Directed Motivational Currents: Using vision to create effective motivational pathways

Christine Muir

University of Nottingham, UK

christine.muir@nottingham.ac.uk

Zoltán Dörnyei

University of Nottingham, UK

zoltan.dörnyei@nottingham.ac.uk

Abstract

Vision, that is, the mental representation of the sensory experience of a future goal state (involving imagination and imagery), is currently at the forefront of motivational innovation, and in recent years it has been seen increasingly more often in the motivational tool kit of practicing language teachers. Theories such as Dörnyei's L2 motivational self system have explored the power that creating effective visions can harness (see, e.g., Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014) and when viewed in conjunction with other current research avenues, such as future time perspective and dynamic systems theory, vision offers exciting potential. A Directed Motivational Current is a new motivational construct that we suggest is capable of integrating many current theoretical strands with vision: It can be described as a motivational drive which energises long-term, sustained behaviour (such as language learning), and through placing vision and goals as critical central components within this construct, it offers real and practical motivational potential. In this conceptual paper, we first discuss current understandings of vision and of Directed Motivational Currents, and then analyse how they may be optimally integrated and employed to create effective motivational pathways in language learning environments.

Keywords: Directed Motivational Current, vision, imagery, motivation process, L2 Motivational Self System, possible selves

In recent years, vision has not only been successfully introduced into the landscape of L2 motivation theory, but has become instrumental to our understanding of how to inspire motivated action in the language classroom. Our practical understanding of vision has been supplemented by the theory of possible selves and imagery, as well as a comprehensive motivation construct, the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), which has mediated this knowledge to facilitate its practical application in the language teaching domain. Indeed, research into vision offers significant contributions to our understanding of how we might increase levels of student motivation as a part of future self-guides.

We can define vision as "the imitative representation of real or hypothetical events" (Pham & Taylor, 1999, p. 250), occurring "when a representation of the type created during the initial phases of perception is present but the stimulus is not actually being perceived" (Kosslyn, Thompson, & Ganis, 2006, p. 4). The term has been used in a number of diverse areas in the social sciences, so much so that van der Helm (2009) talks about the *vision phenomenon*, covering "the ensemble of claims and products which are called 'visions' or could be called as such" (p. 96). He identifies seven different types of vision, but he argues that the core meaning of the concept is largely uniform, capturing the *future*, the *ideal* and the *desire for deliberate change*. Within the context of possible language selves, we might view vision as "the sensory experience of a future goal state, or in other words, a personalized goal that the learner has made his/her own by adding to it the imagined reality of the goal experience" (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013, pp. 454-55).

The detailed visions we create and the senses we use to form each vision of our future selves are generated through the same neural mechanisms as if we were to experience the event in reality (e.g., Moulton & Kosslyn, 2009); indeed, the brain can have difficulty in distinguishing an event which is occurring in reality from a detailed vision of the same event (Cox, 2012). Taylor, Pham, Rivkin, and Armor (1998, p. 430) suggest that it is due to this that mental simulations gain mental simulations gain their motivational power; by functioning within the constraints of reality we are able to believe them to be genuine possibilities. Such *imagined realities* can give rise to strong emotional reactions, allowing individuals to prepare coping and other strategies in advance of the event itself. Through enhancing "the links between thought and goal-directed action" (Pham & Taylor, 1999, p. 250) in this way, visionary interventions can push us on to achieve because in our visions we have already seen, felt and experienced ourselves succeed.

