TEACHING BY PRINCIPLES

OBJECTIVES After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- develop a broadly based theoretical approach that incorporates a number of basic principles of language learning and teaching
- distinguish among 12 principles that form such a theoretical basis
- understand the unique nature of each principle and its specific contribution to the revitalization of your approach to language pedagogy
- apply aspects of each principle to classroom methodological options

So far in this book you have observed a classroom in action, examined a century of language-teaching history, and taken a look at major constructs that define current practice in language teaching. In the remaining chapters you may have already felt a little bewildered by the sheer number of methods and approaches that have characterized our profession. You may be asking questions like:

- "Am I a student-centered, interactive, or task-based teacher, or what?"
- "The idea of CLT appeals to me, but out of a number of possible approaches within the tradition, how can I determine which one is best for me?"
- "Practically, a continuous, enlightened, eclectic approach is appealing, but isn't that way too broad a claim?"
- "There are too many options here; how can I make informed choices about what to do in the particular context of my classroom?"

In order to sort through these questions and find some plausible answers, it is important for you to consider elements that are at the core of language pedagogy: foundational principles that can form the building blocks for your own theoretical rationale. For virtually all successful teachers, such principles comprise their approach to language teaching.

In Principles of Language Learning and Teaching (Brown, 1977), which I refer to here as PLT, I noted that the last few decades of research produced a complex network of information on second language acquisition and language in the classroom. And, while many mysteries still remain about why and how learners successfully acquire second languages, it is appropriate for you to have some certainty about second language acquisition. We can then clearly see that...
CHAPTER 4

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So far in this book you have observed a classroom in action, examined a century of language-teaching history, and taken a look at major constructs that define current practices in language teaching. In the foregoing chapters you may have already felt a little bewildered by the sheer number of methods and approaches that have characterized our profession. You may be asking questions like:

"Am I a learner-centered, interactive, or task-based teacher, or what?"

"The idea of CLT appeals to me, but out of a number of possible approaches within the tradition, how can I determine what my approach is?"

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In Principles of Language Learning and Teaching (Brown, 2007), which I refer to here as PLLT, I noted that the last few decades of research produced a complex storehouse of information on second language acquisition and teaching. We have discovered a great deal about how to best teach a second language in the classroom. And, while many mysteries still remain about why and how learners successfully acquire second languages, it is appropriate for you to focus on what we do know: what we have learned and what we can say with some certainty about second language acquisition. We can then clearly see that
a great many of a teacher's choices are grounded in established principles of language learning and teaching. By perceiving and internalizing connections between practice (choices you make in the classroom) and theory (principles derived from research), you are more likely to engage in "enlightened" teaching. You will be better able to see why you have chosen to use a particular classroom technique (or set of techniques), to carry it out with confidence, and to evaluate its utility after the fact.

You may be thinking that such a principled approach to language teaching sounds only logical. How could one proceed otherwise? Well, I have seen many a novice language teacher gobbled up teaching techniques without carefully considering the criteria that underlie their successful application in the classroom. "Just give me 101 recipes for Monday morning teaching," say some, "I just want to know what to do when I get into the classroom." Unfortunately, this sort of quick-fix approach to teacher education will not give you that all-important ability to comprehend when to use a technique, with whom it will work, how to adapt it for your audience, or how to judge its effectiveness.

We'll now take a broad, sweeping look at 12 overarching principles of second language learning that interact with sound practice and on which your teaching can be based. These principles form the core of an approach to language teaching, as discussed in the previous chapter. There is no magic about the number 12. If you read Tom Scovel (2001) you'll find 5 principles, but if you read Bernard Spolsky (1989) you'll discover 7! I have chosen 12 for the sake of simplicity and inclusiveness.

Before proceeding with a description of the 12 principles, a special note is in order to readers and instructors who have used the previous editions of Teaching by Principles. I continue to enumerate 12 principles in my list but have made two changes that reflect recent research and thinking. The revisions are as follows:

- Autonomy (+6) is a new principle.
- Willingness to Communicate (WTC) (+8) now replaces Self-confidence and Risk-taking since the latter are, in recent research, well accounted for in the concept of WTC.

One further note: As you are reading, it may be helpful to check referenced sections of PLLT to refresh your memory of certain terms and background information.

COGNITIVE PRINCIPLES

We will call the first set of principles "cognitive" because they relate mainly to mental and intellectual functions. It should be made clear, however, that all 12 of the principles outlined in this chapter spill across somewhat arbitrary cognitive, affective, and linguistic boundaries.
Chapter 4  Teaching by Principles

Principle 1: Automaticity

No one can dispute the success with which children learn foreign languages, especially when they are living in the cultural and linguistic milieu of the language (see PLLT, Chapter 3). We commonly attribute children’s success to their widely observed tendency to acquire language subconsciously, that is, without overtly analyzing the forms of language themselves. Through an inductive process of exposure to language input and opportunity to experiment with output, they appear to learn languages without “thinking” about them.

This childlike, subconscious processing is similar to what Barry McLaughlin (1990; McLaughlin, Rossman, & McLeod, 1983) called automatic processing with peripheral attention to language forms (PLLTT, Chapter 10). That is, in order to manage the incredible complexity and quantity of language—the vast numbers of bits of information—both adults and children must sooner or later move away from processing language unit by unit, piece by piece, focusing closely on each, and “graduate” to a form of high-speed, automatic processing in which language forms (words, affixes, word order, rules, etc.) are only on the periphery of attention. Children usually make this transition faster than adults, who tend to linger in analytical, controlled modes, focusing on the bits and pieces of language before putting those bits and pieces into the “hard drive” of their mind.

The Principle of Automaticity highlights the importance of

- subconscious absorption of language through meaningful use;
- efficient and rapid movement away from a focus on the forms of language to a focus on the purposes to which language is put;
- efficient and rapid movement away from a capacity-limited control of a few bits and pieces to a relatively unlimited automatic mode of processing language forms (often referred to as fluency); and
- resistance to the temptation to analyze language forms.

The Principle of Automaticity may be stated as follows:

Efficient second language learning involves a timely movement of the control of a few language forms into the automatic, fluent processing of a relatively unlimited number of language forms. Overanalyzing language, thinking too much about its forms, and consciously lingering on rules of language all tend to impede this graduation to automaticity.
Notice that this principle does not say that focus on language forms is necessarily harmful. In fact adults, especially, can benefit greatly from certain focal processing of rules, definitions, and other formal aspects of language. What the principle does say is that adults can take a lesson from children by speedily overcoming our propensity to pay too much focal attention to the bits and pieces of language and to move language forms quickly to the periphery by using language in authentic contexts for meaningful purposes. In so doing, automaticity is built more efficiently.

What does this principle, which ordinarily applies to adult instruction, mean to you as a teacher? Here are some possibilities:

1. Because classroom learning normally begins with controlled, focal processing, there is no mandate to entirely avoid overt attention to language systems (grammar, phonology, discourse, etc.). That attention, however, should stop well short of blocking students from achieving a more automatic, fluent grasp of the language. Therefore, grammatical explanations or exercises dealing with what is sometimes called “usage” have a place in the adult classroom (see Principle 12), but you could overwhelm your students with grammar. If they become too heavily centered on the formal aspects of language, such processes can block pathways to fluency.

2. Make sure that a large proportion of your lessons are focused on the “use” of language for purposes that are as genuine as a classroom context will permit. Students will gain more language competence in the long run if the functional purposes of language are the focal point.

3. Automaticity isn’t gained overnight; therefore, you need to exercise patience with students as you slowly help them to achieve fluency.

**Principle 2: Meaningful Learning**

Closely related to the Principle of Automaticity are cognitive theories of learning (*PLII*, Chapter 4), which convincingly argue the strength of meaningful as opposed to rote learning (Ausubel, 1963). Meaningful learning “subsumes” new information into existing structures and memory systems, and the resulting associative links create stronger retention. Rote learning—taking in isolated bits and pieces of information that are not connected with one’s existing cognitive structures—has little chance of creating long-term retention. Children are good meaningful acquirers of language (see Principle 1) because they associate sounds, words, structures, and discourse elements with that which is relevant and important in their daily quest for knowledge and survival.
The Principle of Meaningful Learning is quite simply stated:

The process of making meaningful associations between existing knowledge/experience and new material will lead toward better long-term retention than rote learning of material in isolated pieces.

