

10

Focus on the Language Learner: Motivation, Styles and Strategies

Andrew D. Cohen
University of Minnesota

Zoltán Dörnyei
University of Nottingham

Introduction: Learner Characteristics

Success in learning a foreign or second language (L2) depends on a variety of factors such as the duration and intensity of the language course, the characteristics and abilities of the teacher, the appropriateness of the teaching methodology, the quality of the textbook, the size and composition of the learner group, the amount of natural L2 practice opportunities, and last but not least, the characteristics of the language learner. This chapter will focus on the last factor, that is, on the impact of the most important learner features on language learning achievement.

The importance of learner characteristics cannot be overestimated. When students embark on the study of an L2, they are not merely 'empty vessels' that will need to be filled by the wise words of the teacher; instead, they carry a considerable 'personal baggage' to the language course that will have a significant bearing on how learning proceeds. Past research in applied linguistics has identified a number of key components of this learner 'baggage' and has also provided clear evidence that these components determine how fast and how well we are likely to master the L2. In this chapter we will first briefly look at three learner characteristics which are largely beyond the teacher's control, and then concentrate on three factors that teachers can actively address to increase the effectiveness of instruction: motivation, learning styles and learner strategies.

Characteristics Outside the Teacher's Control

Age and Gender

What are the chief learner characteristics – or as researchers like to call them, 'individual differences' – that influence language learning success? It is appropriate to start with the two main demographic variables, the learner's age and gender. The former has been the subject of a great deal of research over the last 40 years. The traditional view has been that the younger we start to learn a second language, the better chance for success we have. Previously, this advantage was explained in terms of a 'critical period', where a person needed to learn the L2 in the period roughly before puberty, or lose the ability to become native-like altogether. However, recent research shows that 'the younger the better' principle is only valid in environments where there is a constant and natural exposure to the L2 (for example, learning French in France); in typical 'classroom environments where the amount of exposure is relatively small, older learners seem to have the advantage over their younger peers, that is, here, older is better. Also, age seems to have a much greater effect on pronunciation than on other linguistic abilities, such as grammar or vocabulary. Even here, it seems that some late-starting learners have been able to develop native-like pronunciation. Thus, although the 'age factor' may have some physiological basis in the way the brain handles language, there are also likely to be several other age-related factors at work, including the amount and pattern of L2 input, the amount of verbal analytical ability and the motivation to learn the L2 (see Singleton, 2001, for a recent overview).

The second factor, the learner's gender, is important because research has consistently found girls to outdo their male peers when it comes to language learning. However, because this factor is beyond the teacher's control, we will not dwell on it here.

Language Aptitude

Let us now turn to what is probably the best-known individual difference variable in language learning: 'language aptitude'. This factor has been referred to under different names, for example, a special 'ability', 'gift', 'knack', 'feel' or 'flair' for languages, and everybody – learners, teachers and researchers alike – will agree that it is a very important attribute of learning effectiveness (see Dörnyei and Skehan, in press, for a recent review). It is best seen as the language-related aspect of intelligence, and it determines the rate of learning and the amount of energy the progress is likely to require of the learner. Someone with a high aptitude will pick up the L2 relatively easily, whereas for another person the same level of proficiency can only be achieved by means of hard work and persistence. Having said this, it is important to note that language aptitude does *not* determine whether or not someone can learn a language. If a learner is not a natural language learner, this can be compensated for by various other factors such as high motivation or the use of

effective language learning strategies. Indeed, the majority of people *are* able to achieve at least a working knowledge of an L2 regardless of their aptitude – so where there is a will, there is most likely a way. Speaking of the learner's 'will' brings us to the first characteristic on which teachers can have a significant impact and on which we will therefore elaborate – motivation.

Motivation

Motivation is often seen as the key learner variable because without it, nothing much happens. Indeed, most other learner variables presuppose the existence of at least some degree of motivation. Motivation can be promoted consciously, which is good news for L2 teachers: it means that by employing certain methods it is possible to change learners' motivation in a positive direction. For this reason, skills in motivating learners are an important aspect of any teacher's methodological repertoire.

The Social Nature of L2 Motivation

Motivation to learn a second language is very different from the motivation to learn any other school subject. This is because an L2 is not only a communication code, but also a representative of the L2 culture where it is spoken. Learning a second language therefore always entails learning a second culture to some degree. As Williams (1994: 77) argues:

The learning of a foreign language involves far more than simply learning skills, or a system of rules, or a grammar; it involves an alteration in self-image, the adoption of new social and cultural behaviours and ways of being, and therefore has a significant impact on the social nature of the learner.

As a consequence, L2 motivation will always have a strong sociocultural component. Learners may well be reluctant to set about learning the language of a cultural group towards which they have truly negative feelings, and similarly, having favourable attitudes towards a language community may well increase the motivation to learn their language. In fact, recognition of this reality inspired the initiation of L2 motivation research at the end of the 1950s in Canada by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert. The social psychological approach they adopted (*see below*) is still one of the most influential directions in the study of L2 motivation (for an overview, *see* Gardner, 1985; Clément and Gardner, 2001).