A vision in isolation however is not necessarily sufficient to inspire motivated action; such daydreams can easily dissolve into mere fantasy. Yet by combining a powerful vision of a future self with a matching and highly struc-

tured behavioural sequence, we may be able to consciously create a motivational surge of energy which can focus action towards a specific target in the future. Significantly, when correctly set up, such a motivational current may in fact become self-propelling: When there is an intricate structure of subgoals laid out along a clear path towards a well-defined vision, the level of motivation fuelling action will be kept on a continuously high plane, thereby facilitating ongoing momentum. We have called this phenomenon a Directed Motivational Current (DMC) (Dörnyei, Ibrahim, & Muir, in press; Dörnyei, Muir, & Ibrahim, in press) and have argued that it represents a unique motivational framework: It is a potent motivational pathway, which emerges when a specific set of initial conditions fall into place to allow for directed motivational energy to be channelled into a behavioural sequence that is aimed towards a predefined, explicit goal. The conceptualisation of this framework draws together knowledge from some of the most promising strands of L2 motivation research, such as vision/imagery, time perspective and dynamic systems theory. Vision is key to this new conceptualisation of motivation, and we can think of vision as the "D" of a Directed Motivational Current, providing both direction and focus to motivational endeavour.

This paper is primarily conceptual. We start by considering the current role of vision within the L2 classroom, and discuss why we believe a new conceptualisation of motivation is both necessary and timely. We continue by offering examples of DMCs in varied contexts, and describe what we currently believe to be the specific parameters of the framework. We go on to situate DMCs within the broader context of motivational literature, giving examples of the theories which are currently most influential in colouring our understanding of DMCs. We conclude by outlining three specific areas of practical application for DMCs within L2 learning contexts and discuss where we believe future research is necessary in order to further develop the framework.

Vision in the L2 Classroom

Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (in press) understand vision as "one of the highest-order motivational forces" (p. 9). Motivation has historically been viewed as a static entity, with the assumption that students can be categorized as either "motivated" or "unmotivated." However, any teacher who has spent time in the classroom would be quick to point out that this is simply not the case; levels of motivation ebb and flow throughout the course of a lesson, a day and even over far longer periods of time. Vision understood as a "highest-order motivational force," relates to a long-term endeavour, which is able to override these fluctuations. In viewing student motivation in this way, vi-

sion can be seen as "one of the most reliable predictors of their long-term intended effort" (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014, p. 9).

The latter aspect of the above description—the link to *long-term* effort—is of critical significance: If we are able to inspire motivated behaviour *over time*, this offers the possibility of creating far greater levels of stability within classroom contexts. Language teachers understand well that not only can it often be a struggle to generate motivation in students, but that it is equally difficult to *maintain* levels of motivation for a period of time sufficient for measurable academic progress to be made. This can especially ring true in instances where the relevance of the new language to the students is difficult to illustrate. Against this backdrop, the attractive notion of a DMC stems from the fact that by creating vivid goals and a potent motivational pathway leading to a personally relevant vision of a possible future self, students become inherently motivated, which in turn allows teachers to focus their energies more productively.

In motivational psychology, the best paradigm to accommodate and operationalise the concept of vision has been possible selves theory, as set out by Markus and Nurius in their seminal paper (1986). As has often been described in the literature, this theory foregrounds three types of possible selves, imagined as what a person *might* become, what they *would like* to become and what they are *afraid of* becoming. When a person has created an intricate vision of their ideal self, that is, what they would like to become, Higgins (1987, 1998) describes motivational impetus being created by the vividly explicit discrepancy between this imagined self and a person's present self. In the field of SLA, possible selves theory has been translated as a part of the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), which is made up of three components, the *Ideal L2 Self*, the *Ought-to L2 Self*, and the *L2 Learning Experience.* Each of these elements has an influence on our levels of motivation and each must be considered when looking at motivation within classroom contexts. Numerous studies have confirmed the validity of the model since it was first introduced (cf. e.g. the papers in Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, as well as Busse, 2013; Csizér & Lukács, 2010; Henry, 2009, 2010, 2011; Hiver, 2013; Islam, Lamb, & Chambers, 2013; Kormos, Kiddle, & Csizér, 2011; Lamb, 2012; Magid, 2012; Papi, 2010; Papi & Teimouri, 2012) and the Ideal L2 Self has time and again been found to be a central motivating factor: a focused, personal and realistic vision of a possible future.