The language classroom has not always been the best place for meaningful learning. In the days when the Audiolingual Method (see PLIT, Chapter 4) was popular, rote learning occupied too much of the class hour as students were drilled and drilled in an attempt to “overlearn” language forms. The Principle of Meaningful Learning tells us that some aural-oral drilling is appropriate; selected phonological elements like phonemes, rhythm, stress, and intonation, for example, can indeed be taught effectively through pattern repetition. But drilling ad nauseam easily lends itself to rote learning.

Some classroom implications of the Principle of Meaningful Learning include the following:

1. Capitalize on the power of meaningful learning by appealing to students’ interests, academic goals, and career goals.
2. Whenever a new topic or concept is introduced, attempt to anchor it in students’ existing knowledge and background so that it becomes associated with something they already know.
3. Avoid the pitfalls of rote learning:
   a. too much grammar explanation
   b. too many abstract principles and theories
   c. too much drilling and/or memorization
   d. activities whose purposes are not clear
   e. activities that do not contribute to accomplishing the goals of the lesson, unit, or course
   f. techniques that are so mechanical or tricky that students focus on the mechanics instead of on the language or meanings

**Principle 3: The Anticipation of Reward**

B. F. Skinner and others have clearly demonstrated the strength of rewards in both animal and human behavior (see PLIT, Chapter 4). Virtually everything we do is inspired and driven by a sense of purpose or goal, and according to Skinner, the anticipation of reward is the most powerful factor in directing one’s behavior. The principle behind Skinner’s operant conditioning paradigm, which could be called the Reward Principle, can be stated as follows:
Human beings are universally driven to act, or “behave,” by the anticipation of some sort of reward—tangible or intangible, short-term or long-term—that will ensue as a result of the behavior.

The implications for the classroom are obvious. At one end of the spectrum, you can perceive the importance of the immediate administration of such rewards as praise for correct responses (“Very good, Maria!” “Nice job!”), appropriate grades or scores to indicate success, or other public recognition. At the other end, it behooves you to help students to see clearly why they are doing something and its relevance to their long-term goals in learning English. On the other hand, a reward-driven, conditioning theory of learning has some shortcomings that ultimately have a high impact on classroom instruction. These shortcomings are summarized under Principle 4, but for the moment, keep in mind that conditioning by rewards can (a) lead learners to become dependent on short-term rewards, (b) coax them into a habit of looking to teachers and others for their only rewards, and therefore (c) forestall the development of their own internally administered, intrinsic system of rewards.

Considering all sides of the Reward Principle, the following constructive classroom implications may be drawn:

1. Provide an optimal degree of immediate verbal praise and encouragement to students as a form of short-term reward (just enough to keep them confident in their ability but not so much that your praise simply becomes verbal gush).
2. Encourage students to reward each other with compliments and supportive action.
3. In classes with very low motivation, short-term reminders of progress may help students to perceive their development. Gold stars and stickers (especially for young learners), issuing certain “privileges” for good work, and progress charts and graphs may spark some interest.
4. Display enthusiasm and excitement yourself in the classroom. If you are dull, lifeless, bored, and have low energy, you can be almost sure that it will be contagious.
5. Try to get learners to see the long-term rewards in learning English by pointing out what they can do with English where they live and around the world, the prestige in being able to use English, the academic benefits of knowing English, jobs that require English, and so on.
Principle 4: Intrinsic Motivation

This principle is elaborated upon in detail in the next chapter as an example of how complex principles underlie a surprising number of our teaching practices. Simply stated, the Intrinsic Motivation Principle is:

The most powerful rewards are those that are intrinsically motivated within the learner. Because the behavior stems from needs, wants, or desires within oneself, the behavior itself is self-rewarding; therefore, no externally administered reward is necessary.

If all learners were intrinsically motivated to perform all classroom tasks, we might not even need teachers! But you can perform a great service to learners and to the overall learning process by first considering carefully the intrinsic motives of your students and then by designing classroom tasks that feed into those intrinsic drives. Classroom techniques have a much greater chance for success if they are self-rewarding in the perception of the learner. The learners perform the task because it is fun, interesting, useful, or challenging, and not because they anticipate some cognitive or affective rewards from the teacher.

You may be wondering why such a principle is listed among "cognitive" principles. The development of intrinsic motivation does indeed involve affective processing, as most of these first five principles do, and so the argument is appropriate. But reward-directed behavior in all organisms is complex to the point that cognitive, physical, and affective processing are all involved. In the specific case of second language acquisition, mental functions may actually occupy a greater proportion of the whole than the other two domains, as we shall see in Chapter 5.

Principle 5: Strategic Investment

A few decades ago, the language-teaching profession largely concerned itself with the "delivery" of language to the student. Teaching methods, textbooks, or even grammatical paradigms were cited as the primary factors in successful learning. In more recent years, in the light of many studies of successful and unsuccessful learners, language teachers are focusing more intently on the role of the learner in the process. The "methods" that the learner employs to internalize and to perform in the language are as important as the teacher's methods—or more so. I call this the Principle of Strategic Investment:
Successful mastery of the second language will be due to a large extent to a learner’s own personal “investment” of time, effort, and attention to the second language in the form of an individualized battery of strategies for comprehending and producing the language.

This principle is laid out in full detail in Chapter 14, where practical classroom applications are made. For the time being, however, ponder two major pedagogical implications of the principle: (a) the importance of recognizing and dealing with the wide variety of styles and strategies that learners successfully bring to the learning process and, therefore, (b) the need for attention to each separate individual in the classroom.

As research on successful language learners has dramatically shown, the variation among learners poses a thorny pedagogical dilemma. Learning styles alone signal numerous learner preferences that a teacher needs to attend to (see PLLT, Chapter 5). For example, visual versus auditory preference and individual versus group work preference are highly significant factors in a classroom. In a related strain of research, we are finding that learners also employ a multiplicity of strategies for sending and receiving language and that one learner’s strategies for success may differ markedly from another’s.

A variety of techniques in your lessons will at least partially ensure that you will “reach” a maximum number of students. So you will choose a mixture of group work and individual work, of visual and auditory techniques, of easy and difficult exercises. Beware, however, of variety at the expense of techniques that you know are essential for the learner! If, for example, you know that three-quarters of your class prefers individual work, that should not dictate the proportion of time you devote to activities that involve silent work at their desks. They may need to be nudged, if not pushed, into more face-to-face communicative activities than their preferences would indicate.

A teacher’s greatest dilemma is how to attend to each individual student in a class while still reaching the class as a whole group. In relatively large classes of 30 to 50 students, individual attention becomes increasingly difficult; in extra-large classes* it is virtually impossible. The Principle of Strategic Investment nevertheless is a reminder to provide as much attention as you can to each individual student.

* Around the world, far too many language class sizes are too large. Numbers in the range of 50-75 are not uncommon. For years I’ve tried to persuade administrators to lower those numbers and to understand that communicative acquisition of a language is very difficult to achieve under such circumstances. Nevertheless, the reality of school budgets sometimes provides few alternatives. See Chapter 15 for some practical suggestions for dealing with large classes.
Some aspects of the dilemma surrounding variation and the need for individualization can be solved through specific strategies-based instruction, the principal topic of Chapter 16. Meanwhile, simply as a “sneak preview” to that chapter, you might consider these questions as more grist for your teacher education mill:

1. Am I seizing whatever opportunity I can to let learners in on the “secrets” that will help them to develop and use strategies for learning and communication?
2. Am I helping students to become aware of their own preferences, styles, strengths, and weaknesses, so that they can then take appropriate action in the form of strategies for better learning?
3. Do my lessons and impromptu feedback adequately sensitize students to the wisdom of their taking responsibility for their own learning?
4. How can I ensure that my students will want to put forth the effort of trying out some strategies?

