FACTORS AFFECTING MOTIVATION TO SECOND AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF URBAN ASIANS LEARNING EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

A. ARUNKUMAR[1] & VINEETHA CB[2]

[1]Chief Ideator, LAMED, India

[2]Research Associate, LAMED, India

ABSTRACT

Second and foreign language acquisition in adolescents and adults is a conscious process that primarily depends on the motivation to learn the language. The construct of motivation to learn languages and acquisition of second language has been analyzed through the lenses of psychology, teaching, neuroscience, linguistics, etc. But not many studies have been reported through the lens of a student evolving into a teacher. An attempt was made to understand the various factors that motivate second language acquisition through different researcher positioning-student and teacher. Between February 2010 and November 2015, an ethnographic approach was used to understand these factors through learning (French, Spanish and Russian) and teaching (French, Spanish and English). A mixed method approach: In-depth interviews, Key informant interviews, participant observational studies (field and reflective notes), informal interactions and Meta analytic reviews were used to inform a model in motivation in second and foreign language learning. We observed that the factors were organized into a social-interpersonal-personal model that influenced the motivation construct to learn the second language. This paper discusses this model and implications in second language teaching.

KEYWORDS: Asians, Ethnography, Second and Foreign Language Acquisition, Social-Interpersonal-Personal Model

INTRODUCTION

Second and foreign language acquisition is different from primary language acquisition. The primary language acquisition follows a stable acquisition of the language structure (Brown, 1973; Dulay and Burt, 1975). In contrast, second language acquisition is a conscious process influenced by correction of errors and learning explicit rules (Krashen and Seliger, 1975). The conscious learning effort depends on individuals' aptitudes and the environmental factors where the language is learnt. Research shows that difference in aptitudes, cognitive and environmental factors can be counteracted by the motivation to learn the language (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) state that attitude and behavior in learning second language is directly proportional to the correspondence between the attitudinal and correspondence targets.

There are various lines of understanding the construct of motivation in second language acquisition. In the past few decades, motivation in second language learning has been of great interest to psychologists and teachers alike. The second and foreign language learning research has seen a surge post 1990, prior to which the picture was widely dominated by the social psychological approach of Robert Gardner, Wallace Lambert, Richard Clement and Associates.

Motivation is defined as a cumulative cognitive processes focusing on the initiation and the maintenance of

second language learning (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Robert Gardner' social psychological approach outlines three elements namely motivational intensity; desire to learn the language and an attitude towards the act of learning the language. Tremblay and Gardner in 1995 extended this model by incorporating elements from expectancy value and goal theories. Expectancy-value theories state that motivation to learn a language is directly proportional to the individual's expectancy of success in learning the language and the value attached to the process of learning (Dörnyei, 1998). The expectancy of success depends on past experiences, perceived self-efficacy and self-worth. The value attached to the task of learning second language is described in four components: importance attached to the language learning, perceived intrinsic value, extrinsic utility value and the cost of learning the language (Eccles and Wigfield, 1995).

A study of Hungarian EFL learners revealed a tripartite motivation construct namely; integrativeness, linguistic self-confidence, and the appraisal of the classroom environment (Clément et al, 1994). According to the linguistic self-confidence concept of Richard Clément, self-confidence plays a significant role in foreign language learning. Further studies classified the various components under the following dimensions viz; language level, learner level and the learning situation level (Dornyei, 1994). Williams and Burden developed a similar framework of motivational factors in 1997. Both the frameworks lack directional relationships between various items listed in the framework. Another line of approach to understand motivation is the self-determination theory. Self-determination theory posits that autonomous learning contributes to motivation and the learner attributes success or failure to their own efforts and strategies than external factors. Studies also show that intrinsic motivation is supported by democratic teaching style (Dickinson, 1995:173-4). The recent studies concentrate on neurobiological models of language acquisition through sustained deep learning based on stimulus appraisal process (Schumann, 1998).

All these studies lack an understanding from the perspective of the students. The positioning of the researcher is important in understanding the second language acquisition. All the above mentioned studies employed researcher or teacher or psychologist perspective which calls for the actual exploration of second language acquisition through the lens of a language learner and lived experiences. The advantage of understanding motivation through the lens of the student and then as a teacher throws more light on the evolution of motivation within each student. The research methods in second language acquisition (SLA) have been evolving and have constantly adopted methods from other fields from general linguistics to neuroscience and corpus linguistics. An array of Qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches has been used.