The importance of being able to create vivid and thought-out images of our future selves is critical to the success of using vision as a motivational tool. Accordingly, this process has been the subject of a great deal of scrutiny in psychology (particularly sports psychology), which has led to our understanding of how to create an effective vision becoming increasingly more advanced.

Past research has highlighted the specific implications of different aspects of the visionary experience, most notably the question of imagery perspective, the use of transportable versus fixed identities, the differences between outcome simulation and process-oriented imagery and of the use of multisensory imagery. Although these ideas are not exhaustive, each represents a different segment of our understanding of using vision to inspire motivational gain, and each issue allows us to craft our visualisations in specific ways in order to achieve different motivational objectives.

Imagery perspective offers us two choices, first- or third-person perspective (see, e.g., Vasquez & Buehler, 2007). A first-person perspective involves the imagining of an event as if it were being experienced by the person in reality, whereas a third-person perspective involves the creation of a vision in which a person acts as the audience, looking down on themselves as actors. Each imagery perspective has been found to have different motivational gains. The experiential knowledge gained from a first-person perspective is able to effectively increase self-efficacy and preparedness for the event in question (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014), whereas a third-person perspective may be more effective in motivating action as it allows for "a greater tendency to focus on the event's coherence with the self-concept" (Libby & Eibach, 2011, p. 718): The discrepancy between the ideal self and the present self is accentuated and is, therefore, more likely to prompt action.

Regardless of the perspective employed, it is vital a visualisation is constructed using an individual's *transportable identity.* Zimmerman (1998) identifies three identities which make up our *self*; a discourse identity, a situated identity, and a transportable identity. In any given situation, a person's discourse identity is the communicative function being played, for example, speaker or listener, and a person's situated identity represents the role which is being played, for example, student or lecturer. A person's transportable identity subsumes all the factors which come together to make a person's identity unique to them; their sex, race, passions, fears, hopes, dreams and so on. In order for a visualisation to be truly internalised, and therefore effective from a motivational standpoint, all areas of a person's transportable identity must be embraced, creating a vision which reflects not only their personal context but all aspects of their character (Richards, 2006; Ushioda, 2011).

Whereas the relative advantages of a first-person and a third-person perspective can be seen as balanced, in that both can successfully be employed to achieve different motivational objectives, *process-oriented imagery* has been found to offer considerable advantages over the use of outcome simulation. This was a significant development, since the latter had been at the centre of motivation theories for many years. Aside from allowing practi-

cally for the planning process to begin (Taylor, Pham, Rivkin, & Armor, 1998), process-oriented imagery also provides a person with a vivid *plan of action* (Pham & Taylor, 1999, p. 250), thereby creating a pathway to the goal, as opposed to it being perceived as disconnected from present reality.

Research has also shown that visionary techniques are most effective when they involve more than one *sense*, that is, when they are more than purely visual representations. By including an auditory dimension in their research paradigm, Dörnyei and Chan (2013) showed that the predictive capacity of imagery was dramatically increased, and therefore they concluded that "vision is multisensory in nature, involving all the senses and not just visualization" (p. 21). In a paper comparing visualisation techniques and potentials in people with and without sight, Eardley and Pring (2006) also concluded that all the senses can be effectively used to increase motivation through imagery. Their results indicated that even where someone is born blind, they are still capable of using effective imagery techniques, and further, that nonvisual imagery techniques played an "important role" for both blind and sighted individuals.

