules and norms. What is important to mention here is that in a safe and supportive classroom the *norm of tolerance* prevails and students feel comfortable taking risks because they know that they will not be embarrassed or criticised if they make a mistake. It has been made clear to them that mistakes are a natural part of learning (for more details about this aspect of the classroom climate, see Section 4.4 on 'Protecting the learners' self-esteem and increasing their self-confidence').

A further tool to improve the classroom atmosphere is the use of *humour*. This is a very potent factor, yet it is often ignored in theoretical writings on motivation. I do not know whether this is because in their rigorous and disciplined quest for truth many researchers have simply forgotten what humour is or because scholars are reluctant to promote a feature – the sense of humour – that they think not everybody has or can acquire. The main point about having humour in the classroom is not so much about continuously cracking jokes but rather having a relaxed attitude about how seriously we take ourselves. If students can sense that the teacher allows a healthy degree of self-mockery and does not treat school as the most hallowed of all places, the jokes will come.

Finally, we should not forget that the classroom is not only a physical environment. The classroom atmosphere will be strongly influenced by the decoration: posters, bulletin board displays, flowers, funny objects ('the puppet of the class') are all

welcome. Some teachers (and many school authorities) may not agree with me, but I have also found soft drinks, snacks and music before and after class (and during some L2 tasks) to be successful in creating a more relaxed atmosphere. The most important thing, however, is not the aesthetic qualities of the surroundings themselves but rather the extent to which the students are involved in personalising the classroom. This is related to the abstract notion of the *ownership of the classroom*. Personalising the classroom can be seen as students exercising increasing control over their environment; therefore, we might encourage learners to 'take over' some control over the walls, spatial arrangement of the furniture, background music, etc.

Strategy 5

Create a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the classroom.

More specifically (in addition to suggestions mentioned in other sections of this chapter):

- Establish a norm of tolerance.
- Encourage risk-taking and have mistakes accepted as a natural part of learning.
- Bring in and encourage humour.
- Encourage learners to personalise the classroom environment according to their taste.

Welcome. Some teachers (and many school authorities) may not agree with me, but I have also found soft drinks, snacks and music before and after class (and during some L2 tasks) to be successful in creating a more relaxed atmosphere. The most important thing, however, is not the aesthetic qualities of the surroundings themselves but rather the extent to which the students are involved in personalising the classroom. This is related to the abstract notion of the *ownership of the classroom*. Personalising the classroom can be seen as students exercising increasing control over their environment; therefore, we might encourage learners to 'take over' some control over the walls, spatial arrangement of the furniture, background music, etc.

dynamics can offer is extremely relevant to language teachers (see Dörnyei and Malderez 1997, 1999; and Ehrman and Dörnyei 1998, for detailed discussions), here I will only highlight two aspects of group dynamics that have direct motivational bearings: *group cohesiveness* and *group norms*. Following these discussions I will briefly address the sensitive issue of how to discipline students without losing our motivational objectives.

Creating a cohesive learner group

A cohesive learner group is one which is 'together'; in which there is a strong 'we' feeling; and which students are happy to belong to. That is, cohesiveness refers to the members' commitment to the group and to each other. It is the 'magnetism' or 'glue' that holds the group together. Cohesiveness is often manifested by members seeking each other out, providing mutual support, and making each other welcome in the group (Ehrman and Dörnyei 1998). What is even more important from our perspective is that student motivation tends to increase in cohesive class groups. This is due to the fact that in such groups students share an increased responsibility for achieving the group goals, they 'pull each other along' and the positive relations among them make the learning process more enjoyable in general.

Well said . . .

'While there are too few rewards in school teaching, one of the most satisfying is the pride of accomplishment that comes from teaching in a classroom that has developed this level of cohesiveness.'

(James Raffini 1993:95)

Whether or not a class becomes a cohesive community is not simply a question of luck. There are a number of specific factors that can positively contribute to the process, and many of these are within the teacher's control. In the following, I will list ten important factors along with some practical examples and suggestions (see Ehrman and Dörnyei 1998, for more details).

