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Self-Determination, Engagement, and Identity in Learning German

Some Directions in the Psychology of Language Learning Motivation

Abstract. Drawing from Self-Determination Theory and diverse theories of language learning moti-vation, we present a framework that (1) represents a range of orientations that students may take towards learning German, and (2) explains how these orientations are connected to language learning engagement and diverse linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes. We maintain that students who invest in learning because it is meaningful to them personally (that is, those who have a self-determined orientation) are more likely to actively engage with the language academically and with its associated community, and in turn they are more likely to become communicatively and culturally competent. We further claim that a self-determined orientation can be fostered in a social environment that is respon-sive to learners' need to be active, competent agents who have mutually satisfying relationships with others. We conclude with some alternative avenues of study that would complement the research done to date.

> *I would not rob you of your food or your clothes or your umbrella,*
> *but if I caught your German out, I would take it.*
> *But I don't study anymore, – I have given it up.*
> MARK TWAIN, *Letter to Bayard Taylor*

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1. Introduction

Learning another language can be an arduous, time-consuming process, that for even the linguistically astute like Twain, ultimately ends in frustrated abandonment. In contrast, others find the process thrilling, both for the stimulation provided by the language and the process of mastering it and/or because of the cultural opportunities that this communicative tool affords. Understanding these extreme motivational positions and the myriad of experiences between and developing ways for teachers and students to arrive at more successful outcomes has occupied researchers for many decades.

The purpose of this paper is to describe some of the contemporary research that facilitates the achievement of this goal, with a particular emphasis on one theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (DECI/RYAN 1985, 2011), which we think provides a particularly simple, useful, comprehensive tool for examining the socio-cultural and psychological dynamics involved in learning a new language. To this end, we outline the theory and present a model to represent a range of orientations that students may take towards learning a language. We argue that students who invest in learning because it is meaningful to them personally (that is, those who have a self-determined orientation) are more likely to actively engage with the language and its associated community and in turn they are more likely to become communicatively and culturally competent. We also claim that a self-determined orientation can be fostered in a social environment that is responsive to learners' need to be active, competent agents who have mutually satisfying relationships with others. Throughout this discussion, we exemplify these developments where possible with reference to scholarship on the learning of German as a heritage and as a foreign language.

2. The Self

Perhaps the most prominent theme in contemporary research on motivation in language learning is that of self and identity (CSIZÉR/MAGID 2014; DÖRNYEI/USHIODA 2009; MERCER 2011). This guiding concept was anticipated in early work on motivation, as many of the foundational scholars maintained that there was a close relation between the acquisition of a language and the acquisition of a culture, and particularly an ethnolinguistic identity (NOELS/GILES 2009). More specifically a person's identity as a member of an ethnolinguistic group and the perceived intergroup relations between one's own group and other groups could be at least as important for understanding social behavior as inter-individual differences in personality and the interpersonal dynamics of relationships with others from the same ethnolinguistic background, such as teachers and family members.

The Socio-Educational Model. Among the most influential social psychological frameworks for understanding language learning to derive from this school was Robert GARDNER's socio-educational model (GARDNER 2010). This model included the notion of an integrative orientation, defined as the desire to learn another language in order to

interact with and potentially identify with members of that language community. With considerable consistency, GARDNER and his colleagues' research shows that an integrative orientation and positive attitudes towards the target language (TL) community are associated with more positive attitudes towards language learning, greater motivational intensity, and proficiency (GARDNER 2010, for review). Early research with German language learners indicated that integrative reasons are commonly endorsed (BAUSENHART 1984; PROKOP 1974, 1975). For German heritage language (HL) learners, the belief that the language has instrumental purposes in daily life complements the integrative orientation (BAUSENHART 1971). In a similar vein, NOELS and CLÉMENT (1989) found that an identity/influence orientation differentiated heritage from foreign language learners of German. That is to say that HL learners expressed a greater desire to identify with and make friends with German-speaking Canadians; participate in, contribute to, and have an influence over the German community; and they wished to pursue in a career in which German figured prominently. These orientations were associated with the intensity of effort that the student put into learning German, which in turn was linked with achievement in the German course.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT). In recent years, the conceptualization of the self's role in language learning has been informed by other theories from diverse areas of psychology and sociology (DÖRNYEI/USHIODA 2009; MERCER 2011; CSIZER/MAGID 2014 for overviews). One theoretical framework that we find useful, SDT (DECI/RYAN 1985: 2011), derives from humanistic psychology and its more recent incarnation in positive psychology (SELIGMAN/CSIKSZENTMIHALYI 2014). A central assumption of humanism is that human beings have the potential to flourish while living full, authentic lives provided that certain innate psychological needs are satisfied. According to SDT, these include (1) the need for competence, which refers to the sense that one can effectively engage with the physical and social environment and meet challenges it poses; (2) the need for relatedness, that is, caring about and feel cared for by significant others; and (3) the need for autonomy, or a sense of volitional agency and psychological freedom when carrying out an activity.