An important development in the understanding of future self-guides was the recognition that even the strongest and most detailed vision may not be sufficient to trigger motivated action in the absence of some key conditions (Dörnyei, 2005). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) offer the following summary of the conditions necessary to allow for the motivating capacity of self-guides to be realised:

- A learner must *have* an ideal self.
- A learner's ideal self must be *elaborate* and *vivid.*
- A learner's ideal self must be *sufficiently different* from a learner's present self.
- A learner must believe that it is *not comfortably certain* that they will reach their goal.
- A learner's ideal self must be perceived as *plausible.*
- A learner's ideal self *must not clash* with their ought-to self or other elements of their self-concept.
- A learner's ideal self must be *regularly activated* in their working self-concept.
- A learner's ideal self must be contrasted by a *feared self*, depicting possible consequences should they fail to achieve their goals.
- A learner's ideal self must be accompanied by *procedural strategies*, which allow for a *roadmap* to be created in the mind of the learner.

This last point is of crucial relevance from the point of view of the current paper. We believe that vision theory is only one part of a wider narrative which can be effectively augmented through the inclusion of a well-structured behavioural regime to form a potent motivational framework. As noted above, we have operationalised this behavioural regime within the framework of DMCs.

Directed Motivational Currents

Vision can govern our behaviour in diverse ways and, as we have seen, does not necessarily always lead to immediate and decisive action. A vision may lie dormant for decades waiting for an appropriate time to emerge at a point when the necessary conditions—a number of interrelated circumstances and factors—fall into place and allow this focus to come to the fore. In contrast, a vision can also initiate a far more intensive course of action by activating a special kind of motivational "fast track." A DMC is representative of exactly this kind of motivational surge; it is created when a structured pathway is set up towards a vision, in a way in which this pathway both reinforces momentum towards the vision and at each step intensifies it; in this way, a detailed vision of a possible future self acts as the fuel for this drive.

In offering some examples of DMCs, we hope they will be immediately recognisable. In each of the following illustrations there is a clearly defined vision and an explicit turning point where action becomes decisively tuned in towards it. A visible change in routine is also evident in each: For the period of time leading up to the accomplishment of the goal, other areas of the individual's life becomes secondary, as all efforts are aligned towards goal achievement. Due to this, it is not uncommon that in the period of time after the goal has been achieved, an individual might feel both physically and mentally drained and take time to adjust back to the everyday routine governing their lives before the DMC was initiated.

Within the field of education, a readily recognisable example of a DMC is someone working towards a deadline for a piece of writing, either within the context of work or study. Let us imagine a university student finishing a final dissertation; in the weeks leading up to this final deadline they might (perhaps uncharacteristically) decline offers of evenings out and work with far greater fervour in order to successfully succeed in producing a piece of work which represents the best of their abilities, thus ensuring that down the line they may be offered their dream job, the vision fuelling the DMC. For the period of time prior to the deadline, their behaviour becomes highly focused and disciplined, fully geared at achieving success.

Directed Motivational Currents are also prevalent in the world of sports, a realm where visionary techniques have been used for decades as a means of inspiring intensified motivated action in athletes. If we imagine a 100-m sprinter, in the three weeks before a race, the motivated behaviour exhibited by the athlete is likely to be fundamentally different from behaviour exhibited during the months of training leading up to this point. The generated DMC, from the specific race approaching, is likely to have strong noticeable effects

on all areas of their life: Perhaps on the number of times per week they train and how hard they work during these sessions, a change in their eating or sleeping habits and a general sense of heightened energy is also likely to be evident as the goal becomes closer and within reach.

We can also see evidence of DMCs in everyday situations, such as when someone might set themselves a target to lose weight and generally live a healthier lifestyle. We can see here the difference between someone who is intrinsically motivated in a particular area and someone who is swept up in a DMC. In the case of the former, one might naturally be inclined to spend time working out every week, a habit built into their daily routine and which might, for example, mean that the ordering of a healthy option from a restaurant menu is unremarkable. In contrast, a DMC is evidenced when someone displays motivated behaviour which is *over and above* their normal levels of motivation, and which pervades several aspects of their lives, such as their eating habits and daily routines. We would likely find such a surge and change in priorities when someone decides to run the next local half marathon or sets an ambitious weight loss goal; when a clear vision is set.

