

Book Review

Researching language learning motivation: A concise guide

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In the context of buoyant research on second language acquisition (SLA), language learning motivation has remained one of the most active fields of inquiry for more than 60 years (Al-Hoorie & MacIntyre, 2019; Ushioda, 2019). Several books have approached this topic from a range of perspectives (e.g., Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Lamb et al., 2019; MacIntyre & Al-Hoorie, 2020). However, the seemingly unceasing theoretical and methodological innovation in motivation research can be confusing, and it has become increasingly overwhelming to keep abreast of all the latest advancements in this burgeoning field. In response to this “promising” yet “perplexing” situation, Ali H. Al-Hoorie and Fruzsina Szabó have edited the volume *Researching language learning motivation: A concise guide*, presenting a timely guidebook for both students and novice researchers to navigate their way through the journey of language learning motivation.

Contributed by both established and emerging experts in the realm of second language (L2) motivation, the volume consists of 21 chapters subsumed under five

sections. Each section, with three to six chapters, is organized under one overarching theme, discussing not only prominent L2 motivation theories (e.g., self approaches) but also cutting-edge topics (e.g., engagement and emotion).

Following a brief introduction by the editors, which pays homage to Zoltán Dörnyei for his profound contributions to L2 motivation research, Part 1 includes three chapters, providing general reflections on the field of language learning motivation. In Chapter 1, Ema Ushioda emphasizes the ethical issues involved in the use of motivational strategies. While teachers' professional responsibilities in guiding students to meet educational goals are widely acknowledged, careful consideration should be given to the extent to which the teacher can influence students' autonomy. In Chapter 2, Matthew E. Poehner adopts a sociocultural theory (SCT) perspective to account for the dynamism of L2 learner development. Underpinned by the notion of *perezhivanie*, this chapter sheds more light on the dynamic person-environment dialectic and discusses how this contributes to the understanding of L2 motivation. In a similar vein, Ofelia García in Chapter 3 also highlights the necessity to go beyond the psychological paradigm of motivation and incorporate social theories such as the sociology of language to move the research agenda forward.

Part 2, titled "Engagement and Self-Regulation," consists of four chapters, centering on the critical construct of engagement within the remit of SLA and L2 motivation research. First, Sarah Mercer explicates the rationale for conceptualizing engagement in the domain of language learning and outlines promising future research directions in this area. The next chapter, authored by Phil Hiver, takes a further step by linking teaching practices to learners' engagement with a prime focus on its temporality and dynamicity. Chapter 6, by Alastair Henry, shifts the focus to the role of goal-setting and highlights how quality goals can sustain long-term motivation. Finally, in Chapter 7, W. L. Oga-Baldwin and Emiko Hirosawa elaborate on the fundamental concepts of self-determination theory and how it could be applied in motivational practice.

Part 3 (Chapter 8-11) provides a critical review of the dominant "selves approaches." First, Peter MacIntyre voices a series of concerns about the application of the L2 motivational self system including its problematic conceptualization and troublesome proliferation in the SLA literature. Because of these concerns, he argues that the selves-related concepts should be treated with great caution when conducting L2 motivation research. In Chapter 9, Mostafa Papi shifts the focus to practice and explores how the future selves predict motivation and behavior in the classrooms, offering corresponding pedagogical implications. Chapter 10, penned by Amy S. Thompson, extends the research landscape to learning languages other than English (LOTES) in rural America, exemplifying the feasibility of constructing an ideal self in rural contexts where contact

with additional languages is limited. In a similar line of research, Flordelis González-Mujico (Chapter 11) scrutinizes how to cultivate and activate L2 selves through technology-enhanced language learning (TELL), concentrating on the effects of digital visualization.

Part 4 contains four studies that link the concept of motivation to emotions, a fledging but burgeoning branch of research in SLA (Dewaele, 2019; Dewaele & Li, 2018; Pawlak et al., 2022). As a trend-setter in this field, Jean-Marc Dewaele starts with Chapter 12 by tracing the historical evolution of emotion research in mainstream applied linguistics and how it could be well integrated into SLA research. In the next chapter, Kate Maher and Jim King draw on a cognitive-behavioral theory (CBT) approach (King & Harumi, 2020) to identify emotional distractions in the language classroom and suggest activities to facilitate emotional and social engagement in speaking tasks. With a similar focus on classroom practice, Tammy Gregersen and Ahmed Al Khateeb (Chapter 14) investigate the phenomenon of “motivation contagion” between language learners and teachers, highlighting its dynamicity and interconnectedness. This part concludes with Christine Muir’s (Chapter 15) discussion of the group-level emotional experience and how it can contribute to directed motivational currents and long-term motivation.