Motivation as a Dynamic Process

A second important aspect of L2 motivation is that it is not stable and static but is rather in a continuous process of change. Dörnyei (2001a) argues that motivation undergoes a cycle that has at least three distinct phases.

- First, motivation needs to be *generated*. The motivational dimension related to this initial phase can be referred to as 'choice motivation' because the motivation that is generated then leads to the selection of the goal or task to be pursued.
- Second, the generated motivation needs to be actively *maintained* and *protected* while the particular action lasts. This motivational dimension has been referred to as 'executive motivation' (or 'volition'), and it is particularly relevant to learning in classroom settings, where students are exposed to a great number of distracting influences, such as off-task thoughts, irrelevant distractions from others, anxiety about the tasks or physical conditions that make it difficult to complete the task.
- Finally, there is a third phase following the completion of the action – termed 'motivational retrospection' – which concerns learners' *retrospective evaluation* of how things went. The way students process their past experiences in this retrospective phase will determine the kind of activities they will be motivated to pursue in the future.

These three phases are associated with largely different motives. That is, people will be influenced by different factors while they are still contemplating an action from those that influence them once they have embarked on some action. And similarly, when we look back at something and evaluate it, again a new set of motivational components may well become relevant. Bearing this in mind, let us look at the most important motives discussed in psychology.

The Most Important Motives to Learn an L2

With regard to 'choice motivation', the most important components are the values and attitudes related to the L2, the L2 speakers and language learning in general. These were the focal issues in Gardner's (1985) influential motivation theory, which placed the emphasis on understanding the broad sociocultural nature of L2 motivation. Within this theory, three concepts in particular have become well-known.

- 'Integrative orientation', which reflects a positive disposition toward the L2 group and the desire to interact with and even become similar to valued members of that community.
- 'Instrumental orientation', where language learning is primarily associated with the potential pragmatic gains of L2 proficiency, such as getting a better job or a higher salary.
- The 'integrative motive', which is a complex construct made up of three main components: (a) *integrativeness* (subsuming integrative orientation, interest in foreign languages, and attitudes toward the L2 community); (b) *attitudes toward the learning situation* (comprising attitudes toward the teacher and the course); and (c) *motivation* (made up of motivational intensity, desire and attitudes towards learning the language).

Another important aspect of choice motivation, the 'expectancy of success and perceived coping potential', refers to learners' confidence in being able to carry out the tasks associated with L2 learning. A key element of this aspect, 'linguistic self-confidence', has been identified as a significant motivational subsystem in L2 acquisition (Clément, 1980; Clément, Dörnyei and Noels, 1994); a plausible explanation for this is that what matters in foreign languages learning is not really the objective level of one's language abilities but rather the subjective perceptions of assurance and trust in oneself. (This is partly why some people will be able to communicate with 100 words while others will not be able to even with thousands of words).

It is also easy to see that the learners' initial beliefs about L2 learning will affect motivation, since unrealistic beliefs about the amount of time it will take to attain a certain level of language functioning will inevitably lead to disappointment. Similarly, whether or not the learner receives positive or negative messages from the larger environment (for example, media, friends) plays an important role in reinforcing or blocking one's initial commitment.

The most important aspect of 'executive motivation' is related to the perceived quality of the learning experience. This quality dimension can be described satisfactorily using Schumann's (1997) framework. Drawing on research in neurobiology, Schumann (1997) argues that humans appraise the stimuli they receive from their environment along five dimensions:

- 'Novelty' (degree of unexpectedness/familiarity).
- 'Pleasantness' (attractiveness).
- 'Goal or need significance' (whether the stimulus is instrumental in satisfying needs or achieving goals).
- 'Coping potential' (whether the individual expects to be able to cope with the event).
- 'Self and social image' (whether the event is compatible with social norms and the individual's self-concept).

These appraisals, then, constitute the person's overall evaluation of the quality of a particular experience. Although the 'quality of the learning experience' factor provides a broad coverage of a range of classroom-specific issues, it is useful to look at the motivational role of the participants in any given learning experience separately. First and foremost come the teachers, whose motivational influence is crucial in every aspect of learning. In their position of officially designated leaders they are the most visible figures in the classroom, embody group conscience, and serve as a reference and a standard. Their personal characteristics, their rapport with the students and the specific ways they model motivational values (for example, how they present tasks or give feedback and praise) are all likely to have an impact on the students' commitment to learning. In addition, we need to consider the role of the parents since educational psychologists have long recognized that various family characteristics and practices are linked with school achievement. Finally, in situations where learning takes place within groups of learners, the motiva-

tional influence of the whole 'learner group' is also considerable – as can be evidenced by every student whose initial enthusiasm for a subject was quickly killed by being called a 'brain', a 'nerd', a 'creep' or a 'swot' (or something even worse) by his/her peers (see Dörnyei, 2001a).

A second important constituent of executive motivation, 'autonomy' (or as it is often called in psychology, 'self determination'), has also generated a lot of research recently (for a review, see Benson, 2001) because there is a consensus that autonomy and motivation go hand in hand, that is, 'Autonomous language learners are by definition motivated learners' (Ushioda, 1996: 2). In addition, research by Noels and colleagues (Noels, Clément and Pelletier, 1999; Noels, 2001) indicates that the teachers' orientation towards autonomy, namely whether they are 'autonomy-supporting' or 'controlling', also plays an important role in shaping their students' motivation, with the former leading to increased student involvement and commitment.

