

应用语言学习丛书

# Motivational Dynamics in Language Learning

语言学习中的动机与动力

Edited by Zoltán Dörnyei,  
Peter D. MacIntyre and  
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## 出版说明

对于中国这样一个英语教学大国，和语言教学相关的话题一直受到语言学界的关注。应用语言学作为一个涵盖范围十分广泛的研究领域，尤其受到我国学者及语言学方向师生的重视。本世纪初，外教社陆续引进出版了“牛津应用语言学丛书”、“剑桥应用语言学丛书”等国际优秀学术成果，因其内容权威、选择精当而受到外语界的好评。

近年来，应用语言学研究取得了很多新的进展，如何引导我国语言学方向的研究生快速便捷地了解这一领域的发展全貌和研究热点，成为我国语言学界老师面临的一个重要问题。有鉴于此，我们又从爱丁堡大学出版社、Multilingual Matters 等国际知名出版社精选了一批图书，组成“应用语言学研究丛书”，以更好地满足广大师生和相关学者的需求。

本丛书的各分册主题均为近年来应用语言学研究领域的热点话题，其中既有对所论述主题的理论回顾和梳理，也有对较新的发展和应用所做的阐释和分析，脉络清晰，语言简洁，共同反映了这一领域过去三四十年间的成果和积淀。

相信本套丛书的出版将为国内应用语言学研究带来新的启示，进一步推动我国语言学研究的进展。

# **Motivational Dynamics in Language Learning**

Edited by

**Zoltán Dörnyei, Peter D. MacIntyre  
and Alastair Henry**

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# Foreword

John H. Schumann

This book is a milestone in the study of motivation. It brings together several important advances. First it recognizes dynamic systems theory as the epistemological basis for conceptualizing motivation. It provides an extensive tutorial on dynamic systems. It introduces research methodologies that allow, on several timescales, the study of individual motivational trajectories in second language acquisition (SLA). The book challenges several assumptions about 'scientific' research in SLA. One is the assumption that truth is found in the study of inter-individual variability among large numbers of subjects. Another is that causal effects are either singular or few in number and that they operate linearly. An additional assumption is that categories and their labels refer to clearly identifiable entities in the world. The adoption of dynamic systems theory (DST) allows, indeed, compels us to eschew notions of single causes, linear causality, immutable categories and highly specified endpoints.

Traditional research on motivation in SLA consisted of studying large numbers of subjects using questionnaires that were administered at one time to large numbers of subjects. This research provided a freeze frame/snapshot perspective on motivation. However, it gave us no information about the individual learner and, as Molenaar (2004) has demonstrated, we cannot argue from groups to individuals except under very strict conditions (see also van Geert, 2011). These studies gave information about motivation at a particular moment in time. Nevertheless, they were often interpreted as providing information about what kind of motivation had brought the learner to this point and about what kind of motivation would carry him/her forward.

For some researchers, there has always been a concern for what was going on in the individual and how that changed over time. In the 1970s, colleagues and I undertook diary studies of individuals learning a second language (L2) in classrooms, in the environments where it was spoken or in a combination of both. Dozens of studies were done at UCLA and other institutions. Attempts were made to aggregate the results (Bailey, 1983, 1991), but commonalities were difficult to discern and no theory existed with which the individual variation could be explained.

In the 1990s, stimulus appraisal theory (Schumann, 1997) was applied to autobiographies of L2 learners. The categories of stimulus appraisal (novelty, pleasantness, goal/need significance, coping potential, and self and social image) were used to relate SLA motivation to underlying neural mechanisms, but also to analyze autobiographies of the L2 learners as a way of tracking the individual variables over longer periods. Thus, stimulus appraisal categories provided an organizational framework, but still an overall theory was lacking. This vacuum was filled by Diane Larsen-Freeman's (1997, 2002; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008) introduction of DST to our field and Zoltán Dörnyei's (2009) adoption of this perspective for his research on motivation.

DST allows researchers in L2 motivation to simultaneously abandon the notion of single and linear causality and frees them from the implicit demand in conventional research for large subject studies. As seen in this volume, DST provides a way to see motivation from the perspective of a general theory that applies to many phenomena. The individual is the entity of concern, and case studies become recognized as the appropriate level of granularity for understanding motivation trajectories in SLA. In this new work, it is wonderful to hear the learners' voices characterizing their motivation. In traditional research, these voices were silenced in statistical analyses, and the complex variation within individuals that characterizes SLA was hidden.

Several years ago at a conference, I asked a major motivation researcher when he thought his research on SLA motivation would be finished. This is part of a bigger question. When will we have sufficient knowledge of L2 motivation so that we can say our work is done? When will it no longer be necessary to do research on L2 motivation? Another question is whether any SLA motivation construct that has been proposed and studied has been wrong? I would suggest that none of them have been wrong. They may have been incomplete; they may have been extended too broadly or narrowly; research on the construct may have been inadequate owing to limitations on current technology or statistical procedures. The constructs may have been limited because of the lack of a larger theoretical framework in which to place them. So will we ever have the answer, and if not, why not?