METHODS

From February 2010 to November 2015, we developed an ethnographic approach to understand second language acquisition through interchanging roles of student, teacher, and researcher. A spectrum of methods was used. Firstly, the classes were observed as a student using a field notes and reflective notes template along with simultaneous interaction with peers and teachers. Secondly, the classes were observed as a teacher to understand various factors that motivate students (using field notes template, feed back forms to capture the opinions of the students, one-to-one interactions and informal group discussions). Thirdly, a cross-sectional survey using a self-reported questionnaire to measure motivation was conducted in an International French Language and Cultural Institute. Concurrently, interviews of 10 European language learners (in-depth interviews [IDI]) and five European language teachers (Key informant interviews [KII]) from Southern India were audio-recorded and analyzed. A systematic meta-analytic review was also used to understand the existing literature on motivation in second language acquisition. Table 1 summarizes the various methods used to inform

Factors Affecting Motivation to Second and Foreign Language Acquisition:
An Ethnographic Study of Urban Asians Learning European Languages

73

the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

The field/reflective notes and feedback forms were analyzed to understand the various facets of motivation construct. Quantitative surveys were analyzed using SPSS20 to learn various factors that motivate second language learners. The in-depth and key informant interviews were transcribed and were initially explored using focused coding and constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in NVivo10. Few emergent codes and categories were identified from the text and added to the existing codes gained from observational studies. Axial coding was done to develop connections between categories derived from all data. Themes were identified by looking for similarities, differences and relationships between categories (Gibson & Brown, 2009).

Table 1: Methods Used in the Ethnographic Approach

Language	Time Period	Study Group Characteristics	Sample Size	Age Range	Males/Females	Study Setting	Duration of Course (in hours)	Method	Researcher Positioning
French	February 2010 to November 2010	Heterogeneous	30	17-38 years	27/3	French Language Institute, Tamilnadu	160	Participant observation	Student
French	July 2011 to December 2011	School students	12	13-14 years	12/0	Private School, Tamilnadu	80	Participant observation	Teacher
French	January 2012 to June 2012	Heterogeneous	22	16-56	12/10	French Language Institute, Tamilnadu	100	Participant observation	Teacher
French	July 2012 to December 2012	Heterogeneous	18	17-42	11/7	French Language Institute, Tamilnadu	100	Participant observation	Teacher
French	April 2012 to December 2012	Heterogeneous	22	17-48	15/7	French Language Institute, Tamilnadu	100	Participant observation	Teacher
French	August-September 2012	College students	40	17-18	0/40	Engineering College, Andhrapradesh	40	Participant observation	Teacher
French	January 2013 to April 2013	College students	30	17-22	18/12	Psychology College, Tamilnadu	40	Participant observation	Teacher
Second Language	May 2013 to April 2014	Systematic Meta-analytic review of previous 10 years articles on second language acquisition and motivation to learn second language							
Spanish	May 2014 to July 2014	Heterogeneous	7	14-29	7/0	Spanish Language Institute, Tamilnadu	70	Participant observation	Student
Spanish	July 2014 to December 2014	Heterogeneous	31	12-43	14/17	Spanish Language Institute, Tamilnadu	460	Participant observation	Teacher
French	November 2014	College students	9	19-20	3/6	French Language	100	Participant observation	Teacher

	to January 2015					Institute, Tamilnadu			
French	August 2015 to November 2015	Post Graduate University students	40	22-25	22/18	International University, Tamilnadu	30	Participant observation	Teacher
Russian	October-November 2015	Heterogeneous	5	22-27	3/2	Russian Language Institute, Tamilnadu	50	Participant observation	Student
French	February 2015 to June 2015	Heterogeneous	191	15-55	89/102	French Language Institute, Tamilnadu	-	Quantitative survey	Researcher
European languages	January to November 2015	European Language Learners and Teachers	10 IDI 5 KII	24.7 (Mean)	2/8 (IDI)	Tamilnadu	-	Qualitative study	Researcher

FINDINGS

The study yielded a seamlessly integrated social-interpersonal-personal model of motivation in second and foreign language learning (Figure 1).

PERSONAL FACTORS

It was observed that intrinsic motivation depends on the personal factors. A student with higher expectancy of success and increased value attached to learning the second language had clearly defined goals to learn the language. On the other hand, students who did not have a considerable amount of expectancy of success conjoint with lesser value attached to second language acquisition did not have a clearly defined goal. The attrition rate was higher among the students of the latter group. And in classes where the extrinsic motivation was also lacking, students dropped out at a higher rate. In the first study group of 30 students of French, only three students continued till the end and only one student opted to go to the next level. In the Spanish study group, the students attached a higher expectancy and value and thereby had a fixed goal to learn the language for specific purposes (career, travel, etc.), exhibited an attrition rate less than 5%.