The last main phase of the motivational process, 'motivational retrospection', involves the process whereby learners look back and evaluate how things went. Various characteristics will strongly influence learners' overall impressions about the past – some learners will gain a positive impetus even from less-than-positive experiences, whereas others may not be completely satisfied even with outstanding performance. From a practical point of view, however, the feedback, the praise and the grades that learners receive are the most significant determinants of their final self-evaluation. The nature of such rewards are too complex to cover in detail here, but we might note that they can function as double-edged swords – grades in particular. If there is too much emphasis on them, getting good grades can become more important than learning; as Covington (1999: 127) concludes, 'many students are grade driven, not to say, "grade grubbing", and this preoccupation begins surprisingly early in life'.

Finally, knowledge of and skills in using various 'learner strategies' also have an impact on learners' motivation in all three phases of the motivational process. Being aware of certain 'made-to-measure' strategies (for example, a computer devotee is told about an effective method of learning an L2 through the use of computer games and tasks) might give the necessary incentive to initiate learning. Then, while learning, well-used strategies increase one's self-confidence and lead to increased success, and – as the saying goes – success breeds further success. Finally, one very important function of the retrospective stage is for learners to consolidate and extend the repertoire of personally useful strategies, which will in turn function as a source of inspiration for future learning. Indeed, strategies and motivation are very closely linked.

Motivating Learners

How can motivation research help classroom practitioners? The most obvious way is by providing a list of practical motivational techniques that teachers can apply. For such lists to be comprehensive and valid, they need to be based on a solid underlying theoretical framework. Motivational recommendations have

been offered by a number of scholars in the L2 field (Alison, 1993; Brown, 1994; Oxford and Shearin, 1994; Williams and Burden, 1997; Dörnyei and Csizér, 1998), with Dörnyei (2001b) providing a comprehensive summary of the topic. Dörnyei (in press) uses the model described above (choice motivation/executive motivation/motivational retrospection) as an organizing framework and identifies four principal aspects of motivational teaching practice:

- 'Creating the basic motivational conditions' (establishing rapport with the students; fostering a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere; developing a cohesive learner group with appropriate group norms).
- 'Generating initial student motivation' (enhancing the learners' L2-related values and attitudes; increasing the learners' expectancy of success; increasing the learners' goal-orientedness; making teaching materials relevant to the learners; creating realistic learner beliefs).
- 'Maintaining and protecting motivation' (making learning stimulating; setting specific learner goals; presenting tasks in a motivating way; protecting the learners' self-esteem and increasing their self-confidence; allowing learners to maintain a positive social image; creating learner autonomy; promoting co-operation among the learners; promoting self-motivating strategies).
- 'Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation' (providing motivational feedback; promoting motivational attributions; increasing learner satisfaction; offering rewards and grades in a motivating manner).

Learning Styles

Researchers both in educational psychology and the L2 field have observed that various learners approach learning in a significantly different manner, and the concept of 'learning styles' has been used to refer to these differences. Indeed, we learn in different ways and what suits one learner may be inadequate for another. Learning styles seem to be relatively stable, and so teachers may not have such a direct influence on this learner variable as with motivation. However, they can modify the learning tasks they use in their classes in a way that may bring the best out of particular learners with particular learning style preferences. It is also possible that learners over time can be encouraged to engage in 'style-stretching' so as to incorporate approaches to learning they were resisting in the past. For example, let us say that a given reader may have been so global in her approach to reading academic texts that she was missing specific details that could have assisted her in deriving meaning from the texts. With proper encouragement from the teacher, she can become more versed at maintaining her global perspective, whilst paying more attention to particulars as well.

Learning style researchers have attempted to develop a framework that can usefully describe learners' style preferences, so that instruction can match these. Although numerous distinctions are emerging from the litera-

ture, the following style preferences are considered particularly relevant and useful to understanding the process of language learning (Reid, 1995; Ehrman, 1996):

- Being visual, auditory or hands-on.
- Being more extroverted versus introverted.
- Being more abstract and intuitive versus more concrete and thinking in step-by-step sequence.
- Preferring to keep all options open versus being closure-oriented.
- Being more global versus more particular.
- Being more synthesizing versus being more analytic.

The Hands-on Activity at the end of this chapter includes a self-assessment instrument and detailed explanations to illustrate what these style dimensions involve in actual learning. Let us look at an example to illustrate how styles may play a role in language learning and language use. Suppose an instructor assigns a task of reading a 500-word text about a new 'dot.com' organization on the market and then completing three activities that accompany the text. The learners are to write out the main point of the passage in one or two sentences, respond to an inference item ('From what is reported about the dot.com's weaknesses, what can be inferred about the rival dot.com's strengths?') and summarize the key points of the passage. In this example, we would suppose that certain style variables are going to be activated more than others – let us say, for the sake of illustration, that they are the following style contrasts: concrete-sequential versus abstract-intuiting, analytic versus synthesizing and particular versus global. In this instance, we might expect that those learners who are more concrete-sequential are the ones who will check the headings and sub-headings in the text to get a sense of its organization, whereas the more abstract-intuitive learners will skip around the text, looking for key words here and there but without a sequential pattern motivating their search. Both types of learners arrive at the main idea, but possibly using different strategic approaches.