Typical scientific research isolates an independent variable and a dependent variable, and then looks at the singular influence of the former on the latter. DST challenges this approach to understanding complex phenomena. Variation within and across individuals becomes central in a dynamic systems approach. But will thousands of longitudinal studies of individuals provide the final answer? Actually, I don't think so. The problem is that we are not dealing with physical phenomena. We are dealing with abstract constructs and conceptualizations. The terms we use to refer to these concepts are not mutually exclusive. In the neurobiological literature related to motivation, the following terms are frequent: intention, incentive, desire, goal, reward, approach, action tendency, wanting, liking, emotion, affect, arousal, valence, appraisal, reward. *The Concise Oxford American Thesaurus* (2006)

under the heading motivation includes: motivating source, force, incentive, stimulus, stimulation, inspiration, inducement, spur, reason, drive, ambition, initiative, determination and enterprise. Other terms include enthusiasm, commitment, persistence, investment, engagement. Do all these terms refer to independent phenomena? Certainly not. They overlap; they capture slightly different perspectives on the issue. Are there any that we can do without? I suspect not. A prohibition on certain terms would create the same problem that Prohibition did – the proscribed words would be bootlegged. When we go beyond words and look at the labels for motivational constructs that have been explored in SLA, we find a similar proliferation. We see integrative motivation, instrumental motivation, self-determination theory, attribution theory, goal theories, situated motivation, task motivation, willingness to communicate, skill-challenge perspectives, value expectancy, the L2 Motivational Self System, identity theory, investment theory and the stimulus appraisal perspective.

Would we have the answer if we could find the definitive neurobiological mechanisms that produce motivation? Such reductionism is not a solution either. Even now we know a good deal about the biology that underlies motivation. It involves the amygdala, the orbitofrontal cortex, the anterior cingulate, the insula, the dopaminergic system, the opioid system, the endocrine system, the musculoskeletal system and the autonomic nervous system. But with even more detailed knowledge about how each of these systems contributes to motivation, we would not have a final answer because at the phenomenal level represented by the motivational constructs, there is so much more to understand and appreciate. And that list is not going to end. Different conceptualizations of SLA motivation will continue to be proposed and will continue to inform our notions of the phenomenon. In a species capable of generating symbolic nonmaterial constructs that cannot be isolated as physical entities but only as conceptualizations built out of other concepts, the number of possible formulations of the phenomena is potentially infinite.

This brings us to a discussion of how the field of SLA motivation research operates. Our field does not stand outside the realm of dynamic systems. In fact, it manifests all the processes that characterize such systems. Motivation became a focus of research in SLA in the late 1950s. Since then it has been pursued with varying degrees of intensity. If a professor takes an interest in this issue, he/she conducts some research often requiring a grant and graduate students as research assistants. The results of the research must be published in order to get the ideas known and to get the professor promoted. The students have to conduct research and publish in order to receive their degrees, secure a position and get tenure. These academics organize to present papers and colloquia at national and international conferences. The research reported at these colloquia is frequently published as collections or monographs. All this is done in order to accrue knowledge about motivation

in SLA, but also for economic reasons. The fate of universities in various economies influences these dynamics. The variations in availability of resources affect hiring, student support, research funding, and hence how, where and with what intensity motivation gets studied. Interest in the phenomenon among SLA researchers waxes and wanes. As argued above, we are not likely to find the final answer as to how motivation affects L2 learning, but the field might just get tired of the issue, and its importance in applied linguistics could diminish. Indeed, there are areas of SLA research where motivation is not given much attention. Among some SLA cognitivists, motivation is seen as a minor intervening variable in L2 acquisition, but not central to the process.

The commitment to DST as a framework for studying motivation does not come automatically (Lewis, 2011). The human mind has evolved to view the world in terms of singular causes and single chains of causality. From an evolutionary perspective, we can assume that such cognition must have been very important for the survival of our species. The experimental method itself may be a manifestation of our tendency to isolate a single cause, to see averages as the truth and to dismiss variation as noise. Complicating the matter, is the fact that the search for a single causal variable often works and has often been very informative; we have learned a lot from this way of thinking. Thus, although case studies done within the framework of DST may be the best way to study intraindividual variation in L2, pressures of academic tradition could make many scholars retreat to the safer attractor – experimental studies of interindividual variation between groups of learners. All these issues play out in the dynamics of motivation research, leading into and out of attractor states and through conditions of considerable variation. Our field is studying the DST game while playing it.

So this volume marks an exciting new beginning. It provides a general theory for motivation in SLA and, I believe, for applied linguistics as a whole. It suggests new methods to do research within that theory. It prioritizes individual accounts over groups; values variation as strongly as states; it challenges historical ideologies; it forces us to rethink our conceptions about cause and categories; it makes us deal with the way the world actually works, not simply the way we all think it works; it allows us to see our research enterprise in terms of complex systems not just as the phenomenon of motivation; it permits us to question our assumptions about an eventual end state in our research; and leaves us open to the notion of investigation without an expectation of an ultimate answer. These are big contributions.

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