Review of *Innovations and Challenges in Language Learning Motivation*

Seher Balbay [a] *

[a] Middle East Technical University (METU), Ankara 06810, Turkey

Abstract

Innovations and Challenges in Language Learning Motivation, Zoltán Dörnyei. Routledge, NY/ USA (2020). 186 pp., Paperback: $34.99, ISBN:978-1-138-59916-1

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Keywords: motivation, L2 learning motivation, SLA motivation research.

Innovations and Challenges in Language Learning Motivation falls into our laps at a moment of "new normalcy" seemingly unprecedented in living memory. Being the perspectives of a leading psycholinguist and expert in motivation studies, Dörnyei's timely guidance helps us to embrace both the conscious and subconscious aspects of motivation as we grapple to sustain learning in unfamiliar ways.

Dörnyei wastes no time taking us to the heart of the matter in the first chapter of the book: whether motivation is an inborn, genetically coded trait or a psychological state that can be tuned or adjusted. Starting with the first extensive personality trait study, we are seamlessly introduced to McAdam's 'Big Five' categorization of personality traits as Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion-Introversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism-Emotional Stability. With ease he gets us to consider the world of variety that comes into play as our life stories evolve and are re-told differently as our perceptions change over time. Irresistibly we are drawn to find that elusive mediating link between our past experiences, the present state of things and future aspirations, our personal narrative. Dörnyei uses this moment to bring us to the challenge; listening to how people describe their circumstances, their context and its demands, how these have changed and impacted their motivation. At this point in the book, we more readily appreciate how to seek out the integrative narrative and

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* Corresponding author.
   E-mail address: seherb@metu.edu.tr

arrive at coherent explanations of success and failure because the importance of personal narratives was emphasized by Dörnyei in the first chapter.

Yet, there is more; thinking of motivation as a stable construct may be helpful but falls short, as Ushioda (1996) found, of explaining how our experiences can change even over one class hour. In Chapter 1, Dörnyei refers to Ushioda's findings to illustrate the importance of conceptualizing motivation in learning as a process-oriented dynamic. Having clearly stated that individuals are influenced by external factors, Dörnyei also clarifies that motivation studies reveal that the agency of individuals bears importance in that they have a mutual relationship with the context they are situated in, that is to say they have a dynamic interaction with their background, history, identity, goals and motives just as they do with social relations, activities and contexts as well, which apparently agrees with the complex dynamic systems approach.

Dörnyei then continues by introducing the Rubicon Method which simply shows how a learner copes with a task in terms of their preactional, actional and postactional motivations, and Contingent path theory which is predicated on the idea that motivation rises with the number of steps toward a goal but time spent has a converse effect, that is "the anticipated time spent on the path has a negative effect" on motivation (Dörnyei, 2020, p. 12). In the first chapter of the book, Dörnyei also warns of the difficulty of distinguishing motivation from affect and cognition believing them intricately intertwined. Motivation, he suggests, "remains personally discernable", and goes on to state that as the neurobiological distinction between 'wanting' and 'liking' is clear, motivational mechanisms are distinct in the brain (Dörnyei, 2020, p. 14). He then extends us an invitation to consider conscious versus unconscious motivation; conscious motivation, usually referring to the motives that human beings claim to be aware of, and and unconscious motivation referring to reasons behind our motivation that "we cannot fully explain" (Dörnyei, 2020, p. 16).

The second chapter focuses on the static nature of motivation, its dependence on outside factors, the learners' environment, attitudes towards L2 in the L1 language community, "sociocultural norms, intergroup relations and acculturation/ assimilation processes" which overrides one's individual characteristics since recent SLA research concluded that individual dispositions can be context-bound (Dörnyei, 2020, p. 21). Dörnyei exemplifies the significance of cultural expectations by citing research conducted by King and McInerney (2014) in which Anglophone children needed autonomy to be motivated whereas Asian children needed authority. He then summarizes the useful frameworks that propose different paths we can take to understand the contextual influences on language learning in particular. Dörnyei, later refers to the shift in the determinant of motivational research from more individual dependent factors such as the need to belong, to more a social motivation which involved interactions.

The next innovation mentioned in Chapter 2, the rise of qualitative research, is about the changing methodology of language learning motivation research. Dörnyei

states that quantitative studies would separate the individual from their context. Complex motivational processes arise from a person's reflexivity and agency and are intricately intertwined with how they interpret environmental factors. Hence, research that is grounded in qualitative data was deemed to be more reliable. Is motivation a trait or a state? Are there unconscious motives involved? Does the context matter? Which time interval do we study and for how long to reach reliable data? Do different goals that are reached simultaneously (goal convergence) affect motivation? Do prioritizing certain goals to others matter? Do we compensate some goals for others? Are some goals detrimental for others? Dörnyei believes in the remedy of a phenomenological approach, that a deep interview analysis of the right questions would reveal the salient role of the context in agency (as cited in Dörnyei, 2020, p. 45).

Still in the second chapter the book then mentions Gardner's Fusion of Personality and Social Psychology which illustrates the importance of contextual factors and the social aspects of motivation. Here, L2 learning helps build a change in one's self image by helping us to adopt new cultural behaviors. When merging the individualistic paradigm with the social one, we see how Gardner parses the attitude of the learner into how they regard the L2 community, the L2 learning situation and the actual L2 language they are learning.