With regard to the sub-task calling for inference, learners with a more abstract-intuitive preference may take some clues from the text, but they may be most comfortable relying on their background knowledge and opinions to infer what is *not* stated in the text about the strengths of the rival dot.com. The more concrete-sequential learners, on the other hand, may focus more exclusively on the clues in the text and remain somewhat frustrated that the answer to the question is illusive for them since it cannot be found in the text itself. Finally, the more global and synthesizing learners may enjoy a summarization task because they are predisposed to using strategies for integrating material into a summary, whilst analytic learners may find it more difficult because they are predisposed to focus on details. The style preferences are presented as dichotomies in the discussion above, but clearly many learners do not favour one learning style to the exclusion of all others. This means that many learners operate somewhere in the middle ground between the extreme positions, for

existing motivation. This is a rather new area in educational psychology, but research during the past decade has shown that learners' self-motivating capacity is a major factor contributing to success.

Communication Strategies

Communication strategies have unquestionably received the most focus in the research literature (Faerch and Kasper, 1983; Tarone and Yule, 1989; Poulisse, 1990; Dörnyei and Scott, 1997; Kasper and Kellerman, 1997). Communication strategies have primarily been viewed as the verbal (or non-verbal) first aid devices which may be used to deal with problems or breakdowns in communication. These devices enable learners to stay active partners in communication even when things do not go well. They may, for example, use communication strategies to steer the conversation away from problematic areas, to express their meaning in creative ways (for example, by paraphrasing a word or concept), to create more time for them to think and to negotiate the difficult parts of their communication with their conversation partner until everything is clear. Thus, these strategies extend the learners' communicative means beyond the constraints of target-language proficiency and consequently help to increase their linguistic confidence as well. Moreover, communication strategies also include conversational interaction strategies and strategies for maintaining the floor which learners who are not experiencing gaps in their knowledge may use.

Researchers have adopted several different taxonomies to classify the relevant problem-solving strategies (Dörnyei and Scott, 1997; Cohen, 1998). Table 10.1 summarizes the most well-known categories and strategy types.

Table 10.1 Some commonly used communication strategies

Avoidance or reduction strategies

Message abandonment: leaving a message unfinished because of some language difficulty
Topic avoidance: avoiding topic areas or concepts which pose language difficulties
Message replacement: substituting the original message with a new one because of not feeling capable of executing it

Achievement or compensatory strategies

Circumlocution: describing or exemplifying the target word you cannot remember (for example, 'the thing you open bottles with' for *corkscrew*)
Approximation: using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of the word you cannot remember as closely as possible (for example, *ship* for 'sailing boat')
Use of all-purpose words: extending a general, 'empty' lexical item to contexts where specific words are lacking (for example, the overuse of *thing*, *stuff*, *make*, *do* as well as using words like 'thingie', 'what-do-you-call-it', 'what's-his-name', etc.)
Word-coinage: creating a non-existing L2 word based on a supposed rule (for example, 'vegetarianist' for *vegetarian*)

example, usually being a global learner, but at times focusing on details depending on the task.

Learner Strategies

Strategy Definitions

When learning and using an L2, learners may employ a number of strategies which are usually aimed at improving their performance. Second-language researchers first noticed the importance of various learning strategies when they were examining the 'good language learner' in the 1970s (see Rubin, 1975). The results indicated that it was not merely a high degree of language aptitude and motivation that caused some learners to excel but also the students' own active and creative participation in the learning process through the application of individualized learning techniques (for a review, see Cohen, 1998). Research has found that the 'good language learner' is in command of a rich and sufficiently personalized repertoire of such strategies.

Although learner strategies have been categorized in numerous ways, one helpful distinction is between language learning and language use strategies.

'Language learning strategies' – referring to the conscious and semi-conscious thoughts and behaviours used by learners with the explicit goal of improving their knowledge and understanding of a target language.

'Language use strategies' – referring to strategies for using the language that has been learned, however incompletely, including four sub-sets of strategies:

- 'Retrieval strategies' (strategies used to call up language material from storage, for example, calling up the correct verb in its appropriate tense or retrieving the meaning of a word when it is heard or read).
- 'Rehearsal strategies' (strategies for practising target language structures, for example, rehearsing the subjunctive form for several Spanish verbs in preparation for using them communicatively in a request in Spanish to a teacher or boss to be excused for the day).
- 'Communication strategies' (strategies used to convey a message that is both meaningful and informative for the listener or reader, for example, when we want to explain technical information for which we do not have the specialized vocabulary).
- 'Cover strategies' (strategies for creating an appearance of language ability so as not to look unprepared, foolish or even stupid, for example, using a memorized and partially understood phrase in a classroom drill in order to keep the action going, or laughing at a joke that you did not understand at all).

