Learner Autonomy and Motivation -A Literature Review

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Abstract
A general argument in rationalization for autonomy in language learning is that autonomous learners are strongly motivated and that autonomy leads to better, more successful work. Autonomy is defined as the ability to take control of one's own learning but it is possible only with an active process of assistance and support to help learners expand and systematize the capacities that they already possess in them. The study on motivation in connection to language learning over the past few decades has been dominated by psychological approach to motivation of Gardner and Lambert, which gives small aid in attempts to relate autonomy and motivation. To discover such associations it is necessary to turn to the literature on motivation in language learning. This paper will review the literature on motivation and suggest that there is a significant relationship between autonomy and some educational theories of motivation.
Keywords: Autonomy, Motivation, Psychological approach

1 Introduction

The focus of language teaching in the 21st Century has begun to play an increasingly important role in helping the learners to become independent in their learning. The concept of autonomy is found not only in the field of education but also in the fields such as, organizational management, feminist study, medicine, and business. But the literature on autonomy in language learning is larger in number compared to other fields. According to Dickinson (1987: 11), autonomous learner takes complete responsibility for all of the decisions concerned with learning and implementation of those decisions. He also takes an active, independent attitude to learning and undertakes a learning task separately. Individual involvement in decision making in one's own learning enhances motivation to learn and the link between autonomy and motivation is investigated in this paper. The objective of this study is to explore the works of various researchers on learner autonomy and its relevance to the practice of language education. It also critically analyzes the relationship of learner autonomy and motivation in second language learning classroom.

1.1 Autonomy

Autonomously acting people "…are less defensive and ego-protective and tend to openly acknowledge negative affect or criticism and personal shortcomings" (cited from Legault and Inzlicht, 2013, p.125).

The continual efforts to narrow the gap between theory and practice have resulted in the genesis of numerous approaches, methods and techniques with regard to language teaching and learning (Howatt, 1984). A method or an approach was replaced by another in quick succession or over a long period of time on the presumption that it was more accountable than the existing one. Each of these approaches was derived from certain notions about learning and the processes of learning. These notions were again based on the research and developments in the fields of Psychology and Linguistics. The gradual shift in emphasis in the focus of these researches from various components of the curriculum to the learner in particular seems to witness the revision of the question 'How do human beings learn a language?' to 'How does an individual learn a language?' In Dickinson's (1993) definition of an autonomous learner the phrase 'responsible' denotes capability to make all decisions related to his learning and implementing all these decisions as well. Responsibility is therefore that empowering quality in the learner that makes itself manifest through the decisions, however small, that the learner makes to maneuver teaching to suit his needs. Little (1991) sees autonomy as a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action. He describes the term responsibility as control over the cognitive processes underlying effective self-management of learning. Autonomy is strongly associated with metacognitive strategies which engross thinking about the learning process, preparation for learning, monitoring the learning task, and self-evaluating.

1.1.1 Motivation

"Autonomous learners are by definition motivated learners" (Ushioda in Dornyei, 2001:59)

Gredler, Broussard and Garrison (2004) broadly define motivation as the quality that makes us do or refuse something. According to Guay and his associates (2010), motivation implies "the reasons underlying behavior". The socio-psychological approach of Gardner and his associates (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Gardner and MacIntyre, 1992) dominated the area of motivation in language learning for several years. This approach relates motivation with attitude of the second language learners, and asserts that learners with a

curiosity in interacting with speakers of target language are likely to be more successful in acquiring the L2 than others. More new research has drawn on cognitive theories of motivation in general learning, which center on the thoughts and beliefs of individuals that are changed into action rather than inner forces such as instinct, volition, will and physical energy (Dornyei, 1998). Of all these theories attribution theory and self-determination theory seem mainly related to control over motivation. Attribution theory speaks about learners' perceptions of the reasons for success and failure in learning. Research intended to elicit learners' views on the reasons for achievement and failure in learning has shown four main types of attributions concerned with ability, task difficulty, effort and luck (Dickinson,1995). Self-determination theory highlights the power of intrinsic motivation in learning and the significance of a sense of personal autonomy to its development (Deci and Flaste, 1995; Deci and Ryan, 2000). Learners who are intrinsically motivated perform learning activities for the delight of learning, for the pleasure of achievement, or to practice stimulation (Vallerand, 1997). But extrinsically motivated learners accomplish activities for external reward or when they are subject to external or internalized demands. In the view of Deci (1978), 'intrinsic motivation implies self-direction' and recent studies reveal that extrinsic motivation was a continuum from externally controlled to self-determined (Deci et al.,1991). As in attribution theory, the relationship between learner control and motivation entails the chance of learners altering their own motivations, for instance, learners may be capable to change self-determined extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation (Benson, 2013).