The fulfillment of these needs is postulated to be relevant to two forms of motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to engagement in an activity because the person finds the activity to be inherently stimulating and enjoyable and it contributes to a sense of mastery. Of course, not all people feel such a passion for language, but nonetheless must pursue an advanced level of proficiency in another language for other reasons. Distinct from an intrinsic interest in the activity is the realm of extrinsic motivation, which represents a range of more or less self-determined reasons, that is, reasons relating to control by people or circumstances outside of the person versus reasons that reflect the person's voluntary choice to engage in something that is personally meaningful. At the least self-determined extreme, some people engage in language study because situational pressures or enticements require it, such as a course requirement or a parental decision (termed "external regulation"). At the most self-determined extreme, people do it because it is an integral part of who they are, and engaging in the activity is an expression of their sense of self (termed "integrated regulation"). Between

these two extremes lies a continuum of self-determination, along which we can differentiate at least two other forms of regulation, including motivated actions based on a sense of obligation (termed "introjected regulation") and those sustained by the belief that the activity helps the person to achieve a goal that s/he has identified as being personally meaningful (termed "identified regulation").

The forms of regulation outlined by SDT can usefully describe and differentiate the motivational orientations of subgroups of German language learners. Research comparing heritage and non-heritage learners of German shows that both heritage and non-heritage learners strongly endorse the position that they are learning German because they found it inherently interesting and enjoyable and to a somewhat lesser extent because of external pressures, such as meeting a course requirement (NOELS 2005). Although both groups indicated they were learning the language because it was personally meaningful, the HL learners more strongly endorsed this orientation. This finding that German was more internalized into the HL learners' self-concept was corroborated by the fact that they also indicated stronger German identification and integrative orientation. These orientations were also related to stronger feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness, which in turn were associated with perceptions of teachers and family members supporting these three needs in learners (NOELS/STEPHAN/SAUMURE 2007).

3. Engagement, Resilience and Positive Psychology

Whereas much of the foregoing discussion focused on the reasons why learners desire communicative competence in another language, an equally important question is how students go about the process of achieving that goal. Certainly these two questions are linked; as noted above, the reasons for learning the language orient the learners' perspective on the process in ways that may or may not facilitate the achievement of that end. In educational psychology, there has been a good deal of interest in the notion of engagement as a framework for articulating the diverse affective, cognitive and behavioural processes that predict success in an academic program. In a general sense, engagement is the glue or the mediator that, combined with need satisfaction and motivational orientations, connects the dynamics of the social context and outcomes of interest (RESCHLY/CHRISTENSON 2012).

Although there is debate about the nature and number of types of engagement, there is a consensus that engagement includes multiple dimensions. As a starting point, we maintain that, with regards to language learning, we can differentiate at least two domains, including (1) academic engagement pertaining to learning and using the language in the classroom and (2) community engagement pertaining to learning and using the language in the TL community (i.e., outside the classroom; NOELS 2001). Of course, this distinction is not hard and fast: for example, teachers can represent the TL community in the classroom, and the TL community could include classmates. As well, other domains merit attention, such as family members for HL students. What is

important is that language education is situated within at least two systems, including educational and ethnolinguistic communities and institutions, although the relative importance of these (and their interaction) will depend on the particular learning context.