As the above examples illustrate, a DMC is clearly and specifically vision-oriented. At all times there is a pre-defined finishing line at an explicit point in the future, allowing for motivational vigour to be efficiently directed. The concept of everything in an individual's life lining up when in a DMC can be imagined in the same way as the movement of a swimmer's hair moving underwater. When motionless, hair billows around of its own accord, each strand moving seemingly independently, changing direction and velocity due to a multitude of factors; the currents in the water, meetings with other strands of hair, meetings with other objects in the water, even the weather conditions on the surface, along with a host of other factors. The movement of each strand is, to an observer, seemingly random, but in reality is influenced and affected by a multitude of unknowable factors. When a swimmer starts to swim towards a point in the distance however, this forward motion overrides the influence of all these unknown factors. Each strand begins to organise itself and the forward movement forging ahead through the water becomes the dominant force over the multiple factors which were previously determining the movement of each strand. This is similar to what might happen to the gym convert; as they become focused on reaching their goal, this focus overrides other influences in their lives and on their time, and their everyday routine is temporarily altered to facilitate successful goal achievement.

The DMC Makeup

Although each DMC is by definition unique and guided by an individual's personal vision of a future self, what makes the notion of a DMC significant from a scientific point of view is that there are several common features which can be seen in every DMC. These characteristics can be considered "defining" of a DMC, as without any of these components a DMC could not emerge.

First and foremost, a DMC is always and in every case *directional*; the relative success of a DMC hinges on a clear vision being established and truly internalised. A second key feature of a DMC is that it requires a *structure* which is both salient and facilitative. This is created through setting frequent and varied *subgoals* which offer tangible feedback of progress. If our motivation peaks when we are approaching a goal, such proximal subgoals serve to keep motivation high and keep us looking forward, on towards the next step along the pathway.

In addition to looking towards the end of a DMC pathway, the *launch* of a DMC is of equal importance and must be equally well managed. A successful DMC requires a clear starting point. Whether this manifests itself as something akin to a dramatic firework display, clearly recognisable to others, or is a more private, yet equally firm and meaningful, decision, it must nevertheless have taken place and have been explicit. A DMC does not simply drift into being; whether conditions are deliberately put into place or whether they happen to fall that way, the released motivational force of a DMC decisively dominates multiple aspects of an actor's life and therefore must result from a conscious decision.

Once this launch has been initiated, a kind of *motivational autopilot* comes into force, whereby a person's normal routines are temporarily replaced by a new set of routines focused on goal achievement. Regardless of whether this new regime involves regular visits to the gym, a set of language practice targets for each day or the attendance of a course to learn a new skill, the salient point is that the necessary steps taken will not require volitional control at every stage, but will become internalised as part of the DMC.

A further feature of DMCs is that there must be a clear emphasis on *participant ownership*. This follows on from the centrality of vision to the construct. As discussed, an effective vision is highly personal and individualised, and even the ought-to self image—which involves importing someone else's vision for an individual—only has motivational value if the individual fully adopts it as his/her own. This level of ownership extends to the structure of the DMC itself. The actor needs to embark on the process with full conviction, believing in the significance of each target and feeling assured that each subgoal is not only achievable but will contribute strongly to achieving the final vision. The *positive emotional loading* created in this way allows mun-

dane activities related to each subgoal to take on increased levels of significance, and for the strength of the overall vision to permeate throughout the entirety of the DMC, endowing each subgoal with a uniqueness it would otherwise be without. When viewed in conjunction with the satisfaction obtained from this clear perception of progress, the positive emotional loading of being on a rewarding journey stands as a final significant aspect of how a DMC comes to be self-propelling in the wake of a potent vision.