Principle 6: Autonomy

One way of looking at the history of language teaching, described in Chapter 2, is to consider the extent to which methodological trends have emphasized the respective roles of the teacher and the learner. Until some of the “designer” methods appeared in the 1970s, most of language-teaching methodology was teacher-centered. Students entered a classroom, sat down dutifully at their desks, and waited for the teacher to tell them what to do. Those directives might have been to translate a passage, to memorize a rule, or to repeat a dialogue. Then, the profession began to value the concept of learner autonomy (Benson, 2001, 2003; Schmenk, 2005; Wenden, 2002), which Benson (2001, p. 290) defined as “the capacity to control one’s own learning.” Autonomy is now almost universally manifested in the classroom in the form of allowing learners to do things like initiate oral production, solve problems in small groups, and practice language with peers.

Of utmost importance, language curricula recognized the crucial objective of helping learners to use the language outside of the classroom. We began to encourage learners to “take charge” of their own learning and to chart their own “pathways to success” (Brown, 1989, 2002b; Benson, 2003). With the principle of students’ taking responsibility for their own learning, yet another important pedagogical foundation stone was set in place.

Briefly, the Principle of Autonomy states:

Successful mastery of a foreign language will depend to a great extent on learners’ autonomous ability both to take initiative in the classroom and to continue their journey to success beyond the classroom and the teacher.
Some have argued (Riley, 1988) that the Principle of Autonomy is a culturally loaded, ethnocentric construct—anything but universal in its conceptualization. Others suggest using some caution in making assumptions across cultural contexts and to account for “specific cultural backdrops and impacts” (Schmenk, 2005, p.115) in promoting autonomy in the language classroom. Once those accommodations have been appropriately addressed, you should by no means refrain from helping your students to participate actively in linguistic exchange and to continue their learning beyond the walls of your classroom. Consider a number of classroom implications of this principle:

1. Learners at the beginning stages of a language will of course be somewhat dependent on the teacher, which is natural and normal. But teachers can help even beginners to develop a sense of autonomy through guided practice and by allowing some creative innovation within limited forms.

2. As learners gain confidence and begin to be able to experiment with language, implement activities in the classroom that allow creativity but are not completely beyond the capacity of students.

3. Don’t forget that pair and group work and other interactive activities in your classroom provide opportunities for students to “do” language on their own.

4. In oral and written production in the classroom, encourage creativity and praise students for trying language that’s a little beyond their present capacity.

5. Remember, you’re a facilitator and coach, so while your students are in your “care,” provide feedback on their speech—just enough to be helpful, but not so much that you stifle their creativity.

6. Suggest opportunities for students to use their language (gauged for their proficiency level) outside of class. Examples include movies, TV, the Internet, books, magazines, practicing with each other, and—if feasible—using self-access centers available in some institutions.

**Socioaffective Principles**

The Principles of Intrinsic Motivation, Strategic Investment, and Autonomy are clearly not purely cognitive in nature. They share some attributes with socioaffective principles, the focus of this section of the chapter. But the next three principles are characterized by a more marked degree of emotional involvement, either within one’s own self or as a learner relates socially to others. Here we look at feelings about self, about communicating with others in a community of learners, and about the ties between language and one’s culture, worldview, and way of life.
Principle 7: Language Ego

The Language Ego Principle can be summarized in a well-recognized claim:

As human beings learn to use a second language, they also develop a new mode of thinking, feeling, and acting—a second identity. The new “language ego,” intertwined with the second language, can easily create within the learner a sense of fragility, a defensiveness, and a raising of inhibitions.

The Language Ego Principle might also be affectionately called the “warm and fuzzy” principle: All second language learners need to be treated with affective tender loving care. Remember when you were first learning a second language and how you sometimes felt silly, if not humiliated, when the lack of words or structure left you helpless in face-to-face communication? Otherwise highly intelligent adults can be reduced to babbling infants in a second language. Learners feel this fragility because the strategic arsenals of their native-language-based egos, which are normally well developed and resistant to attack, are suddenly—in the perception of the learner—obsolete. Now they must fend for their emotional selves with a paltry linguistic battery that leaves them with a feeling of total defenselessness.

How can you bring some relief to this situation and provide affective support? Here are some possibilities.

1. Overtly display a supportive attitude to your students. While some learners may feel quite stupid in this new language, remember that they are capable adults struggling with the acquisition of the most complex set of skills that any classroom has ever attempted to teach. Your “warm and fuzzy” patience and empathy need to be openly and clearly communicated, for fragile language egos have a way of misinterpreting intended input.

2. On a more mechanical, lesson-planning level, your choice of techniques and sequences of techniques needs to be cognitively challenging but not overwhelming at an affective level.

3. Considering learners’ language ego states will probably help you to determine
   • who to call on
   • who to ask to volunteer information
   • when to correct a student’s speech error
   • how much to explain something
   • how structured and planned an activity should be
   • who to place in which small groups or pairs
   • how “tough” you can be with a student
4. If your students are learning English as a second language (in the cultural milieu of an English-speaking country), they are likely to experience a moderate identity crisis as they develop a “second self.” Help such students to understand that the confusion of developing that second self in the second culture is a normal and natural process (see PLLT, Chapter 7). Patience and understanding on your part will also ease the process.

**Principle 8: Willingness to Communicate**

Closely allied to the Language Ego Principle is a construct that is a relatively recent newcomer to second language acquisition research: Willingness to Communicate (WTC) (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrod, 2001; MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998; Yashima, 2002), simply defined as “the intention to initiate communication, given a choice” (MacIntyre et al., 2001, p. 369). Observations of language learners’ unwillingness to communicate, or what we commonly label as “shyness,” have led us to emphasize classroom activity that encourages learners to “come out of their shells” and to engage communicatively in the classroom.

It has already been briefly noted that WTC combines concepts of **self-confidence** and **risk-taking**, as they are both interwoven in our human psyche. Of further importance are two other related constructs: **anxiety**, that is, the extent to which learners may “worry” about themselves; and **self-efficacy**, a person’s belief in his or her ability to accomplish a task (See PLLT, Chapter 6, for further description). Linked to one’s self-confidence (and allaying anxieties) is the ability to take calculated risks in attempting to use language—both productively and receptively. If learners recognize their own ego fragility and develop the firm belief that, yes, they can indeed do it (self-efficacy), then they are ready to take those necessary risks. They are ready to try out their newly acquired language, to use it for meaningful purposes, to ask questions, and to assert themselves.

This eighth principle may be summarized as follows:

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Successful language learners generally believe in themselves
and in their capacity to accomplish communicative tasks,
and are therefore willing risk takers in their attempts to
produce and to interpret language that is a bit beyond their
absolute certainty. Their willingness to communicate
results in the generation of both output (from the learner)
and input (to the learner).
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The concept of WTC strikes at the heart of educational philosophy, and it appears to be applicable across many cultures (Yashima, 2002). Many instructional contexts do not encourage risk-taking; instead they encourage correctness, right answers, and withholding “guesses” until one is sure to be correct. Most educational
research shows the opposite to be more conducive to long-term retention and intrinsic motivation. How can your classrooms reflect the Principle of WTC?

1. Give ample verbal and nonverbal assurances to students, affirming your belief in the student's ability. Energy that the learner would otherwise direct at avoidance or at erecting emotional walls of defense is thereby released to tackle the problem at hand.

2. Sequence techniques from easier to more difficult. As a teacher you are called on to sustain self-confidence where it already exists and to build it where it doesn't. Your activities in the classroom would therefore logically start with simpler techniques and simpler concepts. Students then can establish a sense of accomplishment that catapults them to the next, more difficult, step.

3. Create an atmosphere in the classroom that encourages students to try out language, to venture a response, and not to wait for someone else to volunteer language.

4. Provide reasonable challenges in your techniques—make them neither too easy nor too hard.

5. Help your students to understand what calculated risk-taking is, lest some feel that they must blurt out any old response.

6. Respond to students' attempts to communicate with positive affirmation, praising them for trying while at the same time warmly but firmly attending to their language.