INTERPERSONAL FACTORS

Another observation is that students irrespective of their personal factors, if failed to attain or maintain effective interpersonal relationships with the significant others tend to have lesser motivation levels. The interpersonal factors provided a necessary extrinsic motivation to continue learning the language. The attrition was high in classes where group activities and interaction among peers were less. Students showed increased participation in the class when the teacher-student and student-student relationships were healthy. The feedback received from the significant others either motivated or de-motivated them towards learning the language.

Some of the participants in our study said,

"The role of the professor is that they have to make sure they don't lose the motivation they have from the beginning." (Spanish tutor, Private language institute, Chennai)

"It is always easy to begin by saying anything interesting the student likes and they become very enthusiastic about learning a language but to keep this interest on..... And to keep the same level of interest...... And to not allow dissipating it..... is always upto the professor to do that". (French Professor and Head of the Department, University, Chennai)

"I got a nice group of friends with whom I went out every weekend. And this probably made me stick to this group and continue the course..." (Student, 28-year old, Russian Language Institute, Chennai)
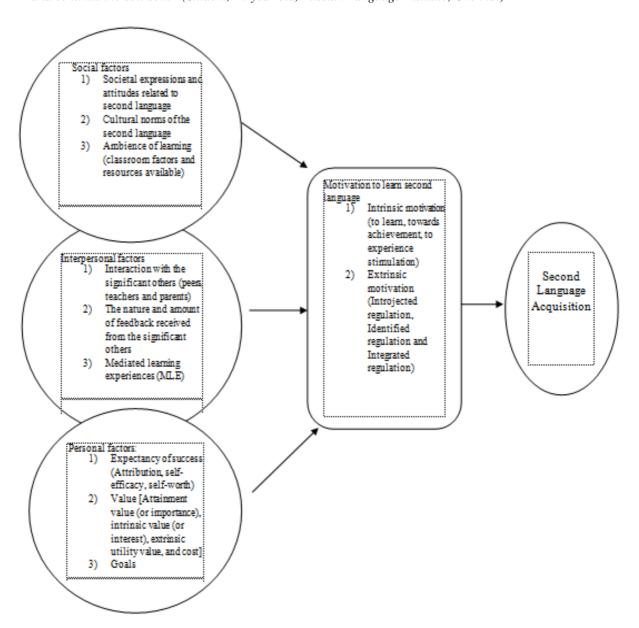

**Figure 1: Social-Interpersonal-Personal Model of Motivation in
Second and Foreign Language Acquisition**

SOCIAL FACTORS

Most of the students who were learning a particular language showed an increased affinity to the societal expressions, attitudes and the culture of the language. The ambience of learning had a significant impact in creating a subconscious motivation as some of the participants in the study said that they dropped out of the course because of poor
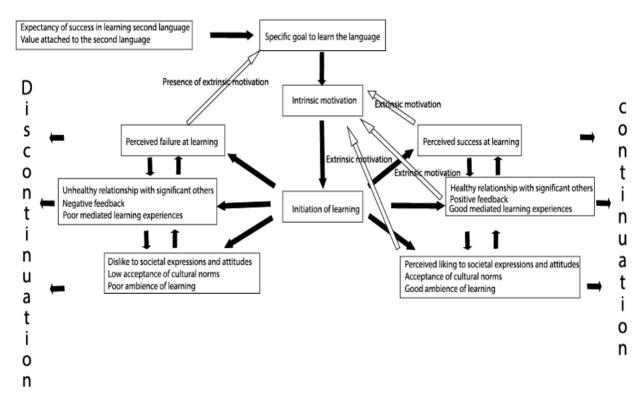
ambience.

> *"I wanted to give a try learning [particular language], but I did not like the culture of the people. It did not appeal to me. So I discontinue from the course" (Student feedback, European Language Institute, Chennai)*

> *"The ambience of the class was very friendly. There is [particular language] everywhere... library... movies... language clubs... I basically learnt lot of [particular language] through these informal social interactions that we had every weekend...." (Student feedback, European Language Institute, Chennai)*

Also, the social factors extended to the social media usage and its impact on physical classrooms. Students reported using social media in their classroom learning had a positive impact in learning.

DISCUSSIONS

Interaction between various social-interpersonal-personal factors in motivation to second and foreign language learning

Figure 2: Interaction between Social-Interpersonal-Personal Factors in Motivation to Second and Foreign Language Learning

There are two types of motivation- intrinsic and extrinsic (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The motivation to learn second and foreign language is primarily intrinsic that develops subconsciously over a period of time which is reinforced by various factors extrinsically. The intrinsic motivation brings the student to the language classroom but it is the extrinsic motivation that ensures retention, continuation and completion of the course. The extrinsic motivation can come through personal factors too though interpersonal and social factors play a major role. When students perform better and develop confidence in learning the language, it reinforces the intrinsic motivation. In due course of time, learners set personal standards (linguistic self confidence and self-determination) to learn the language. Thus personal factors including goal setting is essential in motivation to learn second and foreign language.

