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Motivation and Foreign Language Learning: From theory to practice

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This is a paperback version of the book containing 189 pages divided into two sections, the first part based merely on theory about motivation while the second part mixes the approaches and researches about the topic of motivation and its enhancement through some researches. First of all an introduction is given by the book's editors explaining how motivation has developed throughout the last decades and which practices are seen as motivators.

The index lists the book contains nine chapters. The first part of the book "Theoretical and practical insights into motivation" is made of four chapters which includes some ideas regarding language learning motivation, whereas the second part: "Studies on motivation in foreign language classrooms" focuses on the relationship between different approaches to foreign language learning such as EFL, CLIL or immersion and motivation. Nevertheless, both sections emphasize and focus on pedagogical implications rooted in theoretical and empirical work.

Through this book the author aims to provide theoretical insights and practical suggestions to improve motivation in the classroom. An important focus that Lasagabaster points out is supporting the teacher's role, providing practical paths to follow, aiming at consequently improving foreign language learning and teacher's teaching practice. For this purpose, the book embraces three different dimensions: the teachers, the learners and the learning context, and analyses how these different dimensions interact with motivation.

The first chapter outlines and emphasizes the role of Directed Motivational Current (DMC), which is well-established in major motivation theories, in a learning process bringing together concepts like self system, dynamic systems theory and future time perspective. First, it presents links to established motivation theories and concludes by describing several relevant practical areas where DMC's can offer benefits. Moreover, Lasagabaster states his concern over temporality in a successful motivational achievement, implanting the future long and short term goals and the perception of progress as principal motivators in a learning process.

The second chapter continues to convey the idea of long term goals as main motivator when learning a language, putting the responsibility on the learners' metacognitive capacity for self-regulation in order to achieve a successful learning. However, he adds that the process of regulating and sustaining motivation entails not only just a focus on progressing and developing one's skills and competence; it also entails an ability to respond effectively to our own challenges. He points out that a learner that knows the know-how, specifically how to deal with problems and difficulties in his or her learning process is a successful learner. The author aims at developing higher order metacognitive and autonomous self within the process that he calls "will and skill".

The third chapter provides the findings of two researches in which students and teachers of bilingual areas become researchers of their own learning, getting to know the status of

motivation in the students when they were completely involved in their learning process objectifying it and encouraging teachers and learners to work together. It is said that when teachers as well as learners are engaged in analyzing their own classroom practices, motivation is enhanced because there is a strategic engagement which leads to a successful learning process. At the end of this chapter, it is introduced the LOCIT process which consists of an inclusive approach to practitioner and learner research.

The fourth chapter attempts to emphasize the role of the teacher as the main factor to help students to pursue and discover their L2 visions. First of all he reflects on the relationship between teacher education and teacher learning which he considers a complex one. He sets out a theory based on what the teacher should ponder on in order to reveal this motivator in his or her learners based on positive influences about one self. He believes that in order to achieve this, teachers should deliberate on three processes; the “who”, having conviction and clarity on the future person one wants to become; the “why”, reflecting on the bigger purposes guiding their work as language teachers, and the “image”, having a visual representation of their desired teaching selves.

The second part of the book starts with the fifth chapter starts in which some studies on motivation in foreign language classroom are exposed and analyzed from this point of view. This chapter provides with evidences on students’ out-of-school encounters with English, their relation with technological devices, in-school learning English and how their beliefs, self-regulation and gender influence their proficiency in the English language. Here Lasagabaster discusses the relationship between different foreign language teaching approaches and motivation itself. It is said that self-efficacy is achieved mostly in real language in use, not in classroom contexts. Learners are encouraged to develop a mindset to provide themselves with the optimum environment for learning a language.

The sixth chapter focuses on displaying the students’ point of view on what motivates and demotivates them in a foreign language lesson taught using CLIL. A research was carried out in two different contexts, Spain and Finland with the purpose of comparing results between students from first and third year of compulsory secondary education. The instrument included closed-ended questions and the procedure analyzing through different variables in order to obtain full detailed results. The learners expressed their opinions freely to comment on their personal learning experiences. The results were varied and some of them coincided on their opinions based on the assumption that teaching English is not the same as teaching in English.

The seventh chapter describes and mentions how different materials for the classroom can affect learning making the classroom a more engaging place. Here some CLIL material is displayed assuming it triggers goal-oriented behavior and described by the author as a “motivational booster”. It analyses how integration, communication and interaction work in a CLIL classroom, as well as different material like role-plays, information gap activities, cultural integrated activities, artistic integrated activities and grammar activities. It also analyses motivation from three dimensions interest and instrumental orientation, attitudes towards learning situation and effort, as being the keys for language learning.

The eighth chapter is mainly focused on short and long term goals and how these accomplished goals build a more positive vision and attitude towards foreign language learning. Feedback, practice and challenge are key words in this chapter because the first two are said to enhance motivation and the last one seeks to visualize the ideal L2 self, solving the discrepancy between actual and future self. The chapter also contains the results of a longitudinal study in language learning motivation in higher education, to know why Bachelor students enrolled in German degree courses at two major English universities. From analyzing these results a very interesting cycle diagram summarizes the findings.

The last chapter and epilogue makes the last connections between what it was presented in the first part of the book, the theories about motivation, and the second part in which the author invites teachers and learners to involve in the learning process in order to promote motivation presenting different approaches and researches made on the topic of motivation in diverse contexts.

In general, the book attempts to help teachers and learners to know more about motivation and how to enhance it in diverse classroom contexts where foreign language learning is taught. Throughout the nine chapters, divided into theoretical and practical, the author tries to focus the discussion from different angles in order to provide a complete vision of motivational aspects. This book is better seen as a handful and complete compilation of many insights about well-established theoretical paradigms of language learning motivation and practices, rather than another volume offering new perspectives.

Overall the book is highly recommendable, especially for teacher educators, teacher practitioners, student teachers and researchers who look to reflect and ponder on what their work is about and how they can apply some theories to their daily practices. It may not be useful for someone who is looking for new perspectives and threads about motivation because the book is not intended to present bright new concepts on theoretical paradigms of language learning but to bring together many different threads, present them, put them into practice and give some tips about each one with recommendations on how to improve motivational aspects in a foreign language learners' classroom and more important than that how to sustain motivation along their learning process.

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