**Principle 9: The Language-Culture Connection**

Language and culture are intricately intertwined. Any time you successfully learn a language, you will also learn something of the culture of the speakers of that language. This principle focuses on the complex interconnection of language and culture:

> Whenever you teach a language, you also teach a complex system of cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.

Classroom applications include the following:

1. Discuss cross-cultural differences with your students, emphasizing that no culture is "better" than another, but that cross-cultural understanding is an important facet of learning a language.

2. Include among your techniques certain activities and materials that illustrate the connection between language and culture.
3. Teach your students the cultural connotations, especially the sociolinguistic aspects, of language.
4. Screen your techniques for material that may be culturally offensive.
5. Make explicit to your students what you may take for granted in your culture.

A second aspect of the language–culture connection is the extent to which your students will themselves be affected by the process of acculturation, which will vary with the context and the goals of learning. In many second-language-learning contexts, such as ESL in the United States, students are faced with the full-blown realities of adapting to life in a foreign country, complete with various emotions accompanying stages of acculturation (see Chapter 7 of PLTT). In such cases, acculturation, social distance, and psychological adjustment are factors to be dealt with. This aspect of the principle may be summed up in this way:

Example text:

Especially in second (as opposed to foreign) language-learning contexts, the success with which learners adapt to a new cultural milieu will affect their language acquisition success, and vice versa, in some possibly significant ways.

From the perspective of the classroom teacher, this principle is similar to the Principles of Language Ego and Willingness to Communicate, and all the concomitant classroom implications apply here as well. An added dimension, however, lies in the interaction between culture learning and language learning. An opportunity is given to teachers to enhance, if not speed up, both developmental processes. Once students become aware that some of their discouragement may stem from cultural sources, they can more squarely address their state of mind and emotion and do something about it.

In the classroom, you can do the following:

1. Help students to be aware of acculturation and its stages.
2. Stress the importance of the second language as a powerful tool for adjustment in the new culture.
3. Be especially sensitive to any students who appear to be discouraged, then do what you can to assist them.

LINGUISTIC PRINCIPLES

The last category of principles of language learning and teaching centers on language itself and on how learners deal with complex linguistic systems.
Principle 10: The Native Language Effect

It almost goes without saying that the native language of every learner is an extremely significant factor in the acquisition of a new language. Most of the time, we think of the native language as exercising an interfering effect on the target language, and indeed the most salient, observable effect does appear to be one of interference (see PLLT, Chapter 4). The majority of a learner's errors in producing the second language, especially in the beginning levels, stem from the learner's assumption that the target language operates like the native language.

But what we observe may, like the tip of an iceberg, be only part of the reality. The facilitating effects of the native language are surely as powerful in the process, or more so, even though they are less observable. When the native French speaker who is learning English says "I am here since January," there is one salient native language effect, a verb tense error stemming from French. But the learner's native French may also have facilitated the production of that sentence's subject-verb-complement word order, the placement of the locative (bère), the one-to-one grammatical correspondence of the other words in the sentence, rules governing prepositional phrases, and the cognate word (January).

The Principle of the Native Language Effect stresses the importance of that native system in the linguistic attempts of the second language learner:

The native language of learners exerts a strong influence on the acquisition of the target language system. While that native system will exercise both facilitating and interfering effects on the production and comprehension of the new language, the interfering effects are likely to be the most salient.

In your dealing with the Native Language Effect in the classroom, your feedback will most often focus on interference. That's perfectly sound pedagogy. Learners' errors stand out like the tips of icebergs, giving us salient signals of an underlying system at work. Errors are, in fact, windows to a learner's internalized understanding of the second language, and therefore they give teachers something observable to react to. Student non-errors—the facilitating effects—certainly do not need to be treated. Don't try to fix something that isn't broken.

Some classroom suggestions stemming from the Native Language Effect:

1. Regard learners' errors as important windows to their underlying system and provide appropriate feedback on them (see Principle 11 and Chapter 17 for more information on feedback). Errors of native language interference may be repaired by acquainting the learner with the native language cause of the error.
2. Ideally, every successful learner will hold on to the facilitating effects of the native language and discard the interference. Help your students to understand that not everything about their native language system will cause error.

3. Thinking directly in the target language usually helps to minimize interference errors. Try to coax students into thinking in the second language instead of resorting to translation as they comprehend and produce language. An occasional translation of a word or phrase can actually be helpful, especially for adults, but direct use of the second language will help to avoid the first language “crutch” syndrome.

**Principle 11: Interlanguage**

Just as children develop their native language in gradual, systematic stages, adults, too, manifest a systematic progression of acquisition of sounds and words and structures and discourse features (see *PLLT*, Chapter 8). The Interlanguage Principle tells us:

> Second language learners tend to go through a systematic or quasi-systematic developmental process as they progress to full competence in the target language. Successful interlanguage development is partially a result of utilizing feedback from others.

While the interlanguage of second language learners varies considerably (see *PLLT*, Chapter 9, on variability) between systematic and unsystematic linguistic forms and underlying rules, one important concept for the teacher to bear in mind is that at least some of a learner’s language may indeed be systematic. In other words, in the mind’s eye of learners, a good deal of what they say or comprehend may be logically “correct” even though, from the standpoint of a native speaker’s competence, its use is incorrect. A learner who says “Does John can sing?” may believe it to be a correct grammatical utterance because of an internalized systematic rule that requires a pre-posed *do* auxiliary for English question formation.

Allowing learners to progress through such systematic stages of acquisition poses a delicate challenge to teachers. The collective experience of language teachers and a respectable stockpile of second language research (Doughty, 2003; Ellis, 2005) indicates that classroom instruction makes a significant difference in the speed and success with which learners proceed through interlanguage stages of development. This highlights the importance of the feedback that you give to learners in the classroom. In many settings (especially in EFL contexts where few
opportunities arise outside the classroom to use the language communicatively, you are the only person the students have real-live contact with who speaks English. All eyes (and ears) are indeed upon you because you are the authority on the English language, whether you like it or not. Such responsibility means that virtually everything you say and do will be noticed (except when they're not paying attention)!

Much has been written about the role of feedback in second language acquisition. In Vigil and Oller's (1976) seminal study (see PLLT, Chapter 9), teachers were reminded of an important distinction between affective and cognitive feedback. The former is the extent to which we value or encourage a student's attempt to communicate; the latter is the extent to which we indicate an understanding of the "message" itself. Teachers are engaged in a never-ending process of making sure that we provide sufficient positive affective feedback to students and at the same time give appropriate feedback to students about whether or not their actual language is clear and unambiguous. (See Chapter 17 for more information on error feedback.)

How, then, do you know what kind of feedback to offer students? Are interlanguage errors simply to be tolerated as natural indications of systematic internalization of a language? These important questions are to some extent answered in Chapter 17. For the moment, however, a number of general classroom implications deserve your attention:

1. Try to distinguish between a student's systematic interlanguage errors (stemming from the native language or target language) and other errors; the former will probably have a logical source that the student can be made aware of.
2. Teachers need to exercise some tolerance for certain interlanguage forms that may arise out of a student's logical developmental process.
3. Don't make a student feel stupid because of an interlanguage error; quietly point out the logic of the erroneous form ("I can understand why you said 'I go to the doctor yesterday,' but try to remember that in English we have to say the verb in the past tense. Okay?").
4. Your classroom feedback to students should give them the message that mistakes are not "bad" but that most mistakes are good indicators that innate language acquisition abilities are alive and well. Mistakes are often indicators of aspects of the new language that are still developing.
5. Try to get students to self-correct selected errors; the ability to self-correct may indicate readiness to use that form correctly and regularly.
6. In your feedback on students' linguistic output, make sure that you provide ample affective feedback—verbal or nonverbal—to encourage them to speak.
7. As you make judicious selection of which errors to treat (see Chapter 17), do so with kindness and empathy so that the student will not feel thwarted in future attempts to speak.
Principle 12: Communicative Competence

While communicative competence (CC) has come to capture a multiplicity of meanings depending on who you ask, it is nevertheless a useful phrase. Look back at Chapter 3 here and recall the description of CLT, and you will see some combination of the following components of CC, which stem from Bachman (1990) and the seminal Canale and Swain (1980):

- organizational competence (grammatical and discourse)
- pragmatic competence (functional and sociolinguistic)
- strategic competence
- psychomotor skills

The array of studies on CC provides what is probably the most sweeping and comprehensive linguistic principle, if not the most important:

Given that communicative competence is the goal of a language classroom, instruction needs to point toward all its components: organizational, pragmatic, strategic, and psychomotor. Communicative goals are best achieved by giving due attention to language use and not just usage, to fluency and not just accuracy, to authentic language and contexts, and to students’ eventual need to apply classroom learning to previously unrehearsed contexts in the real world.