DMCs in Mainstream Motivation Theories

Although a new concept, DMCs have often been alluded to in the motivation literature. Looking specifically at L2 motivation, Lepp-Kaethler and Dörnyei (2013) found strong evidence of motivational pathways akin to DMCs in their study of how links with sacred texts can elevate bible translators' and other faith practitioners' language learning efforts. The authors describe the heightened level of motivation observed in some of their participants, extraordinary both in terms of intensity and longevity, as a "jet stream" in which "learners are caught in a powerful inner current" (p. 186). Such a powerful current of motivation has also been described in non-language-related research, for example, by Harber, Zimbardo and Boyd (2003, p. 262) as a "fast track," which was evidenced in future-oriented students when compared to those who were more oriented towards the present (see below for more detail). Let us survey briefly a number of established motivation theories in psychology which display significant links with certain elements of DMCs.

Goal-setting Theory

The most obvious connection in this respect is with *goal-setting theory* (Locke & Latham, 1990). Its main tenet is that human action is caused by purpose and that this purpose is translated into the goals that people set for themselves. Dörnyei (2001) describes four central means by which goals can govern behaviour:

- They direct attention and effort towards goal-relevant activities at the expense of actions which are not relevant.
- They regulate effort expenditure in that people adjust their effort accordingly to the difficulty level required by the task.
- They encourage persistence until the goal is accomplished.
- They promote the search for relevant action plans or task strategies.

Each of these functions plays a role in a successful DMC, yet equally relevant is the recognition in goal theory that *proximal subgoals*, that is, short-

term targets leading to the accomplishment of the overall, distal goal, increase the motivational loading of goal-related behaviour. Subgoals of this sort not only provide constant targets to aim for, but also act as *progress markers* allowing an individual regular positive feedback.

Flow Theory

The type of *motivational autopilot* described earlier has been touched upon within the literature in several different guises. It is related to the concept of proximal subgoals, as discussed above, but it is more prominently associated with Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) *flow theory*, describing optimal task engagement. Csikszentmihalyi explains that people can enter a unique mindset—or *flow*— where they are wholly focused and are intent on achieving the task in hand. This state of being absorbed in a task is not unlike being caught up in the surge of a DMC, although Csikszentmihalyi's notion of flow concerns a significantly shorter time-scale (a one-off activity). The conditions necessary for the initiation of flow are also comparable to the conditions needed to launch a DMC. Egbert (2003) gives a brief summary of the broad dimensions of these conditions:

- a balance exists and is recognised between the challenge posed by the task and participant skill,
- clear goals are outlined and there is opportunity for deep concentration,
- the participant has intrinsic interest in the task or views the task as authentic,
- the participant is able to claim control over both the task itself and the outcomes.

Perceived Behavioural Control

Ajzen's (1988, 1991) concept of *perceived behavioural control*, a key element of his *theory of planned behaviour*, offers a further theoretical link with DMCs. The perceived level of control an individual has over a situation relates to the fact that the actor in a DMC must believe that it is within their capabilities to manipulate the situation sufficiently in order to achieve a favourable outcome. Only in this way can an individual take full psychological ownership of pursuing a goal. The vision aspect of a DMC is particularly relevant here, because the detailed imagery constructed in advance, particularly process-oriented imagery, allows the goal to take on aspects of reality, and the highly structured pathway offers a straightforward route towards it, with each step clearly mapped out and understood.

Self-determination Theory

Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) is a further theoretical strand relevant to DMCs, even though it is, in contrast to the theoretical bases discussed above, *not* goal-related. At the heart of this theory lies the concept of *intrinsic motivation*, that is, the motivation to engage in a task for reasons purely related to the enjoyment of the task itself, as opposed to pursuing rewards or recognition (i.e., *extrinsic motivation*). One particularly pertinent aspect of self-determination theory is the assumed strong link between motivation and autonomy (i.e., self-determination), a connection which has also been recognised in SLA contexts. Ushioda (1998, p. 2), for example, pointedly states that "autonomous language learners are by definition motivated learners." This is clearly relevant to the overall "ownership" condition of a DMC, and it also helps to explain the broader process of learners engaged in a DMC attributing their successes to their own efforts, thereby increasing their levels of motivation as their self-efficacy and perceived behavioural control grows.