With this distinction in mind, we take REEVE's (2013) conceptualization of engagement (which was articulated with reference to academic engagement), which differentiates four distinct but intercorrelated aspects: (1) behavioural engagement, which involves attention, effort and persistence in school-related activities; (2) emotional engagement, which includes positive and negative affect directed towards the language and related aspects (which is very similar to GARDNER's (2010) notion of positive attitudes towards the learning situation); (3) cognitive engagement, which includes adopting self-regulated learning strategies in one's own learning, applying what is learned to one's personal experiences, etc; (4) agentic engagement (which distinguishes REEVE's model from another influential model posited by SKINNER et al. 2009) which refers to intentional, active positive contributions to the learning process rather than just passively receiving and reacting to instruction. In other words, this component highlights the energized, agentic involvement in the process that might be critical for sustained success.

As articulated in the heuristic model presented in Figure 1, engagement is the action component of motivation that mediates between the self (defined in terms of need satisfaction and self-determined orientation to the activity), on the one hand, and linguistic and sociocultural outcomes[1], on the other hand (NOELS 2001, 2009). This motivational process is supported (or not) by the perceived responsiveness of the interpersonal context to the person's psychological needs. The full motivational process is shaped by the socio-structural context within which learning takes place (including the opportunity for contact with a specific TL group and the relative status of the ethnolinguistic groups) as well as the socio-cultural dynamics that mutually constitute interpersonal relations, need fulfilment, orientations, engagement and outcomes. Students' basic psychological needs (i.e. autonomy, competence and relatedness) may be more or less met by the interpersonal dynamics in the educational system (e.g., teachers and classmates) and, depending on the context, family members (especially in the case of HL learners) and members of the TL community in the case of those who have such an opportunity for interaction.[2] In turn, the degree of need satisfaction influences students' orientation and engagement in language learning. Engagement is posited to be the most proximal

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[1]   "Outcomes" is a widely used but unfortunate term because it implies that these linguistic and non-linguistic sociocultural phenomena are static end-points rather than being multiply determined, changeable processes that have reciprocal influences on other aspects of this model. Thus the term "outcomes" is used only to expediently describe these phenomena as captured by this "snapshot" of an interactive, dynamic process.

[2]   In many multicultural contexts, there exist many opportunities for social interaction with members of other ethnolinguistic groups. However, in foreign language contexts such opportunities may be rare or the TL community may be ill-defined (e.g., English as a foreign language). In such cases, interpersonal interactions with TL speakers would be expected to have an impact on motivational processes to the extent that native or non-native speakers are available.

predictor of academic (and in the language course, primarily linguistic) and sociocultural outcomes. Reciprocal relations are plausible, such that engagement not only influences outcomes, but engagement and outcomes (e.g., eventual proficiency, etc.) could also influence, for example, the way that significant others interact with students (and hence students' perceptions of the significant others). As well, engagement and outcomes could have an impact on the learners' self-perceptions and orientations.