It is important to note that the CC principle still has a bit of a reactionist flavor: reacting to other paradigms that emphasized attention to grammatical forms; to “correct” language above all; to artificial, contrived language and techniques in the classroom; and to a finite repertoire of language forms and functions that might not have lent themselves to application in the world outside the classroom. But since most of our language-teaching generalizations are, after all, at least partially conceived against the backdrop of previous practices, such a statement can stand as a reasonably accurate description of our current understanding of CC.

To attempt to list all the applications of such a principle to the language classroom would be an exhaustive endeavor! Many such applications will become evident in later chapters of this book. But for the sake of closure and simplicity, consider the following six classroom teaching “rules” that might emerge:
1. Remember that grammatical explanations or drills or exercises are only part of a lesson or curriculum; give grammar some attention, but don’t neglect the other important components (e.g., functional, sociolinguistic, psychomotor, and strategic) of CC.

2. Some of the pragmatic (functional and sociolinguistic) aspects of language are very subtle and therefore very difficult. Make sure your lessons aim to teach such subtlety.

3. In your enthusiasm for teaching functional and sociolinguistic aspects of language, don’t forget that the psychomotor skills (pronunciation) are an important component of both. Intonation alone conveys a great deal of pragmatic information.

4. Make sure that your students have opportunities to gain some fluency in English without having to be constantly wary of little mistakes. They can work on errors some other time.

5. Try to keep every technique that you use as authentic as possible: Use language that students will actually encounter in the real world and provide genuine, not rote, techniques for the actual conveyance of information of interest.

6. Some day your students will no longer be in your classroom. Make sure you are preparing them to be independent learners and manipulators of language “out there.”

* * * * *

The 12 principles that have just been reviewed (listed for your convenience in Table 4.1) are some of the major foundation stones for teaching practice. While they are not by any means exhaustive, they can act for you as major theoretical insights on which your methodology can be based. With these 12 principles, you should be able to evaluate a course, a textbook, a group of students, and an educational context, and to determine courses of action in the classroom. You should be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of lessons you’ve observed or lessons you plan to teach. In short, you should be able to frame your own approach by considering the extent to which the 12 principles inform your understanding of how languages are learned and taught.

I hope you have gained from this discussion a realization of the value of undergirding your teaching (and your teacher training process) with sound principles that help you to understand why you choose to do something in the classroom; what kinds of questions to ask yourself before the fact about what you are doing, how to monitor yourself while you are teaching, how to assess after the fact the effectiveness of what you did, and then how to modify what you will do the next time around.
Table 4.1. Principles of language learning and teaching

Cognitive Principles

1. Automaticity
2. Meaningful Learning
3. The Anticipation of Reward
4. Intrinsic Motivation
5. Strategic Investment
6. Autonomy

Socioaffective Principles

7. Language Ego
8. Willingness to Communicate
9. The Language-Culture Connection

Linguistic Principles

10. The Native Language Effect
11. Interlanguage
12. Communicative Competence

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION, ACTION, AND RESEARCH

[Note: (I) Individual work; (G) group or pair work; (C) whole-class discussion.]

1. (G) The 12 principles summarized in this chapter are all important. Direct small groups to prioritize them, placing three principles at the top of the list. Then, have the groups compare their top three with others in the class. All may discover how difficult it is to choose only three to be at the top of the list.

2. (G) Have any principles been left out that should have been included? Ask small groups to pool their thoughts, describe any such principles, and justify their inclusion in such a list. Groups will then compare their own conclusions with those of others.

3. (G) Go back to Chapter 1. Notice that in the second part of the chapter, questions were raised regarding the lesson that was described. Assign one or more of those 30 comments to pairs. The task of each pair is (a) to determine which principles in this chapter justified the teacher's choice in each case, and (b) to decide whether any aspects of that lesson should have been altered and which principles support those alterations. Then, pairs can share their thoughts with the rest of the class.
4. (C) Look at Chapter 2, in which a number of methods were descriptive of a brief history of language teaching. A chalkboard list of methods should stimulate a class discussion of the extent to which each method can be justified by certain principles discussed in this chapter and criticized by other principles.

5. (1) As an exercise in articulating principles, write one or more sentences in your own words to describe each of the 12 principles cited here. Try doing this without looking back at the chapter, then compare your responses with what is written in the chapter.

6. (C) The 12 principles given here form elements of a theory of second language learning and teaching (see PLT, Chapter 10). Using these 12 principles as a backdrop, ask the class to formulate a possible theory of second language learning and teaching. Chalkboard notes will remind students of various ideas and suggestions.

7. (1/C) The next time you observe a foreign language class (this could be one you are taking yourself), take a list of the 12 principles with you and determine the extent to which the principles are being applied. In some cases a principle may explain why students are successfully achieving lesson objectives; in other cases a principle might articulate why objectives were not reached. Your insights might be reported back to the class.
FOR YOUR FURTHER READING


This book provides an accessible alternative to PLLT in its survey of current theories and issues in the field of second language acquisition. It serves as a vantage point from which to view the backdrops to the 12 principles presented in this chapter.


Tom Scovel’s book offers a nice readable perspective on language learning (and teaching) by organizing principles around five domains: people, language, attention, cognition, and emotion, which spell out the acronym PLACE. Bernard Spolsky’s book sets forth some 70 “principles,” or conditions, for successful second language acquisition. They break down into quite specific conditions. The two lists are worth comparing to the list of 12 in this chapter.


Jack Richards offers yet another way of looking at language-teaching principles. He puts theories of teaching into a framework of four categories: science-research based, theory-philosophy, values-based, and art-craft conceptions. While you’re reading this chapter, glance through other chapters in this useful anthology.
CHAPTER 5

INTRINSIC MOTIVATION IN

THE CLASSROOM

OBJECTIVES After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- recognize differences among behavioral, cognitive, and constructivist perspectives on motivation
- understand the role that motivation plays in all learning, not just in language learning
- identify the distinguishing characteristics of intrinsic motivation, especially in contrast to extrinsic motivation
- apply principles of intrinsic motivation to the second language classroom

For every complicated problem there is an answer that is short, simple, and wrong.

— H. L. Mencken

One of the more complicated problems of second language learning and teaching has been to define and apply the construct of motivation in the classroom. On the one hand, it is an easy catchword that gives teachers a simple answer to the mysteries of language learning. “Motivation is the difference,” I have heard people say, “between success and failure. If they’re motivated, they’ll learn, and if not, they won’t.” That simplification may hold some of the time. Why not all the time? Just what is motivation? Can it be acquired, or is it just “there”? Can it be taught? Where does it come from? Are there different kinds of motivation? If you don’t address questions like these carefully, you run the risk of passing off motivation as one of H. L. Mencken’s short, simple answers to learner success when it is neither short nor simple. Ironically, motivation is not the “wrong” answer to explaining learner success, but it is “right” only when its full complexity is recognized and applied appropriately in the language classroom.

In the previous chapter, 12 principles of language learning and teaching were examined. Underlying each of those 12 is a complex array of research and practice that should remind us that foundational principles are not simple constructs that can be adequately defined in a brief maxim. One of the 12 principles was intrinsic motivation. In this chapter we will take a long, careful look at the complexity and power of intrinsic motivation.
DEFINING MOTIVATION

How would you define motivation? Let me offer the following "dictionary definition" drawn from a number of different sources: Motivation is the extent to which you make choices about (a) goals to pursue and (b) the effort you will devote to that pursuit.