Time Perspective

The theoretical approach labelled as *time perspective* has in recent years enjoyed something of a renaissance within the field of mainstream motivational research. Although the concept of *time* has forever intrigued motivation scholars, given the pervasive static perception of motivation mentioned at the beginning of this paper, it was a relatively recent development which conceded that "the perception of time is inevitably linked to the selection and pursuit of social goals" (Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999, p. 166), and which has allowed time perspective to truly start exerting an influence on motivational theory.

A basic understanding of time perspective can be illustrated thus: Imagine two candidates begin a new job knowing that they will be promoted after three years if they perform well. Someone with a strongly developed future time perspective will perceive those three years as shorter in duration (and will thus be less impatient) than someone with a less developed future time perspective. The future-oriented individual would also more likely appreciate the instrumental value of tasks currently under completion and therefore would exhibit a higher level of motivation at the present moment (a finding first made by De Volder & Lens, 1982, and subsequently replicated in a raft of other studies from a broad range of disciplines). In contrast, the candidate oriented more towards the present would likely have less regard for his future promotion because of its perceived greater distance from the present. Because DMCs are, by definition, future-oriented, this line of thinking is helpful in understanding the motivational power of vision-formation.

Dynamic Systems Theory

Finally, the solidifying and aligning function of DMCs can be most aptly understood and valued from a dynamic systems theory (DST) perspective. As a technical term, a *dynamic system* is descriptive simply of a context which has multiple factors in play, each influencing those surrounding them and thereby causing multiple interferences. The behaviour of such systems can, and often does, seem random (or non-linear) when viewed as a whole because the multiple interactions can become so complex that rather than seeing patterns of movement, we perceive movement to be chaotic. Despite its complexity, understanding the world around us from a DST perspective does make intuitive sense, because our actions, however banal, are influenced by such a large number of factors and conditions that it is usually impossible to describe our motives with 100% accuracy. In this respect, it is highly relevant that, as mentioned in the first part of this paper, vision can be seen as a highest-order motivational force, able to override lower-level fluctuations. A vision-driven DMC is even more potent as it combines the future-oriented perspective of vision with the robustness of a self-propelling behavioural structure. In this way, a DMC can be seen as a predictable pathway even in a complex dynamics terrain.

DMCs in the L2 Classroom

Vision and imagery are becoming increasingly more recognised within language teaching methodology. Dörnyei and Kubanyiova's (2014) discussion is matched by two practical collections of classroom activities, Arnold, Puchta and Rinvolucri's (2007) *Imagine That! Mental Imagery in the EFL Classroom* and Hadfield and Dörnyei's (2013) *Motivating Learning*. When considering DMCs in the classroom, although obviously not referred to under this term, several key aspects have traditionally been capitalised on in language instruction. In many ways, the structured setting of a classroom is an ideal context for the creation of a DMC, as it allows for the laying out and controlling of an intricately structured pathway. In this final section we would like to illustrate the operation of DMCs on three different time scales: a *language teaching task*, a *project* and *study-abroad*. Regardless of the timescales, the generated motivational current in each case has a specific starting point, a well-defined final goal and a clear structure which facilitates progress.

Language Teaching Tasks

The shortest of the suggested applications is able to function at a lesson level, where a DMC is set up, launched, pursued and the goal reached all within the duration of a single class. An example of this is a *language teaching task*, where the goal might be, for example, the creation of a performance, a presentation or a poster. In order to successfully set up a DMC within this short time scale, it is important that power be given early on to the students themselves, especially if the class is large, where it would likely be impossible to create a central vision which each student may effectively personalise in the time available. Within the clear parameters of the activity in hand, students must be allowed to take control and design the specifics of the task so that it becomes personally relevant to them. To increase the motivation-facilitating capacity of the structure, proximal subgoals need to be set for progress points throughout the lesson to allow for a building of momentum and enthusiasm for the final goal. In visual tasks, such as the preparation of a display, this incremental feedback is provided by the task itself, as the visual elements are constructed and elaborated to form the overall picture.