Along with the two general strategy types described above, language learning and language use strategies, we would like to add a third one, 'self-motivating strategies', which learners can use to increase or protect their

Table 10.1 – continued

Use of non-linguistic means: mime, gesture, facial expression or sound imitation
Literal translation: translating literally a lexical item, an idiom, a compound word or structure from L1 to L2
Foreignizing: using an L1 word by adjusting it towards the L2 phonologically (that is, with a L2 pronunciation) and/or morphologically (for example, adding a L2 suffix to it)
Code switching: including an L1 word with L1 pronunciation or an L3 word with L3 pronunciation in L2 speech

Stalling or time-gaining strategies

Use of fillers and other hesitation devices: using filling words or gambits to fill pauses and to gain time to think (for example, *well, now let me see, as a matter of fact, etc.*)
Repetition: repeating a word or a string of words immediately after they were said (either by the speaker or the conversation partner)

Interactional strategies

Appeal for help: turning to the conversation partner for help either directly (for example, 'What do you call ...?') or indirectly (e.g., rising intonation, pause, eye contact, puzzled expression)
Asking for repetition: requesting repetition when not hearing or understanding something properly (e.g. 'Sorry?', 'Pardon?')
Asking for clarification: requesting explanation of an unfamiliar meaning structure (e.g. 'What do you mean?', 'The what?')
Asking for confirmation: requesting confirmation that one heard or understood something correctly (e.g. 'You mean?', 'Do you mean?')
Expressing non-understanding: expressing that one did not understand something properly either verbally or nonverbally (e.g. 'Sorry, I don't understand', 'I think I've lost the thread')
Interpretive summary: extended paraphrase of the interlocutor's message to check that the speaker has understood correctly (e.g. 'So what you are saying is ...', 'Let me get this right; you are saying that ...')

It is important to note that communication strategies may or may not have any impact on learning. For example, learners may use a vocabulary item encountered for the first time in a given lesson to communicate a thought, without any intention of trying to learn the word. In contrast, they may insert the new vocabulary item into their communication expressly in order to promote their learning of it.

Cognitive, Meta-cognitive, Affective and Social Strategies

Aside from classifying strategies as focusing on the learning or the use of language, there are two other notable approaches to categorizing strategies. One is to categorize them into one of four groups according to whether they are cognitive, meta-cognitive, affective or social (Chamot, 1987; Oxford, 1990). Another is to group them according to the skill area to which they relate

(Cohen, 1990). Let us first describe the four-way grouping, and then provide an illustrative classification of strategies according to skill area.

'Cognitive strategies' encompass the language learning strategies of identification, grouping, retention and storage of language material, as well as the language use strategies of retrieval, rehearsal and comprehension or production of words, phrases and other elements of the L2. In short, they cover many of the processes or mental manipulations that learners go through in both learning and using the target language. 'Meta-cognitive strategies' are those processes which learners consciously use in order to supervise or manage their language learning. Such strategies allow learners to control their own cognition by planning what they will do, checking how it is going and then evaluating how it went.

Affective strategies serve to regulate emotions, motivation and attitudes (for example, strategies for reduction of anxiety and for self-encouragement). So, for example, before a job interview in the L2, a learner may engage in positive self-talk about focusing on the message rather than on the inevitable grammatical errors that will emerge. Finally, 'social strategies' include the actions which learners choose to take in order to interact with other learners and with native speakers (for example, asking questions to clarify social roles and relationships or co-operating with others in order to complete tasks). Such strategies are usually directed at increasing the learners' exposure to L2 communication and to interactive practice. For example, an American learner of Japanese in Hawaii may develop and then consciously select a series of strategies for starting conversations with Japanese tourists in Waikiki, a daunting challenge since rules for starting conversations with strangers differ across the two cultures.

There is one obvious problem relating to this kind of classification of strategies. A learner's use of what is ostensibly a single strategy may actually represent a continual shifting or 'dance' from one of these categories to another. For example, let us say that a given learner, Herbert, practises a gracious self-introduction for a job interview. On one level, Herbert's strategy is a cognitive one since he is rehearsing pragmatic behaviour in order that it be done gracefully, appropriately and without too many grammatical errors. If Herbert is doing it as a conscious planning strategy, it may also represent a meta-cognitive strategy, especially during the moments when he thinks to himself that this is what he wants to do. The strategy may also serve as an affective strategy since Herbert could be choosing it as a means of reducing anxiety regarding the imminent interview. Finally, the rehearsal of self-introductions can serve as a social strategy in that the better Herbert is at self-introductions, the easier it may be for him to introduce himself to others, the more motivated he may feel to do so, and consequently the more encounters he may be motivated to have with speakers of the L2.

Classifying Strategies According to Skill Areas

The next type of classification of strategies is by skill area. The receptive skills, listening and reading, and the productive skills, speaking and writing,

are the four basic skill categories. There are, however, other skill areas as well. For example, there are strategies associated with vocabulary learning which cross-cut the four basic skills. Then, there is also the strategic use of translation, perhaps less conspicuous a skill area for strategizing, but undoubtedly an area that learners draw on. By translation, we are not referring to figurative or polished translation, but rather to the kind of literal or rough translation that most learners engage in from time to time or even extensively in order to function in all four of the basic skill areas. Table 10.2 shows the skill-related strategy categories, along with representative examples of specific strategies.