In an initial study of engagement in the language classroom, we measured engagement according to REEVE's (2012) four-part typology (DINCER 2014). As hypothesised, students who perceived their language instructors as having an autonomy-supportive teaching style also reported greater autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their language course. Satisfaction of these basic psychological needs mediated the relation between the students' perceptions of their teacher and all four types of classroom engagement (i.e., behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and agentic), and was an especially strong predictor of emotional and agentic engagement. In addition, L2 achievement was predicted by both emotional and agentic engagement, and cognitive engagement predicted absenteeism. Engaged language learners reported more positive feelings about the course, displayed high rates of satisfaction, and achieved more positive outcomes when they were educated in autonomy-supportive language classrooms. Taken together, these results suggest that a language learner who experiences himself as an agent in his learning would be a successful language learner.
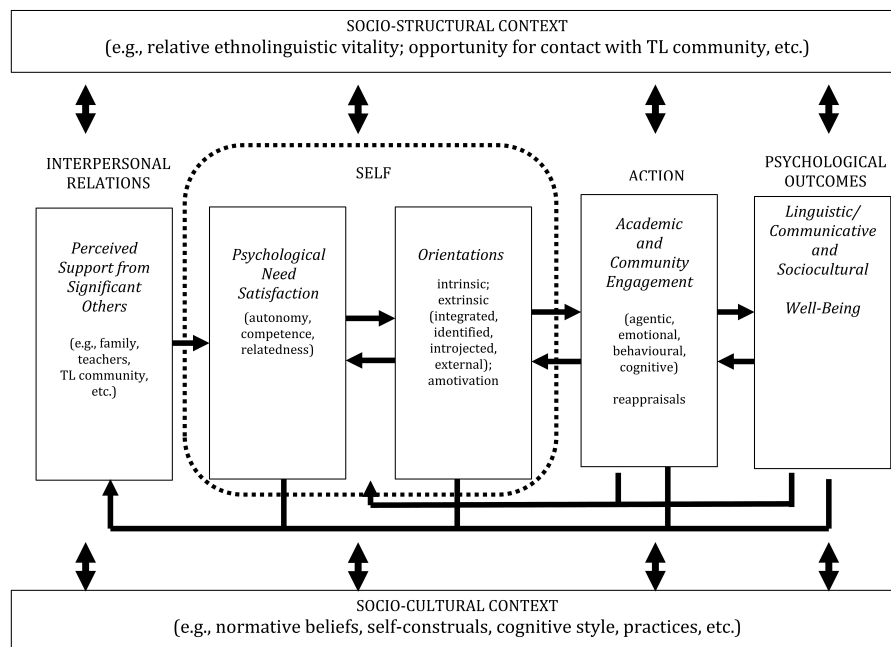

Fig. 1: Heuristic model of the motivational process (adapted from NOELS 2001)

Engaging with the language is not the only strategy students can use to enjoy and stay motivated in their language courses. In addition to orienting outwards and engaging with the course agentically, students can also turn inwards and manage their own attitudes in order to increase their positive feelings towards the language class. One strategy for managing these attitudes is positive reappraisals, which involves efforts to look on the bright side and try to find meaning in language learning difficulties. According to CHAFFEE, NOELS and SUGITA MCEOWN (2014), positive reappraisals are a strategy students may use to feel agentic, increasing their feelings autonomy, competence, and relatedness without endeavoring to change anything about their class or their teacher. An agentically engaged student exercises agency by acting on and influencing the learning environment, contributing to the classroom and asking the teacher to accommodate his or her needs. Students who positively reappraise the situation are also exercising agency, but they are influencing their own attitudes and feelings towards the learning environment rather than the environment itself. Although there may be individual differences in the chronic tendency to use either of these engagement strategies, resilient learners likely use both strategies in situationally appropriate ways.

One reason to explore more internally-focused methods by which student engagement and motivation can be fostered is that students may not always have opportunities to exercise agentic engagement, as might happen in settings where institutions or instructors are particularly demanding. In such situations, it may be especially important to exercise control over one's own attitudes and interpretations of the learning environment. In a study of the interaction between students' positive reappraisals and their perception of their instructor as either autonomy supportive or controlling, we found that although positive reappraisals tended to benefit all students, reappraising was especially helpful for students who saw their instructor as relatively controlling (ibid.). Specifically, students who did not reappraise had high language class anxiety and low energy towards their studies when their teacher was controlling, but not when the teacher was autonomy supportive. In contrast, students high in positive reappraisals had moderately low anxiety and high energy regardless of their perception of the teacher.

Self-determination, agentic engagement and the resilience associated with positive reappraisals are only a few of the affirmative aspects associated with motivation that researchers interested in positive psychology have introduced to the field of language learning (MACINTYRE/MERCER 2014; MACINTYRE/GREGERSEN/MERCER 2016). A growing number of researchers have become interested in how positive character traits, emotions and institutions contribute to and in turn are affected by persons who come to flourish in their daily lives (SELIGMAN/CZIKZENTMIHALYI 2014). Such aspects are postulated to affect students by broadening the way a person experiences and adapts to the world and also by helping the person to establish the social and human capital necessary to thrive in the world (FREDRICKSON 2001). The evidence-based scholarship in this relatively nascent area emphasizes how constructs that are related to human flourishing, including mindfulness, hope, curiosity, passion, empathy, hardiness, flow, and gratitude, can foster positive experiences and ends, and suggests how teaching practice

can address these aspects, often by incorporating techniques that emphasize physical exercises, music, laughter, and so on.