The third chapter in the book dwells on the relation of motivation research to SLA, developing techniques that work for language learners, and measuring motivation. Following a review of articles published on motivation in SLA, hardly any study focused on the internal aspects of L2 learning, although the processes of language learning are directly relevant to motivational factors. Hence, chapter 3 dwells on the focus of SLA in motivation studies, 'task motivation'.

While Dörnyei mentions that a focused approach that narrows the research question is required, he also points out that motivation can enhance attention and mentions work on neuroimaging which studies the relationship between motivation and the cognitive process of noticing something. Some other research concentrates on task-specific motivation, but Dörnyei states that such motivation is dependent on a number of cognitive and emotional factors which should also be considered, L2 level and personality and context-related factors, such as the teacher, learner group composition, distractions and disturbances.

Students' engagement is a challenge in motivation research as well. How can teachers turn the learning task into a rewarding activity for the student? In Chapter 3, Dörnyei also shows us how motivation research can be applied in the classroom; "Creating the basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation, encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation" (Dörnyei, 2020, p. 56). He emphasizes that L2 learners are easily distracted in class and that even with the required communicative competence and L2 learner may not be willing to communicate for various reasons. Hence, Dörnyei states that engagement refers to both the motive and the action that results thanks to the

motive. Thus, the school context, course content, learning tasks, peers and the teacher play major roles in the motivation of L2 learners.

The third chapter also mentions strong evidence to support the idea that technology has motivational effects especially in the younger generation. Computer assisted language learning (CALL) has been known to affect student motivation positively, yet today online media creation lends itself to more that CALL provides, such as self expression and authenticity. Also, Dörnyei refers to the ease of tracking student progress via computer integration into L2 teaching as another asset. However, technology in SLA can be the cause of reluctance or distraction as well. Dörnyei also mentions that the invasion of the language teacher into the private territory of the students' digital world might be demotivating and cause resistance.

The following challenge in Chapter 3 that Dörnyei presents is the difficulty of measuring a concept of dynamic nature, motivation. When cross-sectional research designs and other quantitative approaches did not suffice in the exploration of a non-linear and adaptive nature of motivation, researchers sought remedy in conducting qualitative, longitudinal and intervention studies, as mentioned earlier in the book in Chapter 2.

Mixed method studies are also emphasized by Dörnyei as a valid medium to collect data in motivation research. Questionnaires accompanied by interviews have become the most common data collection tools recently. He adds that a "backward search" which refers to using retrodictive tools that seek to collect data on the reasons why motivational changes occurred are used frequently in motivation research. Dörnyei concludes Chapter 3 by expressing that as motivation involves operations in the affective and cognitive domain the mission of the motivation researcher is to identify predictive salient attractors that interest people.

The fourth chapter describes research into unconscious motivation, a shift after many years of research conducted on conscious motivation, which is a controversial topic since there is no consensus among researchers as to whether conscious or unconscious motives drive human behavior even though we possess a very limited conscious mind. Dörnyei suggests our neural system retrieves data stored in our unconscious memory in ways similar to a digital computer memory which can retrieve precise information when needed. While research on unconscious motivation dwells on human agency, the capacity of people to act independently by making one's own choices is clear. The chapter continues by giving a historical overview of studies conducted on the unconscious mind dating back to Freud's work on repressed motives and behaviorists who focused on the role of reinforcing behaviors with stimulus and disregarding unobservable mental processes.

One can easily find traces of the excitement he has towards research in motivation in his language in the fifth chapter of his book where he focuses on the role of vision on motivation in relation to psychology, sports and business studies, and discusses vision-based motivational effects in the process of acquiring L2. In this chapter,

Dörnyei also addresses unresolved issues on motivation about context and culture dependent variations.

In Chapter 6, Dörnyei outlines a framework of factors for long-term motivation: Self initiated vision works both in initiation motivation and providing it through the journey at times of need, behavioral routines play a significant role in conserving motivation, and "sub-goals, progress checks, positive feedback, social support" are factors that help maintain motivation. Positive emotionality, strategic self-control and resilience foster long-term motivation consciously.

The book speaks to a range of audiences, including undergraduate students and practicing teachers. With its wide scope in motivation studies, the book definitely helps build a bridge between theory and practice, hence it would serve the needs of not only graduate students in Psychology of Language Learning or Developmental Psychology students, Applied Linguistics, English as a second language language teacher training programs but also other field-related academic community to generate discussion on the psychological foundations of language learning concerning motivation. The topic of motivation, vision building, have not only been an interest area for language teachers, but it has been mainly the topic of psychology, yet, apparently, studies in applied linguistics and psycholinguistics focusing on this multifaceted concept, motivation, are here to stay. Yet as second and foreign languages gain even more importance in our globalized world where most of us are trying to become citizens of the world, motivation research in SLA will gain even more importance. Overall the book is perspective-changing in that it is an overview of various different approaches to research in social sciences, not only in psychology or language learning and also the intersection between humanities and sciences when research integrates data collection and analysis tools such as MRI scans, and neuropsychology. It is of groundbreaking value since the motivational strategies that language teachers employ have the potential to change individuals' performance potential, hence their accomplishments and self perception.

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