



## THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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**Annotation:** This article is devoted to the topic 'The Role of Motivation in Second Language Acquisition.' The study examines the central role of motivation as a psychological and social construct in determining the rate and ultimate success of second language learning. The research analyses the foundational theoretical frameworks of motivation in second language acquisition, including Gardner and Lambert's integrative and instrumental motivation model, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, and Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System. The article further explores the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the influence of the learning environment on motivational dynamics, and the practical strategies teachers can employ to foster and sustain learner motivation. The pedagogical implications of motivation research for the design of second language curricula and classroom instruction are discussed with reference to contemporary empirical findings.

**Keywords:** *motivation, second language acquisition, integrative motivation, instrumental motivation, L2 motivational self system, self-determination theory, affective filter, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, language learning.*

### Introduction

Among the many individual learner variables that influence second language acquisition (SLA), motivation occupies a position of particular prominence. Decades of research in applied linguistics, educational psychology, and language pedagogy have consistently demonstrated that motivation is one of the most powerful predictors of success in second language learning, exerting a decisive influence on



the extent and quality of language learning engagement, the persistence of learners in the face of difficulty, and the ultimate level of proficiency attained. Without adequate motivation, even learners who possess exceptional linguistic aptitude and access to high-quality instruction may fail to achieve meaningful communicative competence in the target language.

The concept of motivation in second language acquisition is, however, complex and multidimensional. It encompasses a broad range of psychological, social, and situational factors, including learners' reasons for studying a language, their attitudes towards the target language community, their beliefs about their own ability to succeed, the intrinsic interest they derive from language learning activities, and the degree to which the learning environment supports their sense of autonomy and competence. Understanding these dimensions of motivation requires drawing on theoretical frameworks from both SLA research and general educational psychology.

The scientific study of motivation in second language learning began in earnest with the pioneering work of Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert in the 1960s and 1970s, and the field has since expanded considerably to incorporate insights from cognitive psychology, social identity theory, and self-determination theory. Contemporary motivation research recognises that motivation is not a static trait but a dynamic and context-sensitive process that fluctuates in response to learners' experiences, relationships, and perceptions of success and failure. This dynamic perspective has important implications for classroom practice, highlighting the critical role of teachers in creating motivationally supportive learning environments.

In the context of Uzbekistan's educational development, the promotion of effective motivational practices in foreign language education represents an important national priority. As English and other foreign languages become increasingly essential for academic achievement, professional success, and



international engagement, understanding the motivational foundations of language learning is of both theoretical and practical significance. This article aims to provide a systematic and theoretically grounded analysis of the role of motivation in second language acquisition, drawing on key works in the field to illuminate the mechanisms through which motivation operates and the ways in which it can be effectively cultivated.

### **Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations**

The modern scientific study of motivation in second language learning is generally traced to the foundational research of Robert C. Gardner and Wallace E. Lambert, whose book *Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning* (Newbury House Publishers, Rowley, MA, 1972) established the first systematic empirical framework for investigating the relationship between learner motivation and language achievement [1]. Gardner and Lambert distinguished two fundamental types of motivation: integrative motivation, in which learners are driven by a genuine desire to become part of the target language community and to communicate authentically with its members, and instrumental motivation, in which learners are motivated by pragmatic goals such as career advancement, academic qualifications, or financial reward. Their research, conducted primarily with English-speaking learners of French in Canada, demonstrated that integrative motivation was positively correlated with higher levels of proficiency and greater persistence in language learning.

Gardner subsequently developed the Socio-Educational Model of language learning, which situated motivation within a broader framework of attitudes, language aptitude, and situational anxiety, arguing that motivation is the primary energising force that determines how effectively learners utilise their aptitude and process classroom instruction. This model proposed the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) as a standardised instrument for measuring motivational



constructs, and it remains one of the most widely used assessment tools in motivation research. While later researchers questioned whether integrative motivation was universally superior to instrumental motivation — pointing to contexts in which instrumental goals proved equally or more effective — Gardner and Lambert's distinction between the two motivational orientations has remained influential in the field.

Stephen Krashen's Monitor Model of second language acquisition, presented most fully in *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition* (Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1982, ix + 202 pp., ISBN: 978-0-08-028628-0), introduced the Affective Filter Hypothesis as a theoretical account of how motivational and emotional factors influence the process of language acquisition [2]. Krashen proposed that a 'filter' composed of affective variables — including motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety — regulates the degree to which learners are able to absorb and process comprehensible input. When the affective filter is low — that is, when learners are motivated, confident, and relaxed — they are more open to input and acquire language more efficiently. Conversely, high anxiety and low motivation raise the affective filter, blocking input and impeding acquisition. The Affective Filter Hypothesis provided a theoretical bridge between motivation research and input-based theories of SLA, and its practical implications — that teachers should strive to create low-anxiety, motivationally supportive classrooms — have been widely accepted in language pedagogy. Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT), first presented in *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior* (Plenum Press, New York, 1985, 372 pp., ISBN: 978-0-306-42022-1), offered a more differentiated account of motivation by distinguishing between intrinsic motivation — driven by genuine interest, curiosity, and enjoyment of the activity itself — and extrinsic motivation — driven by external rewards, pressures, or obligations [3]. SDT proposes that intrinsic motivation supports higher-quality learning, deeper engagement, and greater well-being, while