You can interpret this definition in varying ways, depending on the theory of human behavior you adopt. Let’s look at theories of motivation in terms of three different viewpoints. One of these perspectives is a traditional view of motivation that accounts for human behavior through a behavioral paradigm that stresses the importance of rewards and reinforcement. Another cluster of perspectives contains a number of cognitive psychological theories that explain motivation through deeper, less observable phenomena. A third way of looking at motivation involves a constructivist view that emphasizes social context and personal choices. These three traditions are described below. (For further perspectives on defining motivation, especially constructivist views of motivation, see PLLT, Chapter 6.)

1. A behavioral definition

A behavioral psychologist like Skinner or Watson would stress the role of rewards (and perhaps punishments) in motivating behavior. In Skinner’s operant conditioning model, for example, human beings, like other living organisms, will pursue a goal because they perceive a reward for doing so. This reward serves to reinforce behavior: to cause it to persist. This tradition gave us what I might facetiously refer to as the “M&M theory” of behavior, derived from the now seldom practiced administration of M&M candies to children for manifesting desired behavior.

A behaviorist would define motivation as “the anticipation of reinforcement.” We do well to heed the credibility of such a definition. There is no question that a tremendous proportion of what we do is motivated by an anticipated reward. From eating to exercising to studying and even to altruistic acts of ministering to others, there is “something in it for me.” The emotional overtones of the more intangible rewards must not be ignored. M&Ms, hugs, and laughter are all, at times, payoffs worth striving for.

Reinforcement theory is a powerful concept for the classroom. Learners, like the proverbial horse running after the carrot, pursue goals in order to receive externally administered rewards: praise, gold stars, grades, certificates, diplomas, scholarships, careers, financial independence, and ultimately, happiness.

2. Cognitive definitions

A number of cognitive psychological viewpoints offer quite a different perspective on motivation. While rewards are very much a part of the whole picture, the difference lies in the sources of motivation and in the power of self-reward. Three different theories illustrate this side of motivation.
A. Drive theory. Those who see human *drives* as fundamental to human behavior claim that motivation stems from basic innate drives. David Ausubel (1968) elaborated on six different drives:

- exploration
- manipulation
- activity
- stimulation
- knowledge
- ego enhancement

All of these drives act not so much as reinforcers, as in behavioristic theory, but as innate predispositions, compelling us, as it were, to probe the unknown; to control our environment; to be physically active; to be receptive to mental, emotional, or physical stimulation; to yearn for answers to questions; and to build our own self-esteem. It takes little imagination to see how motivation in the classroom is the fulfillment of these underlying drives.

B. Hierarchy of needs theory. One of the most widely cited theories of motivation comes from Abraham Maslow (1970), who, in the spirit of drive theory, elaborated further to describe a system of needs within each human being that propel us to higher and higher attainment. Maslow's hierarchy is best viewed metaphorically as a pyramid of needs (see Figure 5.1), progressing from the satisfaction of purely physical needs up through safety and communal needs, to needs of esteem, and finally to "self-actualization," a state of reaching your fullest potential.

![Maslow's hierarchy of needs](image)

Of key importance here is that a person is not adequately energized to pursue some of the higher needs until the lower foundations of the pyramid have been satisfied. Therefore, a person who is hungry or cold, who has gotten little sleep, etc., has little motivation to see beyond those pressing physical discomforts to
pursue anything higher. Likewise, needs for safety (comfort, routine, protection) and for a feeling of belonging (in a group of classmates or friends) must be met in order for a person to devote full energy to the higher needs of academic attainment, achievement of recognition for successes, and to the ultimate peak of "being all that you can be."

Maslow’s theory tells us that what might be inappropriately viewed as rather ordinary classroom routines may in fact be important precursors to motivation for higher attainment. For an activity in the classroom to be considered motivating, then, it need not be outstandingly striking, innovative, or inspirational. Even familiar classroom procedures (taking roll, checking homework, small talk at the beginning of class, etc.), if they fulfill lower-order needs, can pave the way to meeting higher-order needs.

C. Self-control theory. Certain cognitive psychologists (for instance, Hunt, 1971) focus on the importance of people deciding for themselves what to think or feel or do. We define ourselves by making our own decisions, rather than by simply reacting to others. Motivation is highest when one can make one’s own choices, whether they are in short-term or long-term contexts.

In the classroom, when learners have opportunities to make their own choices about what to pursue and what not to pursue, as in a cooperative learning context, they are fulfilling this need for autonomy. When learners get things shoved down their throats, motivation can wane, according to this branch of theory, because those learners have to yield to others’ wishes and commands.

3. A constructivist definition

A constructivist view of motivation places even further emphasis on social context as well as individual personal choices (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 120). Each person is motivated differently, and will therefore act on his or her environment in ways that are unique. But these unique acts are always carried out within a cultural and social milieu and cannot be completely separated from that context. In some ways Maslow’s (1970) needs theory, summarized above, can be seen as constructivist in that ultimate attainment of goals is partly due to factors involving community, belonging, and social status. Motivation, in a constructivist view, is derived as much from our interactions with others as it is from one’s self-determination.

Motivation is something that can, like self-esteem, be global, situational, or task oriented. Learning a foreign language requires some of all three levels of motivation. For example, a learner may possess high “global” motivation but low “task” motivation to perform well in, say, the written mode of the language. Motivation is also typically examined in terms of the intrinsic and extrinsic motives of the learner, which we will now consider.
INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION

Before we look closely at intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, let me offer a disclaimer of sorts. For several decades, research on motivation in the field of second language acquisition research has been strongly influenced by the work of Robert Gardner and his associates (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner & Maclntyre, 1991, 1993; Gardner & Tremblay, 1994). In this succession of research studies, a distinction has been made between integrative and instrumental orientations (see PLLT, Chapter 6). While the 1972 study claimed that an integrative orientation (desire to learn a language stemming from a positive affect toward a community of its speakers) was more strongly linked to success in learning a second language than an instrumental orientation (desire to learn a language in order to attain certain career, educational, or financial goals), later studies showed that both orientations could be associated with success.

Remember two important points. First, the research by Gardner and his colleagues centered on a dichotomy of orientation, not motivation. Orientation means a context or purpose for learning, motivation refers to the intensity of one's impetus to learn. An integrative orientation simply means the learner is pursuing a second language for a social or cultural purpose or both, and within that purpose, a learner could be driven by a high level of motivation or a low level. Likewise, in an instrumental orientation, learners are studying a language in order to further a career or academic goal. The intensity or motivation of a learner to attain that goal could be high or low.

Second, integrative and instrumental orientations are not to be confused with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation! They are separate issues. One (integrative/instrumental orientation) is a dichotomy and refers only to the context of learning. The other (intrinsic/extrinsic motivation) designates a continuum of possibilities of intensity of feeling or drive, ranging from deeply internal, self-generated rewards to strong, externally administered rewards from beyond oneself.

Now, let's move to specifying further what the intrinsic/integrative continuum implies. Edward Deci (1975, p. 23) defined intrinsic motivation this way:

Intrinsically motivated activities are ones for which there is no apparent reward except the activity itself. People seem to engage in the activities for their own sake and not because they lead to an extrinsic reward. . . . Intrinsically motivated behaviors are aimed at bringing about certain internally rewarding consequences, namely, feelings of competence and self-determination.

Extrinsically motivated behaviors, on the other hand, are carried out in anticipation of a reward from outside and beyond the self. Typical extrinsic rewards are money, prizes, grades, and even certain types of positive feedback. Behaviors initiated solely to avoid punishment are also extrinsically motivated, even though numerous intrinsic benefits can ultimately accrue to those who, instead,
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view punishment avoidance as a challenge that can build their sense of competence and self-determination.

Which form of motivation is more powerful? A convincing stockpile of research on motivation strongly favors intrinsic drives, especially for long-term retention. Jean Piaget (1972) and others pointed out that human beings universally view incongruity, uncertainty, and "disequilibrium" as motivating. In other words, we seek out a reasonable challenge. Then we initiate behaviors intended to conquer the challenging situation. Incongruity is not itself motivating, but optimal incongruity—or what Krashen (1985) called "i + 1"—presents enough of a possibility of being resolved that we will go after that resolution.