Table 10.2 A brief sampling of strategies associated with different skill areas

Listening strategies

Strategies to increase exposure to the new language:

- Listening to a talk show on the radio, watching a TV show, going to see a movie in the new language, or attending some out-of-class event conducted in the target language

Strategies to become more familiar with the sounds in the new language:

- Looking for associations between the sound of a word or phrase in the new language and the sound of a familiar word
- Imitating the way native speakers talk

Strategies for better understanding the new language in conversation

Before listening to the language:

- Deciding to pay special attention to specific language aspects, for example, the way the speaker pronounces certain sounds

When listening in the language:

- Listening for word and sentence stress to see what natives emphasize when they speak
- Practising 'skim listening' by paying attention to some parts and ignoring others

If some or most of what someone says in the language is not understood:

- Making educated guesses and inferences about the topic based on what has already been said
- Looking to the speaker's gestures and general body language as a clue to meaning

Reading strategy use

With regard to reading habits in the target language:

- Making a real effort to find reading material that is at or near one's level

As basic reading strategies:

- Planning how to read a text, monitor to see how the reading is going, and then check to see how much of it was understood
- Making ongoing summaries either in one's mind or in the margins of the text

When encountering unknown words and structures:

- Guessing the approximate meaning by using clues from the surrounding context
- Using a dictionary so as to get a detailed sense of what individual words mean

Speaking strategy use

In order to practise for speaking:

- Practising new grammatical structures in different situations to check out one's confidence level with the structures
- Asking oneself how a native speaker might say something and then attempting to practice saying it that way

In order to engage in conversations:

- Initiating conversations in the new language as often as possible
- Asking questions as a way to be sure to be involved in the conversation

When not able to think of a word or expression:

- Looking for a different way to express the idea; for example, using a synonym or describing the idea or object being talked about
- Using words from one's native language, perhaps adding vowels or consonants so that they seem like words in the target language

Writing strategy use

As basic writing strategies:

- Planning how to write an academic essay, monitoring to see how the writing is going, and then checking to see how well the product fits the intentions
- Making an effort to write different kinds of texts in the target language (for example, personal notes, messages, letters and course papers)

While writing an essay:

- Reviewing what one has already written before continuing to write new material in an essay
- Postponing editing of the writing until all the ideas are written down

Once a draft essay has been written:

- Revising the essay once or twice to improve the language and content
- Looking for ways to get feedback from others, such as having a native writer put the text in his or her own words and then comparing it to one's original version

Vocabulary strategies

To memorize new words:

- Analysing words to identify the structure and/or meaning of a part or several parts of them
- Making a mental image of new words whose meaning can be depicted.

In order to review vocabulary:

- Going over new words often at first to make sure they are learned
- Going back periodically to refresh one's memory about words previously learned.

In order to recall vocabulary:

- Making an effort to remember the situation where the word was heard or seen in writing, and if written, trying to remember the page or sign it was written on

As a way of making use of new vocabulary:

- Using words just learned in order to see if they work
- Using familiar words in different combinations to make new sentences

Table 10.2 – continued

Strategic use of translation

In order to enhance language learning and use:

Planning out what one wants to say or write in the L1 and then translating it into the target language
While listening to others, translating parts of what they have said into one's own L1 to help store the concepts

To work directly in the target language as much as possible:

Making an effort to put one's native language out of mind and to think only in the target language
Being cautious about transferring words or concepts directly from the L1 to the target language.

Self-motivating Strategies

As indicated above, there is yet another set of learner strategies which may play a role in empowering learners to be more committed and enthusiastic language learners, namely, 'self-motivating strategies'. Even under adverse conditions in certain classrooms and without any teacher assistance, some learners are more successful at staying committed to the goals they have set for themselves than others are. How do they do it? The answer is that they apply certain self-management skills to overcome environmental distractions or distracting emotional or physical needs/statuses; in short, they motivate themselves. And if they can do so, surely others can do so as well, particularly if teachers and other language educators provide some coaching. This assumption about students' self-motivating capacity has received confirmation during the past decade and scholars have come up with a number of useful techniques that learners can apply to keep progressing when their initial motivation is flagging.

A recent book concentrating on motivational strategies (Dörnyei, 2001b) draws on Kuhl's (1987) and Corno and Kanfer's (1993) research to suggest that self-motivating strategies are made up of five main classes, which are listed below with two typical example strategies for each:

1. Commitment control strategies for helping to preserve or increase the learners' original goal commitment:
 - *Keeping in mind favourable expectations or positive incentives and rewards* (for example, a film director fantasizing about receiving an Oscar).
 - *Focusing on what would happen if the original intention failed.*
2. 'Meta-cognitive control strategies' for monitoring and controlling concentration, and for curtailing unnecessary procrastination:
 - *Identifying recurring distractions and developing defensive routines.*
 - *Focusing on the first steps to take.*

3. 'Satiation control strategies' for eliminating boredom and adding extra attraction or interest to the task:
 - *Add a twist to the task* (for example, reordering certain sequences or setting artificial records and trying to break them).
 - *Use your fantasy to liven up the task* (for example, treating the task as a game, creating imaginary scenarios).
4. 'Emotion control strategies' for managing disruptive emotional states or moods, and for generating emotions that will be conducive to implementing one's intentions (note that these strategies are often similar to 'affective learning strategies' discussed earlier):
 - Self-encouragement.
 - Using relaxation and meditation techniques.
5. 'Environmental control strategies' for eliminating negative environmental influences and exploiting positive environmental influences by making the environment an ally in the pursuit of a difficult goal:
 - *Eliminating negative environmental influences* (such as sources of interference: for example, noise, friends; and environmental temptations: for example, a packet of cigarettes).
 - *Creating positive environmental influences* (for example, making a promise or a public commitment to do or not to do something, asking friends to help you or not to allow you to do something).