4. Returning to the Self and Identity

The constructs studied by positive psychologists are only some potential ramifications of language education that go beyond linguistic proficiency. As noted earlier, since language learning can take place in the social world outside the classroom, issues such as willingness to communicate, language use, and identification with other ethnolinguistic groups, are also important dynamics to consider. In our discussion thus far, self and identity processes have been presented as important for orienting motivational processes that lead to the development of linguistic proficiency. But engaging in the process of learning and using another language can also affect a persons' sense of self and identity. Identities are constructed through socio-communicative processes, such that when we acquire new language and communication capabilities, we acquire new tools to accomplish many socio-cognitive tasks, including the negotiation of new identities.

Because ethnolinguistic identity is a relational construct, to understand a person's ethnolinguistic identity we must consider their feelings of belonging to at least two reference groups, including the ancestral group and any other relevant reference group(s), which in the case of minority ethnolinguistic groups is often the majority group. These feelings depend upon aspect of the interpersonal interaction, and thus, they are situationally variable (CLÉMENT/NOELS 1992; NOELS/CLÉMENT 2015). Drawing from communication accommodation theory (GILES/OGAY 2006) that highlights the proclivity of interlocutors to attune their speech usually in a complementary fashion (although contrastive identities may be evident under conditions of threat), we maintain that people tend to align their speech and identities with the people they encounter across different social situations. Since language learners are likely to have interactions with the TL community in the school (e.g., teachers) and possibly other more public contexts (especially where the vitality of the TL community is substantial), we might expect identification with that group to be strongest in those domains. However, for HL learners, who have a familial connection to the language, their identity with that group would likely be higher in family context.

To examine this possibility, we reanalyzed data from NOELS' (2005, also 2013a) study of HL and non-HL learners of German to understand German learners' situated ethnolinguistic identity. These research participants were presented with examples of everyday situations representing social interactions with family members, close friends, and people in the university and general community domains. For each situation, participants indicated on scales from 1 to 5 how much contact they had with German speakers, how often they used German, and their identification as a German and as an English speaker. Both groups had more contact and language use with Germans in the school situation than with friends and in community, and the groups were equivalent across these domains. They differed however, in that the HL students had more contact

with Germans in the family domain. Consistent with the non-HL learners' patterns of German contact and use, although English identity was consistently high and much stronger than German identity across all situations, non-HL learners indicated a stronger German identity at university and among friends (some of whom might be assumed to be students in their German classes) than in the other domains. The HL learners showed a different profile. Although their English identity was stronger than German across all situations, German identity was strongest in the family domain, followed by the university and friendship domains, and weakest in the recreational work and community domains. In a complementary manner, English identity was weak in the family domain relative to other situational domains, although this difference from other domains was statistically significant only in comparison with the work and community domains. Thus, when HL learners interact with family members, including those of German descent, German identity is relatively strong, and approaches equivalence with English identity. Although weaker than in the family domain, German identity is relatively strong at school and with friends where there is more opportunity for interactions with German speakers. Again, the patterns of situated identity reflect the opportunities for German use and sociocultural engagement.

These results stress that learners' identities are more nuanced than global assessments might suggest. A situated perspective suggests that although there is some evidence of assimilation of the HL learners to the majority society in public domains, this is not necessarily the case in private domains. In public domains, where there is more contact with Anglophones, it might be functional to use English and identify with the broader society, but the same is true about German in private domains. An important implication of this situated analysis is that one strategy for maintaining German language and culture is to purposely create situations to shelter the HL from the acculturative pressures of the mainstream society, such as community centers and German school programs. It is also important to further explore how learners integrate their languages and identities in ways that reflect greater willingness or reluctance to identify with the language community (DRESSLER 2010, 2014).

5.   Some New Research Directions

There are many possible avenues for future motivation research, but we selected three areas because they represent different components of the model presented in Figure 1, as well as different levels of analysis of motivational processes (DOISE 1986; NOELS 2001). These include (1) the level of the individual, specifically beliefs about language aptitude and their implications for goal-setting, emotional and behavioural reactions to challenges, engagement, and continuance; (2) the level of interpersonal relations, specifically the teacher-student relationships and how to best foster positive experiences and successful outcomes for all members of the class; and (3) the level of societal and cultural dynamics, particularly how (a) power differentials between ethnolinguistic groups and opportunities for face-to-face and mediated social interaction, and (b) cul-

turally shared values, beliefs, norms, practices offer affordances and constraints on language learning and language use.