The last section of the edited collection, Part 5, brings together six chapters (Chapter 16-21), each presenting an emerging topic that holds particular promise for the research agenda on L2 motivation. From a methodological angle, in Chapter 16, Ali H. Al-Hoorie and Phil Hiver point to the limitations of the qualitative-only approach and make a case for the need to adopt quantitative approaches in research on motivation grounded in complex dynamic systems theory (CDST) (Larsen-Freeman, 2012). This is followed by Chapter 17, in which Martin Lamb delves into the motivation of Indonesian learners of English via a critical discourse analysis of an English language product leaflet they made. In Chapter 18, Vera Busse addresses the monolingual bias in SLA and extends the research scope to include students’ L2 motivation in multi-ethnic school settings. Chapter 19, by Zana Ibrahim, expounds on the definition of “success in L2 learning” in an English as a lingua franca (ELF) context, and how such success could be used to motivate learners through establishing a realistic goal. The last two chapters (20-21) concomitantly touch upon motivational practice in language classrooms. Robert S. Murphy in Chapter 20 recapitulates seven neuroELT maxims to sustain student motivation in classrooms. Finally, in Chapter 21, Yoshifumi Fukada and colleagues highlight the significant role of group dynamics, and how it promotes learners’ psychological wellbeing and L2 motivation.

Overall, featuring concise and accessible overviews of contemporary concepts and directions of L2 motivation research, this impressive book serves as an informative and invaluable guide for both graduate students and novice researchers.

Compared to traditional motivation books with lengthy chapters dwelling on complex conceptualizations, the current volume is likely to reach a wider readership by its succinct (in terms of length) and all-inclusive (in terms of the range of topics) nature. Anyone seeking an up-to-date overview of motivation research will benefit from reading this combined expertise. Another strength of this book resides in its balance between reviewing established theories and introducing emerging or underappreciated themes in L2 motivation research. Specifically, the authors provide a critical discussion of the widely applied theoretical frameworks such as self-determination theory (Chapter 7), and L2 motivational self-system (Chapter 8), specifying in which context these theories could be appropriately used, which can surely help novice researchers avoid potential pitfalls. In addition, the volume brings to the fore underrepresented yet cutting-edge themes in L2 motivation. Chapters in the last two parts, for instance, discuss an array of topics including emotions in SLA, classroom engagement, motivation contagion, and LOTE's motivation, thereby providing an excellent springboard for setting a new research agenda.

While this volume manages to weave a tapestry of ideas centering around L2 motivation, two shortcomings should be noted. Firstly, similar to other edited volumes contributed by a team of experts, it seems inevitable that various chapters are rather fragmented without a unifying theoretical thread that is consistently followed. For this reason, certain chapters overlap and might better fit better into other sections. For instance, if Chapter 21 in Part 5, which explores the role of group dynamics, appeared in Part 4, it could constitute a good complement to Chapter 15 in this part, which also scrutinizes the group-level interaction and emotion in the L2 classroom. Furthermore, given that this volume is framed as a guidebook for researching motivation, due attention should be given to discussing motivation-pertinent findings in a more direct manner. Admittedly, the topics covered in the book mirror the general trend in SLA, manifesting recent "social turn" (Block, 2003), "emotional turn" (White, 2018), and "multilingual turn" (May, 2019). However, these state-of-the-art concepts may steal the show and divert attention away from the issues of crucial importance to motivation. For instance, the first two chapters in Part 2 are devoted to the conceptualization of engagement with little mention of its link with motivational development. Issues can also be discerned in Part 4, in which too much emphasis is placed on emotions in its own right whereas only one chapter explicitly discusses its relationship with motivation contagion in the classroom. This being said, the chapters still offer a detailed account of the current conceptualizations, making it an informative learning resource for newcomers.

Overall, this expertly curated volume sets itself from those previously published ones by its succinctness, accessibility and a balance between hindsight

and foresight. Specifically, the book aptly describes the fundamental role of motivation in the burgeoning field of psychology and language learning and constitutes a fitting tribute to Zoltán Dörnyei's field-shaping influences. Bringing together both established theories and emerging topics, it is undoubtedly a concise guide for not only postgraduates to continue in-depth research, but also for academics who are eager to break new ground in researching L2 motivation.

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