We believe that raising learners' awareness of self-motivation strategies, in particular drawing attention to specific strategies that are especially useful in a given situation, may have a significant 'empowering effect' on the students.

Pedagogical Implications: the Intersection of Motivation, Styles and Strategies

Steps for Style- and Strategies-based Instruction

Research has found that it is possible to teach learners to enhance their strategy use, that is, to help them to be more conscious and systematic about the strategies that they already use and to add new strategies to their repertoire (Dörnyei, 1995; Weaver and Cohen, 1997; Cohen, 1998). The earlier discussion of learning styles underscored the importance of having learners determine their style preferences and be more cognizant of the fit between their style preferences and the strategies that they select for language learning and language use tasks. The following are steps that teachers can take to make their instruction style- and strategies-based, along with motivating learners to engage themselves in this type of awareness-raising:

- Raise learner awareness about learning style preferences and language learner strategies at the outset in order to generate motivation to be more

conscious about style preferences and more proactive about the use of language strategies.

- Find out which styles the learners favour, and which strategies the students may already use or may wish to add to their repertoire.
- Suggest and model what 'style-stretching' might look like, as well as modelling new strategies.
- Provide a rationale for strategy use, since learners are likely to apply strategies or develop new ones only if they become convinced about their usefulness.
- Provide guided exercises or experiences to help students put the strategies into practice.
- Encourage students to enhance their current strategy repertoire.
- Encourage students to be willing to use such strategies even when it may mean taking risks.
- Highlight cross-cultural differences in how strategies (especially communicative strategies) might be employed (for example, when it is appropriate to use filled pauses in a language, such as the use of *eto* and *ano* in Japanese or *este* in Spanish, since their usage is somewhat different from that of *uh* in English).
- Organize 'sharing sessions': from time to time ask students to share information about their learning style preferences and about the strategies they have generated or found particularly useful. Because of their direct involvement in the learning process, students often have fresh insights they can share with their peers. In addition, personalized learning strategies are sometimes amusing to hear about and students may enjoy sharing them, especially when they see that their peers are doing some of the same things.

The Use of Style and Strategy Surveys

We would recommend actively involving learners in diagnosing for themselves their style and strategy preferences, as well as their 'motivational temperature'. There are various published learning style surveys, with the 'Style Analysis Survey' (Oxford, 1995: 208–215) being more focused on language learning than some of the other instruments (cf. also the short self-assessment tool at the end of this chapter). In addition, teachers can administer self-report questionnaires that cover strategy use by skill area such as in Table 10.2, communication strategies such as those listed in Table 10.1, or strategies classified in some other manner (for example, cognitive, meta-cognitive, affective and social as in Oxford's 'Strategy Inventory for Language Learning' (Oxford, 1990: 283–291). With regard to student motivation, the main strategies a teacher can apply are listed in detail in Dörnyei (2001b), but even in this domain the self-motivating strategies listed on pages 184–185 would allow active learner participation.

A key factor is to make the interrelationship of motivation, styles and strategies a matter of explicit discussion early on, rather than to assume that

'things will come automatically' or that learners know what to do in each instance. If learners are made aware of the importance of these individual difference variables, and are given tools for dealing with them, they are likely to take more responsibility of their own learning and will adopt those attitudes and techniques that characterize the good language learner.

Conclusion

The individual difference variables of motivation, style and strategies are inter-related in numerous ways. If students with certain style preferences succeed in finding learning strategies that particularly suit them (for example, an auditory learner taking the initiative to tape-record portions of a class session and then playing them back in order to review vocabulary and fix the words more solidly in memory), such actions may also enhance their interest in the task and expectancy of success, which will in turn increase their motivation with this task and ideally with others. Similarly, effective and well-personalized communication strategies (such as when the extroverted learner keeps a conversation going with a well-placed paraphrase when the target-language word for *insight* escapes her) can increase the learners' linguistic self-confidence and generate increased satisfaction in their L2 use. Finally, a teacher who keeps learner self-motivating strategies firmly in mind can check periodically to make sure that they are in the learners' repertoire and that they are doing everything to assist learners in keeping their motivational level high. Given the numerous other pedagogical issues to consider in the classroom, teachers may not feel that there is time to engage in this kind of top-down motivation, style and strategy planning for a given course. In reality, it may be just such planning which makes the teaching of a language course more productive for both the teacher and the students, as well as more enjoyable.