Language Mindsets. Although motivation research has largely been anchored on the notion of the self in its sociocultural context, other psychological aspects also have important implications for learners' engagement and persistence, their experience during the learning process, and the outcomes they achieve (MERCER/RYAN/WILLIAMS 2012). One emerging line of research focuses specifically on beliefs about language intelligence or aptitude (MERCER/RYAN 2010; NOELS/LOU 2015). Following DWECK's (2012) notion of mindsets, LOU and NOELS (2016a) suggest that people's beliefs about whether language intelligence is changeable predict their motivation and achievement within and outside the language classroom. Beliefs about general language intelligence, L2 aptitude, and age sensitivity in language learning can be grouped into two separate but related constructs reflecting entity and incremental language mindsets. An incremental mindset refers to the belief that language aptitude is malleable and can potentially be improved. It is linked to positive beliefs about effort expenditure (e.g., "effort can increase my language ability"), and greater intention to continue language study. It is also associated with learning goals (i.e., goals that focus on the learning process and improving competence), which in turn predicts more mastery and less anxious responses in failure situations. In contrast, an entity mindset refers to the belief that language aptitude is unchangeable, and it is linked to negative beliefs about effort (e.g., "no matter how hard I try I will never be fluent"), a stronger intention to give up, lower learning goals, fear of failure, and anxiety in failure situations. Moreover, learners with a strong entity mindset who perceived themselves as being very competent in the language set goals that focused on demonstrating their ability to themselves and others.

Although individuals can have chronic, consistent tendencies in their beliefs about language aptitude (including the belief that both mindsets are tenable), these mindsets can be influenced by the social context and hence are situationally dynamic. Using mock magazine articles to prime language learners with either an entity or an incremental mindset, LOU and NOELS (2016b) found that both language mindsets are readily accessible and either one can be reinforced depending on the article the student read. Similar to patterns found in the correlational study described above, learners primed with an incremental mindset set more learning goals compared to those primed with an entity mindset, and in turn they responded more positively to "failure" situations, such as being overlooked because their language skills were inadequate or doing poorly on a class activity. These experimental findings suggest that language mindsets have a causal impact on reactions in challenging situations because they influence the kind of goals people set which in turn elicits those reactions.

Beliefs about language and L2 learning are distinct from L2 self-concepts, but these two schemas may well influence one another. For instance, studies in other domains suggest that mindsets are related to patterns of self-determined motivation (GOOD/RATTAN/DWECK 2012). Entity theorists, who attribute ability and success to uncontrollable (usually biological) factors, feel less able to manage the development of their competence and less confident about improvement, and feel less belongingness

and relatedness to their class than do incremental theorists (ibid.). Correspondingly, entity theorists show less intrinsic motivation, are more likely to give up, and have lower grades compared to students who think intelligence is malleable (DWECK 2012). Based on this evidence, it is possible that promoting incremental beliefs in the learning environment can help learners to establish self-determined motivation in a language classroom (MCINTOSH 2000).

Not only do mindsets predict resilience in the language course and course outcomes, mindsets could also affect learners' willingness to communicate with members of the TL community. As well, such beliefs might influence how willing members of the TL community are to support novice speakers: if it is believed that language competence cannot change, they may be less willing to engage with newcomers (such as immigrants) and support programs and policies for language training (LOU/NOELS 2015). In addition to examining the implications of mindsets inside and outside the classroom, research might integrate the relatively separate literatures on motivation and language aptitude, two constructs that hitherto have been considered to have independent effects on linguistic proficiency and communicative competence (GARDNER 2010). And in line with the above discussion concerning motivation and teaching, intervention studies could specify how teachers can enhance students' motivation through training, lectures, and other types of formal programs, but also through the type and manner of feedback they give to learners in daily interactions (YEAGER/DWECK 2012).