1. The *amount of time spent together* and the *shared group history*: there isn't much you can do about this one . . .
2. The extent to which group members can *learn about each other*: In order to help learners to get to know each other better, you can include special 'ice-breaking activities' at the beginning of a new course. These are designed to set members at ease, get them to

memorise each other's names, and to share personal information. Later on in the course you can provide further opportunities for students to learn more about each other by personalised certain language tasks or by choosing, in preference, activities with a potential for eliciting genuine personal information.

3. **Proximity** (i.e. physical distance such as sitting next to each other), **contact and interaction**: You may want to move students round from time to time to prevent the emergence of rigid seating patterns. Also, activities such as pair work, small group work, role-play and project work are very effective in allowing people to come into contact and interact with one another. Extracurricular activities and outings are also good ways of providing opportunities for contact and interaction.

4. **Cooperation** between members for common goals: student collaboration can be successfully promoted by including certain tasks – such as role-play performances, problem solving activities, project work, filling in worksheets, and preparing group reports – which require the preparation of a single 'group product' (see Section 4.6, for more details).

5. **The rewarding nature of group experience**: a commonplace yet true fact is that the more people enjoy the learning process in the class, the more they will want to belong to the class (see Section 4.1, for more).

6. **Successful completion of whole-group tasks** and a sense of group achievement: you may occasionally include whole-group tasks or projects which generate a satisfying visible product, or conclude in the solving of a puzzle or problem – after which the group can congratulate themselves on their achievement.

7. **Intragroup competition**: small group 'fun' competitions (i.e. games in which small groups compete with each other) promote inter-member relationships. You may want to put students together who would not normally make friends easily.

8. **Common threat** (e.g. the feeling of fellowship before a difficult exam) or **joint hardship** that group members have experienced (e.g. carrying out some tough task together): these create solidarity among the 'fellow-sufferers', but I am not sure how far we can take the practical implications of this . . .

9. **Group legends**: you may promote the building of a kind of 'group mythology' by encouraging learners to give the group a name and to invent characteristics for it. They may also establish group rituals, create a semi-official group history, prepare 'group objects' and symbols (such as flags or coats of arms) and find or create appropriate group mottoes/logos.

10. **Investing in the group**: it has been found that when members spend a considerable amount of time and effort contributing to the group goals, this will increase their commitment towards these goals. Therefore eliciting some significant investment early in the group's life may work towards group cohesiveness.

Strategy 6

Promote the development of group cohesiveness.

More specifically:

- Try and promote interaction, cooperation and the sharing of genuine personal information among the learners.
- Use ice-breakers at the beginning of a course.
- Regularly use small-group tasks where students can mix.
- Encourage and if possible organise extracurricular activities and outings.
- Try and prevent the emergence of rigid seating patterns.
- Include activities that lead to the successful completion of whole-group tasks or involve small-group competition games.
- Promote the building of a group legend.

Establishing constructive group norms

In every classroom there is a range of subtle and less subtle rules that determine what students can and cannot do. The interesting thing about these 'group norms' is that only some of them have been mandated by the teacher (e.g. 'No eating in class!'), others have spontaneously developed during the course of the group's development and are not even explicitly stated (e.g. the kind of jokes allowed or clothes worn). In many contemporary classrooms we can, regrettably, find the covert 'norm of mediocrity', which results in learners suffering social consequences for academic success. In such contexts, a student's lack of motivation can often be traced back to a real or imagined fear of being isolated or rejected by their peers. On the other hand, if the group adopts effective learning-oriented norms, this can be a major contribution to group motivation.

How can we establish constructive group norms? After all, everybody, teachers and students alike, would agree that there need to be certain 'rules of conduct' in the classroom to make joint learning possible. In

Table 5 Sample set of class rules

- For the students:*
- Let's not be late for class.
 - Always write you homework.
 - Once a term you can 'pass', i.e. say that you haven't prepared.
 - In small group work only the L2 can be used.
 - If you miss a class, make up for it and ask for the homework.
- For the teacher:*
- The class should finish on time.
 - Homework and tests should be marked within a week.
 - Always give advance notice of a test.
- For everybody:*
- Let's try and listen to each other.
 - Let's help each other.
 - Let's respect each other's ideas and values.
 - It's OK to make mistakes: they are learning points.
 - Let's not make fun of each other's weaknesses.
 - We must avoid hurting each other, verbally or physically.