1.1.2 Relationship between Learner Autonomy and Motivation
The following literature reviews attempt to demonstrate and support the objective of the study.

The significance of motivation in language learning has become the prime focus of educational psychologists for several years. The purpose of this literature review is twofold: a) to explore the ways in which autonomy and motivation have been defined by the researchers, and b) to learn how motivation enhances autonomy. Ellis' (1985) comment on success in learning and motivation is worth mentioning. He claims "we do not know whether it is motivation that produces successful learning or successful learning that enhances motivation". Dweck (1986) emphasizes the fact that learning success alone will not be sufficient to construct and develop productive motivational attitudes but the learners should make every effort even after achieving performance goals or learning goals. In the views of Deci and Ryan (1992), external rewards can be merged with or even lead to intrinsic motivation, if a learner is adequately self-determined and internalized. According to Dickinson (1995), success in learning and enhanced motivation will occur when a learner has more control of his/her own learning process. The learner can have a certain level of possession in learning, if he takes responsibility in the learning process like planning, monitoring and self-evaluating. Thus intrinsic motivation would not be a requirement but be an asset. He also opines that, in order to promote more intrinsically oriented motivation in learners, instructors should provide feedback as they share information and not as they evaluate. This idea is support by Deci who says that feedback should offer both information concerning the activity and reinforcement of the learner's access to self –determined progress (in Weiner, 1980). Dornyei and Csizer (1998) record learner autonomy as one of 'ten commandments' for motivating learners. In his book on motivational strategies, a section has been allotted for creating learner autonomy, including various procedures for improving learners' sense of control over their learning. Kim Noels and her associates (2000) have also integrated self-determination theory into their model of language learning motivation; their study explains the link between teacher support for learner autonomy and learners' sense of self-determination. They report that if learners believe they have high levels of "freedom of choice and perceived competence" they will pursue more "self-determined forms of motivation". But if they have "low perceptions of freedom of choice and perceived competence" then amotivation will result. They also add that the learners will be amotivated, if they are exposed to situations in which their behavior has no influence on subsequent outcomes. Hidi and Harackiewicz (2000) reject the view that external rewards always spoil intrinsic motivation. They claim that the value of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation may depend on the length of participation and difficulty of the task.Various studies on learner autonomy have also given enough proof that motivation is enhanced when learners take more control over their learning (Lamb, 2001; Sakui, 2002, Ushioda, 2003, 2007). On the contrary, Spratt, Humphrey and Chan (2002), argue that it is motivation that precedes autonomy. They also report that when learners are compelled to learn English, they feel less motivated to involve in self-directed learning activities and they say teacher-centred instruction over learner autonomy may be favoured by Asian students. Roth et al. (2007) empirical study shows that teachers who were more autonomously motivated for teaching had students who perceived them to be more autonomy supportive. In contrast, teachers who felt intruded in their classrooms were seen as more dominating by students. Further, they add that agentic engagement is a constructive aspect of learner engagement that allows educators to value how students really connect themselves in learning tasks, as they not only try to learn and develop skill, but they also try to create a more motivationally supportive learning situation for themselves. Lee et al. (2010) declares that blogs improve learners' involvement and motivation

because they aim at a large audience and do not confine to a single instructor alone. While blogging presents academic aptitude of the learners with regard to self-directed learning, the ease of access to networking influences participation levels of the learners. Ushioda (2011) points out that by developing autonomy and motivating learners to speak as themselves now, teachers can make them fulfill their competence to be the persons they want to become and use the language to perform what they want with their own motivation and sense of self. According to Mizuno et al. (2011) intrinsic motivation should connect the working memory system to link attainments to a final goal. Particularly while learners are at school, the working memory maintains some degree of currently significant information so that it is accessible for instant use. Thus, function of working memory leads to goal-directed behavior. Stroet et al. (2013) methodically reviewed 71 experimental studies on the effects of autonomy supportive teaching on learner's motivation and discovered a clear positive relationship.

1.1.3 Summary

This review of a selection of the literature on research into motivation intends to find the relationship between autonomy and motivation. It has been shown that there is considerable evidence from motivational studies that learning success and enhanced motivation is conditional on learners taking control over their learning, being able to make choices for their own learning and recognizing that their learning successes or failures are to be ascribed to their own efforts and strategies rather than to factors outside their control. In applied linguistics, these conditions are characteristic of learner autonomy and self-direction.

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