



Motivation for Participating and Performing in English Classrooms: Between Self-images and Positioning

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Abstract:

Second language learning motivation is often analyzed as a multidimensional construct involving learner's images of their individual selves and complex statistical measures. While many of these analysis have deepened understanding of various cognitive and affective factors influencing language learner behavior, research investigating the different motivation factors that combine learner types remains scarce. Involving 78 Malaysian undergraduates from a University in East Malaysia taking a proficiency course, the study looked at learner motivation in relation to L2 motivational dimensions, classroom factors and learning goals. An exploratory cluster analysis identified 4 group motivational profiles: 1-motivated, 2-amotivated, 3-externally motivated and 4-self-determined. Initial data analysis found both learner images (the ideal L2 learner) and instrumental (Ought to L2 learner) as main factors influencing motivated learning behavior. The combined findings for learner confidence in the classroom and vitality of L2 speaker communities revealed that except for the extrinsically motivated communities (e.g. International Finance students), most students indicated learning as more meaningful if attention was given to their first language resources. Classroom activities that integrate first language resources have a positive influence on learner's effort and willingness to invest while a strict L2-only perspective have a negative effect on learner motivation. Given

the role of English for the digital world, L2 universities may benefit from including learners' first language resources and experience for engaging and helping learners to perform academically.

Keywords: *cluster analysis, Malaysian English Learners, Second language motivation*

1. Introduction

Developments in mainstream psychology and second language motivation research have contributed to better understanding of the complex nature of second language (L2) motivation. With language being a means of communication and an expression of identity, exploring English language learners (ELLs) learning behavior is useful due to its various benefits (Chew, 2010). As the language of the internet, international trade and business, English enables users to arrive at other socio-economic benefits. English also allows speakers to take on multiple identities as they communicate with speakers of other languages and this has contributed to an increase in demand for English language courses worldwide. Transposed to university English programs and educators responding to the proverbial chalk talk, this means greater accountability in terms of curricula, pedagogy and learner satisfaction (Behari-Leak, 2019). This study sets out to assess motivation factors that encourage sub communities within L2 communities to learn and perform.

L2 motivation is a dynamic and multifaceted construct and a variety of theories and approaches provide directions for interpreting the L2 learning process (Dornyei, 2005). L2 motivation differs from many psychological constructs due to the uneven process of language learning. Currently, three developments of the self, borrowed from mainstream psychology dominate L2 motivation research (Achugar, 2009). The first being, "identities are not given but developed, sustained and transformed through interaction" (Hopf, 2000, p.370). Transposed to the language classroom, ELLs like familiar settings where they play active roles. Positive positioning of learners through active learning give confidence to learners. Second, growing interest in the conceptualization of the self, such as "self-esteem" and "self-concept" and the inclusion of such conceptualizations into L2 motivation research (e.g. Dornyei, 2005; Noels et al., 2003) have contributed to various L2 motivation models. The L2 Motivational Self System (henceforth L2MSS) (Dornyei, 2005, 2009) with its three main components (e.g. the Ideal L2 self (IL2), Ought to L2 self (OL2) and Motivated learning behavior (MLB)) is able to assess the relationship between the main components and other emotional variables. However, the caveat being motivation research has often relied on self-reported questionnaires and complex statistical procedures (e.g. correlation, factor analysis and structural equation modeling) to study dominant motivational factors. These studies have deepened understanding of various cognitive and affective factors influencing language learners; but research looking at how different motivation factors combined in learner communities achieve specific learner types remain scarce (e.g. Csizer & Dornyei, 2005). Third, given developments in technology, increasing ethnic nationalism and rising voices from the global south demanding a more inclusive university curricula, there is the need to reassess ELL sub communities' motivation for learning English. This study aims to address these gaps.

2. Literature Review

Research on individual difference (ID) in SLA have helped researchers identify dimensions of enduring L2 characteristics applicable to all and on which individuals differ by degree.