Learners are very sensitive to the teacher's attitude towards these norms: as mentioned earlier, teachers, through their position as designated leaders, embody 'group conscience', and the model they set by their behaviour plays a powerful role in shaping the class. The saying 'Practise what you preach' is very relevant here: if the teacher does not pay enough attention to the enforcement of the established norms, learners very soon get the message that those rules are not really important and will rapidly discount and disobey them. For example, if the group has originally agreed on always writing their homework but the teacher sometimes forgets to check this or lets those who have failed to complete theirs get away too easily, the homework-writing morale of the class will soon plummet.

Strategy 7

Formulate group norms explicitly, and have them discussed and accepted by the learners.

More specifically:

- Include a specific 'group rules' activity at the beginning of a group's life to establish the norms explicitly.
- Explain the importance of the norms you mandate and how they enhance learning, and ask for the students' agreement.
- Elicit suggestions for additional rules from the learners and discuss these in the same way as the rules you have proposed.
- Put the group rules (and the consequences for violating them) on display.

my own teaching experience I have come to agree with research findings that suggest that norms are most efficient if they are *explicitly discussed and willingly adopted* by members. To facilitate this, I have often included an explicit *norm-building procedure* early in the group's life by

- formulating potential norms;
 - justifying their purpose in order to enlist support for them;
 - having them discussed by the whole group;
 - eliciting further potential norms from the learners and subjecting these to discussion too;
 - and finally agreeing on a mutually accepted set of 'class rules'.
- Such a procedure can take the form of a negotiated pyramid discussion, for example, first students discuss a particular point in pairs, then two pairs come together and come to an agreement, then they pool their ideas in groups of eight, etc. The consequences for violating any formally agreed norm should also be specified, and it is a good idea to put the established class rules (and the consequences for violating them) on display on a wall chart. Table 5 presents a sample set of class rules. There is one thing I would like to emphasise concerning class norms.

How to discipline learners who break the rules

Strictly speaking, discipline is not so much a motivational as a classroom management issue (which falls outside the scope of this book). Yet, it is often at times of conflict that our carefully constructed motivational practice collapses, so it might be important to say a few words about how to discipline students in a motivational (or at least not de-motivational) manner.

From the perspective of group dynamics, the best method of discipline is to leave it to the students themselves. This may not be as unrealistic as it first sounds. The advantage of well-chosen and fully accepted norms (discussed above) is exactly that group members tend to abide by them

without much pressure being exerted, and when someone violates the class norms, the group is likely to be able to cope with such deviations. In her influential book on group work, Elisabeth Cohen (1994:60) summarises very well the importance of a successfully developed norm system in educational settings:

the fact that new norms have been internalised is of considerable practical importance. Much of the work that teachers usually do is taken care of by the students themselves; the group makes sure that everyone understands what to do; the group helps to keep everyone on task; group members assist one another. Instead of the teacher having to control everyone's behaviour, the students take charge of themselves and others.

The power of the group . . .

We should not underestimate the power of the class group to cope with people who break the rules. They can bring to bear considerable group pressure on errant members, by:

- showing active support for the teacher;
- indirectly expressing disapproval with shifts in eye contact, withdrawal from interaction;
- openly ridiculing or criticising the violator;
- putting the violator in 'social quarantine'.

Let us not forget that group pressure can be powerful enough to make certain students depressed, sometimes suicidal, and groups can also drive teachers crazy if they choose to . . .

Unfortunately, there will be times when the group won't do the job for us and we must confront students about misbehaviour. At times like this, the rule of thumb generally mentioned in the literature is that we should address the issue directly, trying to discuss with the students involved what they can do to engage in more positive behaviour. This may be easier if we manage to separate students from their actions in the spirit of 'I accept you but not your behaviour'. McCombs and Pope (1994:40) argue that, contrary to belief, most misbehaviour in the classroom is the result of the students' low self-esteem: 'Students, rather than being malicious, attention-seeking egomaniacs, are misbehaving because they're scared or insecure'. In any case, if any disciplining is necessary, it should be fair, well-understood by the 'victim' and consistently applied. Easier said than done.

Strategy 8

Have the group norms consistently observed.

More specifically:

- Make sure that you yourself observe the established norms consistently.
- Never let any violations go unnoticed.