Abraham Maslow (1970) claimed that intrinsic motivation is clearly superior to extrinsic. According to his hierarchy of needs, we are ultimately motivated to achieve "self-actualization" once the basic physical, safety, and community needs are met. No matter what extrinsic rewards are present or absent, we will strive for self-esteem and fulfillment.

Jerome Bruner (1962), praising the "autonomy of self-reward," claimed that one of the most effective ways to help both children and adults to think and learn is to free them from the control of rewards and punishments. One of the principal weaknesses of extrinsically driven behavior is its addictive nature. Once captivated, as it were, by the lure of an immediate prize or praise, we can become dependent on those tangible rewards, even to the point that their withdrawal can extinguish the desire to learn.

Now, you may be thinking, don't extrinsic rewards play a role in a learner's motivation? Wouldn't extrinsic rewards, coupled with intrinsic motivation, enhance the intrinsic? Not according to a surprising number of research studies. Two examples (Kohn, 1990) illustrate:

1. Subjects were asked to solve an intrinsically fascinating complex puzzle with no stated reward. Halfway through the process, the experimenter informed the subjects that there would be a monetary reward for solving the puzzle. From that point onward, intrinsic motivation (as measured by speed and correct steps toward a solution) waned.

2. Teenage girls were given the task of teaching some games to younger children. One group of "teachers" was simply given the teaching task; the others were told that they would receive a reward (a free ticket to the movies) for successfully completing the task. Results: The first group did their task faster, with more success, and reported greater pleasure in doing so than the second group.

It is interesting that the research shows that one type of extrinsic reward can indeed have an effect on intrinsic motivation: the positive feedback that learners perceive as a boost to their feelings of competence and self-determination. No other externally administered set of rewards has a lasting effect. So, for example, sincerely delivered positive feedback in a classroom, seen by students as a validation of their own personal autonomy, critical thinking ability, and self-fulfillment, can increase or maintain intrinsic motivation.
Intrinsic motivation is of course not the only determinant of success for a language learner. Sometimes, no matter how much you want to accomplish something or how hard you try, you may not succeed for a host of other reasons. But if the learners in your classroom are given an opportunity to “do” language for their own personal reasons of achieving competence and autonomy, those learners will have a better chance of success than if they become dependent on external rewards for their motivation.

INTRINSIC MOTIVATION IN EDUCATION

Educators like Maria Montessori, Rudolf Steiner, Paolo Freire, A. S. Neill, and Carl Rogers have all provided exemplary models of intrinsically motivated education. Traditionally, elementary and secondary schools are fraught with extrinsically motivated behavior. The school curriculum is dictated by institutions (sometimes politically influenced) and can be far removed from even the teacher’s choice. Parents’ and society’s values and wishes are virtually forced onto pupils, whether they like it or not. Tests and exams, many of which are standardized and given high credence in the world “out there,” are imposed on students with no consultation with the students themselves. The glorification of content, product, correctness, and competitiveness has failed to bring the learner into a collaborative process of competence building.

The consequence of such extrinsic motivators is that schools all too often teach students to play the “game” of pleasing teachers and authorities rather than developing an internalized thirst for knowledge and experience. The administration of grades and praises for being a “good child” builds a dependency on immediate M&M gratification. Competition against classmates (who might otherwise be allies or partners in learning) ensues. If a communal bond is created, it runs the risk of being motivated by the need to band together against teachers and authorities. Over the long haul, such dependency focuses students too exclusively on the material or monetary rewards of an education rather than instilling an appreciation for creativity and satisfying some of the more basic drives for knowledge and exploration. Ultimately, the product of this system is a student who has been taught to fear failure above all and therefore to refrain from potentially rewarding risk-taking or innovative behavior.

A bleak picture? Too harsh? Of course, there are many happy exceptions to such a depiction, but you don’t have to look very far in any corner of the world to find major elements of the picture holding true. The question is: Can something be done to turn such a picture upside down? Or, more specifically to your quest, can your English classroom become a place where these extrinsic elements are diverted into a more positive direction? Or, better yet, can such elements be avoided entirely?

Table 5.1 depicts what can happen in an institution that takes eight extrinsic elements and, while accepting their reality in virtually any society or educational institution, turns those elements in an intrinsically oriented direction. The notion
here is that an intrinsically oriented school can begin to transform itself into a more positive, affirming environment not so much by revolutionizing society (which takes decades if not centuries) but by shifting its view of the student.

Table 5.1. From extrinsic to intrinsic motivation in educational institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extrinsic Pressures</th>
<th>Intrinsic Innovations</th>
<th>Motivational Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOL CURRICULUM</td>
<td>learner-centered</td>
<td>self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>personal goal-setting</td>
<td>self-actualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individualization</td>
<td>decide for self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS</td>
<td>family solidarity</td>
<td>love, intimacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>negotiated agreements</td>
<td>acceptance, respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>for wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIETY’S EXPECTATIONS</td>
<td>security of comfortable</td>
<td>community, belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(conformity)</td>
<td>routines</td>
<td>identity, harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>task-based teaching</td>
<td>security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TESTS &amp; EXAMS</td>
<td>peer evaluation</td>
<td>experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-diagnosis</td>
<td>self-knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>level-check exercises</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMMEDIATE GRATIFICATION</td>
<td>set long-term goals</td>
<td>self-actualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(“M&amp;M’s”)</td>
<td>focus on big picture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>patience will reward</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAKE MONEY!</td>
<td>content-based teaching</td>
<td>cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vocational education</td>
<td>harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>workplace ESL, ESP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPETITION</td>
<td>cooperative learning</td>
<td>community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>group work</td>
<td>strength, status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the class is a team</td>
<td>security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEVER FAIL!</td>
<td>risk-taking, innovation, creativity</td>
<td>learn from mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>nobody’s perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“c’est la vie”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A curriculum that comes from “the administration” can be modified to some extent to include student-centered learning and teaching, to allow students to set some—not all, perhaps—of their own learning goals, and to individualize lessons and activities as much as possible. The result: higher student self-esteem, greater chances for self-actualization, more deciding for oneself.

Expectations of parents and other authority figures are a reality that we cannot simply dissolve by waving a magic wand. But teachers can help to convert the perception of those expectations into a sense of the positive effect of the immediate family on a student and of the importance of tradition not because it has been forced on them, but because its intrinsic worth is perceived. The result: an appreciation of love, intimacy, and respect for the wisdom of age. In turn, society’s expectations may,
through a process of education and counseling, be seen as a means for providing comfortable routines (time schedules, customs, mores). Class discussions can focus on a critical evaluation of society so that students aren’t forced to accept some specific way of thinking or acting, but are coaxed into examining both sides of the issue. The result is a sense of belonging, of the value of the wider community, of harmony.

Tests and exams can incorporate some student consultation (see Chapter 24) and peer evaluation. Teachers can help students to view tests as feedback instruments for self-diagnosis, not as comparisons of one’s performance against a norm. Students thus become motivated by the experience and by achieving self-knowledge.

The otherwise extrinsic values that are given in Table 5.1 (immediate gratification, material rewards, competition, and fear of failure) can also be redirected through

- emphasizing the “big” picture—larger perspectives
- letting students set long-term goals
- allowing sufficient time for learning
- cooperative learning activities
- group work
- viewing the class as a team
- content-centered teaching
- English for specific (vocational/professional) purposes
- English in the workplace
- allowing risk-taking behavior
- rewarding innovation and creativity

Such activities and attitudes on your part appeal to the deeper causes of motivation. They get at needs and drives, at self-control, at a balanced, realistic perception of self, and even at the simple joy of learning for its own sake!