Further Reading

- Cohen, A.D. (1990). *Language Learning: Insights for Learners, Teachers, and Researchers*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle. The first set of chapters provides examples for the reader to practice the strategies presented (for vocabulary, speaking, reading, and writing) and the rest of the book consists of a survey of the language learning strategy research.
- Cohen, A.D. (1998). *Strategies in Learning and Using a Second Language*. Harlow: Longman. This volume distinguishes language learning from language use strategies, describes research methods for investigating these strategies, and then presents research which links the use of strategies on specific tasks with language performance on those tasks.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Teaching and Researching Motivation*. Harlow: Longman. This is an accessible overview of L2 motivation research, with a balanced treatment of both theoretical and practical issues. It also provides research guidelines and over 150 questionnaire items for those who would like to conduct their own investigations.

- Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Written for practicing teachers, this book is the first publication that is entirely devoted to discussing L2 motivational strategies, that is, practical techniques to generate and maintain student motivation in the language classroom.
- Reid, J.M. (Ed.) (1995). *Learning Styles In the ESL/EFL Classroom*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle. This book provides an edited collection of essays on learning styles and a number of sample learning style surveys.
- Weaver, S.J., Cohen, A.D. (1997). *Strategies-based Instruction: A Teacher-training Manual* (CARLA Working Paper Series #7). Minneapolis: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition. This teacher-training manual provides a broad range of activities and materials to demonstrate how strategies-based instruction can be used in the language classroom. The manual outlines a 30-hour training course, ideas for three-, six- and 15-hour versions of the course, as well as optional activities.

Hands-on Activity

The following is a shortened version of the 'Learning Style Survey' (adapted by Julie Chi and Andrew Cohen from Rebecca L. Oxford's (1993, in Reid, 1995) 'Style Analysis Survey'), designed to assess language learners' general approach to learning. Your task is to fill in the survey, then total your points, and based on your scores, consider your overall learning preferences. In the Suggested Solutions section we will provide specific guidelines on how to interpret your scores.

For each item, circle your immediate response:

- 0 = Never
- 1 = Rarely
- 2 = Sometimes
- 3 = Often
- 4 = Always

Part 1: How I Use My Physical Senses

I remember something better if I write it down	0	1	2	3	4
I understand lectures better when they write on the board	0	1	2	3	4
Charts, diagrams and maps help me understand what someone says	0	1	2	3	4
Visual – Total					
I remember things better if I discuss them with someone	0	1	2	3	4
I prefer to learn by listening to a lecture rather than reading	0	1	2	3	4
I like to listen to music when I study or work	0	1	2	3	4
Auditory – Total					

I need frequent breaks when I work or study	0	1	2	3	4
If I have a choice between sitting and standing, I'd rather stand	0	1	2	3	4
I think better when I move around (for example, pacing or tapping my feet)	0	1	2	3	4
Tactile – Total					

Part 2: How I Expose Myself to Learning Situations

I learn better when I work or study with others than by myself	0	1	2	3	4
I meet new people easily by jumping into the conversation	0	1	2	3	4
It is easy for me to approach strangers	0	1	2	3	4
Extroverted – Total					
I am energized by the inner world (what I'm thinking inside)	0	1	2	3	4
I prefer individual or one-on-one games and activities	0	1	2	3	4
When I am in a large group, I tend to keep silent and just listen	0	1	2	3	4
Introverted – Total					

Part 3: How I Handle Possibilities

I have a creative imagination	0	1	2	3	4
I add many original ideas during class discussions	0	1	2	3	4
I am open-minded to new suggestions from my peers	0	1	2	3	4
Random-Inuitive – Total					
I read instruction manuals (for example, for VCRs) before using the device	0	1	2	3	4
I trust concrete facts instead of new, untested ideas	0	1	2	3	4
I prefer things presented in a step-by-step way	0	1	2	3	4
Concrete-Sequential – Total					

Part 4: How I Approach Tasks

My notes and other school materials are carefully organized	0	1	2	3	4
I write lists of everything I need to do each day	0	1	2	3	4
I enjoy a sense of structure in the classroom	0	1	2	3	4
Closure-oriented – Total					
I gather lots of information, and then I make last-minute decisions	0	1	2	3	4
I prefer fun or open activities rather than structured activities	0	1	2	3	4
My schedule is flexible for changes	0	1	2	3	4
Open – Total					

Part 5: How I Deal with Ideas

I can summarize information easily	0	1	2	3	4
I enjoy tasks where I have to pull together ideas to form one large idea	0	1	2	3	4
By looking at the whole situation, I can easily understand someone	0	1	2	3	4
Synthesizing – Total					
I prefer to focus on grammar rules	0	1	2	3	4
I enjoy activities where I have to compare or contrast two things	0	1	2	3	4
I'm good at solving complicated mysteries and puzzles	0	1	2	3	4
Analytic – Total					

Part 6: How I Deal with Input

It is easy for me to see the overall plan or big picture	0	1	2	3	4
I get the main idea, and that's enough for me	0	1	2	3	4
When I tell an old story, I tend to forget lots of specific details	0	1	2	3	4
Global – Total					
I need very specific examples in order to understand fully	0	1	2	3	4
I can easily break down big ideas into their smaller parts	0	1	2	3	4
I pay attention to specific facts or information	0	1	2	3	4
Particular – Total					

III LANGUAGE SKILLS AND ASSESSMENT