Student-Teacher Relationships and Motivational Teaching Practice. With the reorientation of the research agenda in the 2000s that incorporated other areas of psychology and sociology, more attention was directed to whether and how teachers could foster their students' motivation (for an overview, NOELS 2015). In one of the earliest research programs on this topic, DÖRNYEI (1994) developed a list of motivational strategies for teachers based on a synthesis of theoretical work, personal experience, and a "semi-formal survey" of teachers and pre-service teachers, and this list was further validated through surveys of Hungarian and Chinese EFL instructors, resulting in "10 commandments of language teaching" (DÖRNYEI/CSIZÉR 1998) and a book outlining over 100 motivational techniques that teachers could use (DÖRNYEI 2001).

This teaching strategy framework was tested in a large-scale study in which researchers observed teacher-student interactions in language classes and assessed the teachers' motivating strategies and the students' behavior (GUILLOTEAUX/DÖRNYEI 2008). A composite of all the teachers' practices correlated with the students' behavioural engagement and their self-reports of motivation and self-confidence. Because of the dynamic nature of learning, DÖRNYEI and CSIZÉR (1998) emphasize that no single strategy would ever have "absolute and general value", and the teacher must take into consideration the learner, the situation, the class dynamics, the stage in the learning process, among a myriad of other factors.

The difficulty in finding a correspondence between what teachers think they do and students' perceptions has been underlined by several studies that have found few reliable relations (e.g., SUGITA/TAKEUCHI 2010, 2012). In one such study, BERNAUS and GARDNER (2008) asked teachers to describe the instructional strategies they use and

asked students to assess the frequency with which their teachers used those strategies. Although there was correspondence over 50% of the time, only the students' perception of the strategy, not the teachers' reported strategy use, predicted student's self-reported motivation. The researchers concluded that teachers should ensure their students know what teaching strategies they are using; if students believe that their teacher uses a variety of teaching strategies, then they are likely to report feeling more motivated.

The finding that composite measures of teachers' strategies better and more consistently predict student motivation than individual indices suggests that there is no magic bullet for motivating students; how teachers affect students' engagement might better be conceived of in terms of a gestalt-like impression rather than as the summation of a number of specific strategies. As such, the teachers' autonomy-supportive orientation may be conveyed as much by nonverbal and paralinguistic actions, such as facial expression, body movement, and tone of voice, as by any specific "motivational strategy". Through the manner in which they address their students, teachers can convey a caring belief in the learner's capacity to act competently and autonomously, even when faced with performing the inevitable mundane, boring tasks that can arise during a language course. This attention to communicative exchanges emphasizes that it is how the learner interprets a teacher's (and others') communication and teaching practice as supporting his/her autonomy, competence and relatedness that it is important for whether or not the learner is likely to engage in learning. In other words, it is the "functional significance" that the learner gives to the teacher's actions that matters (WILD/ENZLE 2002).

Future research requires continued observational investigations of teacher-student interactions in the classroom, but must be sure to include self-reports of students' and teachers' interpretation of those interactions in order to understand how those acts affect students' motivation. Individual and group-level analyses are needed to capture the variations across individuals, classes, and institutions, and these designs could be complemented by longitudinal designs to examine these dynamics as learners and teachers mature and relationships evolve. Since most educational research acknowledges transactional relationships between students and teachers, it would be useful to learn more about teachers' motivation and how it relates to students' in a reciprocal fashion (NOELS 2015).

The Societal and Cultural Context. Another avenue for future research is continued examination of how the social world outside the classroom is intertwined with motivational processes (NOELS 2014; SUGITA MCEOWN/NOELS/CHAFFEE 2014). An early and astute observation made by LAMBERT (1974) is that the language learning experience and outcomes can be dramatically different for members of majority versus minority ethnolinguistic groups. In his discussion of additive and subtractive bilingualism, LAMBERT (ibid.) suggests that the addition of another language and culture would have little impact on the heritage language and culture for people from relatively high vitality (or majority) groups, but it would undermine that of people from relatively low vitality groups. In such models, the network of socio-communicative contacts plays an important meditational role between the features of the society and those of the indi-

vidual learners. Hence, parents, teachers and members of the TL community are all significant reference points for students' own attitudes towards language learning and the language community and they provide immediate opportunities for using the language to exchange information and negotiate their physical and psychological needs. The relative status and ethnolinguistic vitality of ethnolinguistic groups is an important component of many models of language learning (e.g., CLÉMENT 1980; LANDRY/ ALLARD/DEVEAU 2013)