As our study reveals, the interaction with peers and significant others plays a significant role in sustaining the motivation to learn the language. Participants tend to discontinue the course if they are not able to develop or maintain fostering relationships in the class. This is true regarding the teacher-student relationship which when skewed leads to attrition. In the same way, teachers who give fewer opportunities to interact in class or who do not spend time building rapport with the students reported more attrition. This is in accordance with the inclusion, control and affection components of the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation (FIRO) (Schutz, 1958) where interpersonal relationships mediate motivation in second and foreign language learning.

The social factors can be attributed to the human nature to seek social identity. Every student wants to associate himself/herself with the social group that would give and/or enhance his/her identity. The attrition level is high when the student is not able to reach this social identity. The social identity is reached through various activities that promote social interactions, exposure to the culture, etc. Further this social identity was established through social media too. Students though they come for few hours of class per week, yet they tend to spend more time in online groups and forums where they develop their identity by contributing to the social interactions.

The second and foreign language learning or teaching curriculum should understand the complex interplay of these social-interpersonal-personal factors (Figure 2). Teachers should understand this underlying model for motivation to provide the necessary space for interpersonal relationships to develop and also give adequate exposure to the culture through various activities to help them develop social identity. Not many classrooms give adequate space for socializing and interpersonal interactions. Using textbooks and strict curriculum ensemble with conventional exams further dampen the extrinsic motivation resulting in high attrition rate. The second and foreign language learning should begin with capturing the motivation levels of the students, customize or design courses according to their needs (purpose driven learning system), ensure adequate interaction between the students, develop a healthy teacher-student relationship, provide exposure to culture of the language, and have an ongoing dialogue with the students both during class and outside class through social media use. Further research is required to understand the mediators and moderators of the motivation in second and foreign language learning and it's cross-cultural implications in teaching. This would help in designing student friendly classrooms to achieve retention of students in second and foreign language learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES

1. Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1977). Attitude-behavior relations: A theoretical analysis and review of empirical research. *Psychological bulletin*, *84*(5), 888.

2. Brown, R. (1973). *A First Language.* Cambridge: Harvard Press.

3. Clément, R., Dörnyei, Z., & Noels, K. A. (1994). Motivation, self-confidence, and group cohesion in the foreign language classroom. *Language learning*, *44*, 417-417.

4. Charmaz, Kathy. "Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative research." *Sage Publications Ltd, London* (2006).

5. Dickinson, L. (1995). Autonomy and motivation a literature review. *System*, *23*(2), 165-174.

6. Dulay, H. and M. Burt (1975) "A new approach to discovering universal strategies of child second language acquisition." In D. Dato (Ed.), *Developmental Psycholinguistics: Theory and Applications.* Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics. Washington: Georgetown University Press, pp. 209-233.

7. Eccles, J. S., & Wigfield, A. (1995). In the mind of the achiever: The structure of adolescents' academic achievement related-beliefs and self-perceptions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin,* **21,** 215–225

8. Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). Attitudes and Motivation in Second-Language Learning.

9. Gibson, W., & Brown, A. (2009). *Working with qualitative data*. Sage.

10. Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). The discovery grounded theory: strategies for qualitative inquiry. *Aldin, Chicago*.

11. Hogg, M. A. (2006). Social identity theory. *Contemporary social psychological theories*, *13*, 111-1369.

12. Krashen, S. and H. Seliger (1975) "The essential contributions of formal instruction in adult second language learning." *TESOL Quarterly* 9: 173-183.

13. Mackey, A. (2014). Practice and progression in Second Language Research methods. *AILA Review*, *27*(1), 80-97.

14. Manstead, A. S. (2000). The role of moral norm in the attitude–behavior relation.

15. Pintrich, P. R., & Schunk, D. H. (2002). *Motivation in education: Theory, research, and applications*. Prentice Hall.

16. Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary educational psychology*, *25*(1), 54-67.

17. Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American psychologist*, *55*(1), 68.

18. Schumann, J. H., Crowell, S. E., Jones, N. E., Lee, N., & Schuchert, S. A. (2014). *The neurobiology of learning: Perspectives from second language acquisition*. Rout ledge.

19. Schutz, W. C. (1958). FIRO: A three-dimensional theory of interpersonal behavior.

20. Tremblay, P. F., & Gardner, R. C. (1995). Expanding the motivation construct in language learning. *The Modern Language Journal*, *79*(4), 505-518.

21. Williams, M., & Robert, L. (1999). Burden (1997) Psychology for Language Teachers. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press*, *5*, 7-29.