**INTRINSIC MOTIVATION IN THE SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM**

Turning to the role of intrinsic motivation in second language classrooms in particular, consider these activities that capitalize on the intrinsic by appealing to learners’ self-determination and autonomy:

- teaching writing as a thinking process in which learners develop their own ideas freely and openly
- showing learners strategies of reading that enable them to bring their own information to the written word
• language experience approaches in which students create their own reading material for others in the class to read
• oral fluency exercises in which learners talk about what interests them and not about a teacher-assigned topic
• listening to an academic lecture in one's own field of study for specific information that will fill a gap for the learner
• communicative language teaching, in which language is taught to enable learners to accomplish certain specific functions
• grammatical explanations, if learners see in such explanations a potential for increasing their autonomy in a second language

Actually, every technique in your language classroom can be subjected to an intrinsic motivation “litmus test” to determine the extent to which they adhere to this powerful principle. Try using the checklist in Table 5.2 to help you determine whether something you’re doing in the classroom is contributing to your students’ intrinsic drives.

Table 5.2. A checklist of intrinsically motivating techniques

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Throughout the rest of this book, you will be reminded of the importance of the Intrinsic Motivation Principle in achieving your goals as a teacher. Think of yourself not so much as a teacher who must constantly “deliver” information to your students, but more as a facilitator of learning whose job is to set the stage for learning, to start the wheels turning inside the heads of your students, to turn them on to their own abilities, and to help channel those abilities in fruitful directions.

Zoltán Dörnyei (2001) offers an insightful set of strategies for creating what he calls “basic motivational conditions” (p. 31) in the classroom, based on a survey of Hungarian foreign language teachers (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). All eight strategies focus on what the teacher can do to start the process of creating intrinsic motivation.

1. Demonstrate and talk about your own enthusiasm for the course material, and how it affects you personally.
2. Take the students’ learning very seriously.
3. Develop a personal relationship with your students.
4. Develop a collaborative relationship with the students’ parents.
5. Create a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the classroom.
6. Promote the development of group cohesiveness.
7. Formulate group norms explicitly, and have them discussed and accepted by the learners.
8. Have the group norms consistently observed.

These eight guidelines are followed, in Dörnyei’s (2001) book, by 27 other strategies for generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation, and encouraging positive self-evaluation.

You might wish to compare Dörnyei’s 35 strategies with my own six general guidelines for infusing your English language classroom with some intrinsically motivating dynamics:

1. Teachers are enablers, not rewarders. Therefore, when you teach, focus less on how to administer immediate or tangible rewards and more on how to get students to tune in to their potential and to be challenged by self-determined goals.
2. Learners need to develop autonomy, not dependence. Therefore, be careful not to let learners become dependent on your daily praise and other feedback. Rather, administer praise selectively and judiciously, helping students to recognize their own self-satisfaction in having done something well.
3. Help learners to take charge of their own learning through setting some personal goals and utilizing learning strategies.
4. Learner-centered, cooperative teaching is intrinsically motivating. Therefore, give students opportunities to make choices in activities, topics, discussions, etc.
Sometimes a simple either/or choice ("Okay, class, for the next 10 minutes we can either do this little cloze test or review for the test. Which do you want to do?") helps students to develop intrinsic motives. They feel less like puppets on a string if you can involve them in various aspects of looking at their needs and self-diagnosing, of planning lessons and objectives, of deciding in which direction a lesson might go, and of evaluating their learning.

5. Content-based activities and courses are intrinsically motivating. Therefore, you might strive to focus your students on interesting, relevant subject-matter content that gets them more linguistically involved with meanings and purposes and less with verbs and prepositions.

6. Tests, with some special attention from the teacher, can be intrinsically motivating. Allowing some student input to the test, giving well-thought-out classroom tests that are face-valid in the eyes of students, and giving narrative evaluations are just some of the topics covered in Chapter 25 on how your tests can contribute to intrinsic motivation.

All of the above enthusiasm for intrinsic motivation shouldn’t lure you into thinking that we now have a catchall concept that will explain everything about learning and teaching. Other factors affect learning outcomes: native ability, age, context of learning, style preferences, background experience and qualifications, availability of time to give the effort needed, and the quality of input that is beyond the immediate control of the learner. And clearly you will be able to use a combination of extrinsic (for more immediate concerns or for extremely low motivational contexts, for example) and intrinsic motives to your advantage in the classroom; there is indeed a place—and a very soundly supportable place—for extrinsic motives in the language classroom.

But when all these factors are duly considered, the students’ long-term goals, their deepest level of feeling and thinking, and their global assessment of their potential to be self-actualized are much, much better served by promoting intrinsic motives. Your task is to maintain these intrinsically motivating factors on an underlying plane of awareness in your mind whenever and wherever learners are placed under your tutelage.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION, ACTION, AND RESEARCH

[Note: (I) Individual work; (G) group or pair work; (C) whole-class discussion.]

1. (I/G/C) This chapter has provided background information, research, and classroom applications of one of the 12 principles named in Chapter 4. Now, as a limited research project, pick one of the other 11 principles and (a) do some library research (you might begin by looking through PLLT) to find
sources on the topic and (b) draw some further practical implications for teaching. Write or orally present your report. This could be done as a collaborative project in pairs.

2. (G) Assign pairs to look once again at the ESL lesson described in Chapter 1, and make a list of aspects of that lesson that appeal to the Intrinsic Motivation Principle. Then, partners should scan through the list of methods described in Chapter 2 and consider the extent to which each method promoted intrinsic motivation among students.

3. (I) Review Gardner’s concept of integrative and instrumental orientation (see PLTT, Chapter 6). Make sure you understand how both of his types of orientation could have either intrinsic or extrinsic motives.

4. (G) Ask pairs to look again at the six drives claimed by Ausubel to underlie human motivation, and describe classroom examples or illustrate how each of the six drives might be fulfilled.

5. (G) Maslow’s pyramid of needs is a well-known model of motivation. Direct pairs to come up with some further examples—beyond those already cited—of how certain “ordinary classroom routines may in fact be important precursors to motivation for higher attainment” (page 87). At what point do these ordinary routines become dull, boring, or ineffective?

6. (I) What do the three cognitive definitions of motivation have in common?

7. (C) In some ways, traditional, largely extrinsically inspired educational systems are strongly criticized here. Ask the class to discuss whether that criticism is justified. Have the class share some examples of extrinsically oriented practices from their own experience in learning another language. What did they do to survive in that atmosphere? How can student survival techniques be turned around to inspire better teaching practices?

8. (G/C) Ask pairs to think of some counterexamples to the “bleak picture” of traditional education—that is, positive, intrinsically rewarding experiences in their own school experiences. Have pairs then share them with the rest of the class.

9. (G) If time and facilities permit, assign partners to design a simple classroom experiment in intrinsic motivation, perhaps following the model of the two little studies summarized on page 89. Since motivation can’t be observed, it must be inferred. Therefore, students will need to be as specific as possible in determining how they will measure intrinsic motivation.

10. (C/G) As a whole class, brainstorm for just a minute to come up with half a dozen or so commonly used techniques in language classrooms that students have observed recently (e.g., pronunciation drill, fluency circle, information-gap activity, reading aloud, listening to a lecture, etc.). Then, assign one or two of those techniques to pairs or small groups for a rigorous examination of the 10 criteria for determining whether a technique is intrinsically motivating in Table 5.2. Groups should then share their “report card” for each technique. Did groups find that in most cases intrinsic motivation depended on how the teacher conducted the technique?
FOR YOUR FURTHER READING


Zoltan Dörnyei has published a number of books and articles on the subject of motivation in language learning. This chapter in his book on individual differences among language learners is an excellent summary of research on motivation worldwide.


One of the most practical of his writings, this book is directed to teachers and offers 35 strategies for teachers to promote motivation. The strategies are classified into four categories: basic motivational conditions; generating initial motivation; maintaining and protecting motivation; and encouraging positive self-evaluation.


Edward Deci is one of the principal players in a long list of those who have conducted research on intrinsic motivation. This book, though somewhat dated, is still applicable to current teaching practice. It explains the construct in full detail and describes supporting research.


While not written for the foreign language teacher specifically, this very practically oriented book for teachers nevertheless gives a sense of many different approaches and classroom techniques that will instill a sense of intrinsic motivation in students.