Not only do the socio-structural characteristics of group dynamics affect opportunities (or not) for language learning and use, social groups' cultural dynamics can also infuse motivational dynamics (GUAY 2016; MARKUS/KITAYAMA 1991). There are many definitions for culture; we define culture as the "shared" or intersubjective systems of meaning that are co-constructed by interlocutors (and hence mutually comprehensible) and become the conventions and mores that are more or less distributed among members of a social network (NOELS et al. 2014 for an extended discussion of culture and language learning). To date there has been little work on culture and its relation to language learning motivation, even though it would seem to be important given language learning is an inherently intercultural phenomenon and the topic is of international interest. Several scholars have argued that construals of autonomy might vary across cultures (NOELS 2013b; NOELS et al. 2014) and also the extent to which obligations towards others are perceived as undermining autonomy. For instance, the Chinese heritage learners in COMANARU and NOELS' (2009) study endorsed introjected regulation to a greater extent than did the German heritage learners in NOELS (2005) study, possibly because of cultural differences in the value of expressing independence from significant others. Cross-cultural comparisons provide a strong test of the validity of humanist tenets that autonomy, competence and relatedness are indeed universal and may point the way to post-humanist frameworks for understanding motivation.

In several respects, the German language offers interesting possibilities for this kind of comparative research that seeks to understand how socio-structural and socio-cultural dynamics are linked to motivation. German has long been of broad appeal to people from non-German countries because of Germany's international reputation in science and technology, philosophy and literature, music, sports and other areas; many feel that knowing this "foreign" language can facilitate their education, careers and hobbies in these areas (GOETHE INSTITUT 2016[3]). Germanophone regions are also appealing destinations for many tourists, international students, and other sojourners, with Germany ranking as the seventh most visited country in the world (UNWTO 2015). Recent global events have made Germany a home for large numbers of foreign workers, immigrants, and refugees. These people must learn German as a "second" language in order to function in German society. And around the world, the offspring of the German diaspora during the 20th centuries aspire to learn their HL to enhance their relationships with family members and participate more fully in their cultural traditions and in contemporary German society. Thus, comparative studies of German foreign,

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[3]   http://www.goethe.de/lrn/prj/zgd/en867247.htm (1st May, 2016)

second and HL learners could help us to better understand how contextual factors, such as the relative status of the language groups, the opportunities for contact with members of the German community across more or less intimate situations (e.g., with family members vs. unrelated community members), and cultural values, norms, and practices play into the experience of learning the language.

6. Conclusion

The field of language learning has undergone considerable growth since the beginning of the new millennium (SUGITA MCEOWN/NOELS/CHAFFEE 2014, BOO/DÖRNYEI/RYAN 2015). By drawing from a variety of theories and developing new theories appropriate to the language learning domain, scholars are learning more about motivational processes in terms of the dynamics within the individual, the interpersonal relations within and outside the classroom, and within and between ethnolinguistic groups in the broader society. We have not had the space to address all of the many new contributions, but have instead focused on what SDT offers for understanding the motivation of language learners, and particularly learners of German. Had we more space, we would further discuss the important shift to look at language learning as a process of development, and how motivation research would benefit from adopting the temporal perspective afforded by developmental approaches and methods, including the complex, dynamic systems paradigm (DÖRNYEI/HENRY/MACINTYRE 2014; LARSEN-FREEMAN/CAMERON 2008). Such a perspective would help us to better understand how intrinsic motivation and engagement vary over time, in relation with other psychological and contextual factors (BUSSE 2013; BUSSE/WALTER 2013). We maintain that SDT provides a useful tool for framing motivation, but are eager to complement this perspective with alternative, complementary perspectives and to challenge the theory's assumptions with contrasting perspectives. Through such discussion, we hope that language learning experiences such as Mark Twain describes, might resonate less widely with language learners and teachers.

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