

PAPER

MOTIVATION AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

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Abstract

This study explores the intricate relationship between motivation and language learning strategies (LLS). Motivation is a key affective factor influencing language acquisition, while strategic behavior in learning enhances learners' autonomy and success. By reviewing empirical studies and theoretical frameworks, the paper investigates how different types of motivation affect the use and efficacy of learning strategies among language learners. Results suggest that high motivation, particularly intrinsic and integrative motivation, correlates positively with frequent and effective use of a variety of strategies.

Key words: motivation, language learning strategies, intrinsic motivation, integrative motivation, self-regulation, second language acquisition, learner autonomy.

Introduction

Language learning is a multifaceted process influenced by cognitive, affective, and social factors. Among these, motivation and language learning strategies (LLS) have received considerable attention due to their central roles in determining learner success [6]. Motivation drives the initiation and continuation of learning behavior, while strategies represent the methods learners use to facilitate understanding and retention. Understanding how motivation influences strategy use can offer valuable insights into improving teaching methods and learner outcomes.

Previous studies indicate that highly motivated learners tend to use more varied and effective strategies [4]. However, the nature of the motivation – whether integrative, instrumental, intrinsic, or extrinsic – also shapes strategic behavior differently [3]. This paper aims to explore these relationships through a review of literature and empirical data.

Methods

The study adopts a qualitative meta-analytical approach, synthesizing findings from peer-reviewed empirical studies and theoretical literature from 1990 to 2023. Databases such as ERIC,

JSTOR, and Google Scholar were used to select 25 key studies that examined the relationship between motivation and language learning strategies. Inclusion criteria included studies with clear definitions of motivational constructs and measurable strategy usage across various learner contexts.

Key theoretical frameworks utilized include Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (1985), Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (1985), and Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (1990), all of which provide the basis for analyzing motivation and LLS interaction.

Results

The review revealed a consistent positive correlation between learner motivation and the use of language learning strategies. Integratively motivated learners, who aim to connect with the target language community, often engage more deeply in metacognitive and cognitive strategies [3]. Intrinsically motivated learners—driven by interest and enjoyment—demonstrate frequent use of social and affective strategies [1].

For example, a study by Schmidt and Watanabe found that Japanese EFL students with high intrinsic motivation reported

significantly higher usage of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Similarly, Oxford and Nyikos found that integrative motivation was a stronger predictor of strategy use than instrumental motivation among American university students [7].

Furthermore, learners with higher motivational levels showed greater flexibility in switching strategies according to learning contexts. Conversely, extrinsically motivated learners often employed fewer and more rigid strategies, mainly focused on test preparation rather than language mastery.

Discussion

The findings underscore the importance of motivation as a facilitator of strategic learning behavior. Integrative and intrinsic motivations appear to promote deeper engagement with language, fostering self-regulation and autonomous learning strategies [2]. These learners are more likely to reflect on their learning process, set goals, monitor their progress, and seek opportunities for authentic communication. In contrast, instrumentally or extrinsically motivated learners may focus more narrowly on outcomes like grades or job prospects, which can lead to surface-level learning strategies. While such motivations are not inherently negative, they may not support long-term retention or communicative competence as effectively as intrinsic drivers.

Teachers and curriculum developers should therefore aim to cultivate learners' intrinsic motivation by providing meaningful, relevant, and enjoyable learning experiences. Integrating strategy training into instruction can also help students become more aware of effective learning behaviors and better regulate their own learning processes [6].

Conclusion

This study reaffirms that motivation plays a pivotal role in the use of language learning strategies. Learners with high levels of integrative and intrinsic motivation are more likely to employ a wider range of effective strategies, resulting in better language learning outcomes. Pedagogical practices should emphasize both the development of motivation and the explicit teaching of strategies to maximize language learning success.

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