extrinsic motivation produces less durable learning outcomes, particularly when it takes the form of external control. A key concept in SDT is the continuum of extrinsic motivation, ranging from external regulation (compliance with rewards or threats) through introjected regulation (internalised pressure) and identified regulation (personal endorsement of goals) to integrated regulation (full alignment of goals with the self). Applied to second language learning, SDT suggests that learners who have internalised the value of language learning and experience it as personally meaningful are more likely to persist and succeed than those motivated primarily by external pressures. The most influential contemporary framework in L2 motivation research is Zoltán Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System, first fully articulated in the edited volume *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self* (Multilingual Matters, Bristol, 2009, xi + 363 pp., ISBN: 978-1-84769-127-9), co-edited with Ema Ushioda [4]. Dörnyei's model reconceptualises motivation in terms of possible selves — future-oriented self-representations that guide and energise behaviour. The L2 Motivational Self System comprises three components: the ideal L2 self, representing the learner's vision of themselves as a proficient, successful user of the L2; the ought-to L2 self, representing the attributes the learner believes they should possess to meet others' expectations; and the L2 learning experience, encompassing the immediate situational motivational factors associated with the classroom and teacher. Research has consistently shown that a vivid and plausible ideal L2 self is a powerful motivational force, particularly in contexts where learners have limited instrumental incentives and must rely on vision and imagination to sustain their engagement with language learning.

Dörnyei's earlier work, *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, 164 pp., ISBN: 978-0-521-79377-3), provided a systematic framework for understanding how teachers can influence learner motivation through deliberate instructional strategies [5]. Drawing on both theoretical models and empirical research, Dörnyei identified a range of evidence-



based motivational strategies organised around four phases of motivational development: creating the basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation, and encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation. This framework has been widely adopted in language teacher education and continues to inform professional development programmes worldwide.

### **Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation in the Language Classroom**

The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as theorised by Deci and Ryan, has important practical implications for the design of second language instruction. Research in educational psychology has consistently demonstrated that intrinsically motivated learners are more cognitively engaged, adopt deeper processing strategies, produce more creative outputs, and experience greater well-being than extrinsically motivated learners. In the language classroom, intrinsic motivation manifests as genuine curiosity about the target language and its culture, enjoyment of communicative activities, and a desire to explore language for its own sake. Teachers can foster intrinsic motivation by offering learners meaningful choices, designing tasks that are both challenging and achievable, using authentic and culturally rich materials, and creating a classroom environment characterised by respect, trust, and collaborative learning. Extrinsic motivation, while generally associated with less durable learning outcomes, is not necessarily detrimental to language learning. SDT's concept of internalisation suggests that extrinsically motivated behaviour can become progressively more self-determined as learners come to endorse the value of language learning for personal rather than purely external reasons. In educational contexts where formal assessment, institutional requirements, and societal expectations play a significant role, supporting the internalisation of external motivations — for instance, by helping learners



understand the personal relevance of language learning and connect their studies to their own aspirations and values — is a critical task for language educators.

## Results and Discussion

The theoretical and empirical evidence reviewed in this article demonstrates that motivation is a central and indispensable factor in second language acquisition. The various theoretical frameworks examined — from Gardner and Lambert's integrative/instrumental distinction to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, and Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System — each illuminate different dimensions of a complex and multifaceted construct. Together, these frameworks highlight the importance of both dispositional and situational factors in shaping learners' motivational experience, and they emphasise that motivation is not a fixed trait but a dynamic process subject to continuous change in response to learners' experiences and contexts. A particularly important implication of the research is that the quality of motivation matters as much as its quantity. Learners who are highly motivated but primarily for external reasons — to avoid failure, to satisfy parental expectations, or to obtain a qualification — may exhibit high levels of activity in the short term but are likely to disengage once the external pressure is removed. By contrast, learners who have developed an internalised, self-determined motivation grounded in personal identity, vision, and genuine interest in the target language are more likely to sustain their engagement over the long term and to achieve higher levels of proficiency. The research also underscores the critical role of the teacher and the learning environment in shaping motivational outcomes. Teachers who create psychologically safe, autonomy-supportive, and intellectually stimulating classrooms make a decisive contribution to learner motivation. Conversely, instructional practices characterised by excessive control, punitive assessment, and a focus on errors over achievement can seriously undermine learners' intrinsic motivation and self-confidence. These findings have



direct implications for teacher training, curriculum design, and educational policy in Uzbekistan and elsewhere.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study has examined the role of motivation in second language acquisition from theoretical and applied perspectives, drawing on key works in the field to provide a systematic analysis of the mechanisms through which motivation influences language learning outcomes. The findings confirm that motivation is a multidimensional and dynamic construct that encompasses integrative and instrumental orientations, intrinsic and extrinsic drives, affective and identity-related factors, and situational and dispositional influences. Effective second language teaching requires a deep understanding of these dimensions and a deliberate commitment to fostering motivationally rich learning environments.

The implications of motivation research for language education in Uzbekistan are significant. As foreign language learning increasingly central to educational achievement and professional success, teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers must prioritise the development of motivationally supportive pedagogical approaches that help learners develop a positive, internalised, and identity-based orientation towards language learning.

On the basis of this analysis, the following recommendations are proposed:

- to incorporate motivation theory as a core component of pre-service and in-service foreign language teacher education programmes, equipping teachers with practical strategies for creating motivationally supportive classrooms;

- to design language curricula that emphasise meaningful, authentic, and personally relevant tasks and materials that foster intrinsic motivation and support the development of learners' ideal L2 self;



–to implement assessment practices that recognise and celebrate learner progress, support positive self-evaluation, and avoid undermining learners' confidence and intrinsic motivation through excessive focus on errors;

–to provide language learners with opportunities to explore the cultural, professional, and personal dimensions of the target language, strengthening both integrative and internalised motivational orientations;

–to conduct longitudinal empirical research into the motivational trajectories of Uzbek foreign language learners, investigating how motivational factors evolve over the course of study and in response to different instructional approaches.

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