Projects

This is perhaps the most easily recognisable way of implementing a DMC in the classroom. A piece of project work is ideally suited as it is characteristically likely to be well structured, and the extra time allocated to the project, in contrast to aiming to create a DMC within the confines of a single lesson, means that there is also greater opportunity for students to create more detailed, individualised goals personal to themselves. A DMC at project level can gain real momentum as the structure can be controlled to offer a series of meaningful subgoals which can be laid out in advance. At the start it is vital that all students "get on board" and personally engage with their project's objectives, understanding in turn how those can contribute towards achieving their own personal learning goals/vision. In order for this to happen it is important to spend time "selling" the project and offering an effective rationale, whetting the students' appetites.

Study-abroad

A study-abroad period, for example, during an undergraduate degree in modern languages studies, by definition must have a clear starting point, as students will need to commit to the goal in advance. However, this feature

alone is not necessarily sufficient for a DMC to be created; while some students who have gone abroad for a term or a whole year come back with dramatically improved levels of the L2, there are also many students who have gone away and made very little noticeable improvement. In an extended DMC such as a year-abroad, a strong vision takes on an even higher level of significance, almost in proportion to the length of time it is required to support. Directed Motivational Currents such as this will typically see motivation peak during the beginning of a student's time abroad, and then find a plateau where highly motivated behaviour, over and above that which might have been exhibited while at home, can be maintained for a long period of time on "motivational autopilot." Directed Motivational Currents are uniquely able to facilitate what might be considered the foundation of a successful study-abroad programme; the implementation of a structure which is sufficiently overarching and able to hold the whole sequence together in a meaningful way.

A particularly successful application of providing a purposive framework such as this has been the study-abroad programme developed by Celia Roberts and her colleagues (2001) as part of the Ealing Ethnography Research Project. The project was designed to answer two key research questions, the first relating to whether language teachers can "learn to teach an ethnographic programme" and, secondly, aimed at understanding whether using these ethnographic approaches could make the period abroad "an active learning experience" (p. 13). To create an overall purpose for engaging with the target language and culture, undergraduate students were trained (in Year 2) to complete an ethnographic study of an individually chosen aspect of the host country while resident abroad (Year 3) to be written up in a research report (Year 4). This project was highly effective in providing students both with an "excuse" for immersing themselves in the life of the L2 community and, further to this, an opportunity for meaningful intercultural encounters, serving as a motivating intellectual challenge to prepare for, undertake and evaluate.

Conclusion

Vision occupies a firm and increasingly prominent place within the landscape of L2 motivation research. A growing body of research has allowed for confidence in the motivating power of vision within the context of language learning, mirroring the high levels of success found by researchers looking at vision within other fields, for example in sports psychology. The concept of DMCs adds to the mix a tightly structured behavioural regime, offering a potent and predictable motivational framework. The motivational surge characterising DMCs is used in many areas of life, from running political campaigns to

preparing for the village choir concert, as it releases a great deal of goal-specific energy to fuel on-task behaviour. Furthermore, DMCs are effective in overriding the messy complexity of everyday life and aligning diverse elements of a system; a good illustration of this capability is the well-documented fact that setting *superordinate goals* for a group of people is one of the best strategies to create cohesiveness, even amongst people who have displayed hostility towards each other in the past.

What is particularly noteworthy from an educational perspective is that DMCs can be consciously employed for the purpose of motivational interventions, for example to fight apathy or achieve feats which may be beyond the normal capabilities of the agents in question. To realise this potential, further research will be needed to fully understand the initial conditions necessary for a DMC to be created, as well as the optimal structural properties of the emerging surge. In any case, the combination of vision with a matching action structure offers a heady mixture, a potentially very powerful tool which has the ability to transport learners to achieve goals they did not imagine within their reach.

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