Strategies to Enhance or Maintain Motivation in Learning a Foreign Language

Estrategias para aumentar o mantener la motivación en el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera

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Motivation is one of the most important factors in the enjoyment and success in learning any subject, especially a foreign language. Many students approach the learning of a language based on academic mandates, family impositions, job requirements, and so on. These non-intrinsic motivations make learning a more difficult, frustrating, and non-pleasurable experience, both for students and teachers. Therefore, skills in motivating learners should be seen as central to teaching effectively. In this article, we provide a series of strategies for teachers to gradually lead students from an extrinsic motivation to a more internal and autonomous motivation. This approach is framed within one of the most recent and well-known theories of motivation: self-determination theory.

Key words: Autonomy, engagement, motivational strategies, self-determination theory, types of motivation.

La motivación es uno de los factores más importantes en el disfrute y el éxito del aprendizaje de cualquier tema, especialmente de un idioma extranjero. Muchos estudiantes se acercan al aprendizaje de un idioma a partir de mandatos académicos, imposiciones familiares, requisitos de trabajo, etc. Estas motivaciones no intrínsecas hacen que el aprendizaje sea una experiencia más difícil, frustrante y no placentera, tanto para los estudiantes como para los maestros. Por lo tanto, las habilidades para motivar a los alumnos deben considerarse centrales para la eficacia de la enseñanza. En este artículo, proporcionamos una serie de estrategias para que los maestros guíen gradualmente a los estudiantes desde una motivación extrínseca a una motivación más interna y autónoma. Este enfoque se enmarca en una de las teorías de motivación más recientes y conocidas: la teoría de la autodeterminación.

Palabras clave: autonomía, compromiso, estrategias motivacionales, teoría de la autodeterminación, tipos de motivación.

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Introduction

Despite the numerous publications that have analyzed and described motivational strategies (e.g., Dörnyei, 1994, 2001; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Williams & Burden, 1997), the amount of research devoted to motivating learners in second language settings has been rather small (Dörnyei, 2003; McEown, Noels, & Saumure, 2014; Noels, 2009; Oga-Baldwin, Nakata, Parker, & Ryan, 2017; Vibulphol, 2016). Therefore, there is an evident need to continue to research to devise instructional interventions that teachers can apply in the classroom to elicit and stimulate student motivation.

The motivating process is usually a long-term affair; one that is gradually constructed with patience, trust, care, and hard work. It is widely recognized that, particularly, in teaching

> it is rare to find dramatic motivational events that—like a lighting or a revelation—reshape the students' mindsets from one moment to another. Rather it is typically a series of nuances that might eventually culminate in a long-lasting effect. (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 25)

This long-term affair necessarily has to begin with the teacher's own enthusiasm or motivation. A teacher's strong desire to teach, a willingness to be resourceful, creative, and informed usually pave the way for students' own motivation to learn. As expressed by Dörnyei (2001), sometimes the best motivational practices are those that have to do with improving the clarity and quality of instruction. Following this lead, the current article describes the importance of *autonomy*, *competence*, and *relatedness* as the basic psychological motivators within self-determination theory (SDT). Based on these three motivators, we provide and explain a series of strategies to help teachers understand how these psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) function as motivational triggers. The strategies can improve the quality of relationships in the classroom, the clarity of instruction, and ultimately lead to greater enthusiasm and engagement both in teaching and learning.

Motivational Strategies

Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) have defined motivational strategies as the teaching practices that trigger student motivation. More specifically, Dörnyei (2001) describes them as the "motivational influences that are consciously exerted to achieve some systematic and enduring positive effect" (p. 28). The most systematic collection of L2 motivational strategies has been laid out by Dörnyei (1994, 2001). This compendium provides 100 recommendations containing macro and micro strategies.

The author explains that this quantity of strategies is overwhelming and difficult for the average classroom teacher. He reports that various teacher-training courses have shown that teachers need a smaller amount of strategies in order to be able to fully concentrate their attention on the implementation of these strategies.

Research on motivation has also been conducted within SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Niemiec, Ryan, & Deci, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2017). This theory proposes an organismic approach to human motivation and emotion that has yielded many useful implications for the design of motivational strategies in the educational domain. SDT is one of the most influential theories in motivational psychology today with robust empirical support. This theory posits that when teachers promote autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the classroom, students are more likely to become autonomously motivated, that is, to autonomously engage with and internalize the study material (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009).

The natural psychological need for *autonomy* (de Charms, 1968) refers to the experience of being able to make our own choices and decisions. For example, students experience autonomy when they are able to willingly dedicate time and attention to their studies. *Competence* (White, 1959) is the confidence that one can perform effectively. Students feel competent when they are not afraid to meet an academic challenge. *Relatedness* (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) refers to the students' feelings of connection with significant others. For instance, according to Ryan and Deci (2000), students who feel

that their teachers genuinely listen, value, and respect them are more likely to identify with their teachers' values and practices.

These three basic psychological needs are essential to foster motivation and engagement in the classroom (Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010) resulting in enhanced performance and persistence (Hardre & Reeve, 2003; Ratelle, Guay, Vallerand, Larose, & Senécal, 2007), creativity and well-being (Black & Deci, 2000), conceptual understanding (Benware & Deci, 1984; Grolnick & Ryan, 1987), and lower levels of dropout (Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997). In addition, SDT warns that if any of these psychological needs are not met, the emotional, physical, and social well-being of a person can be negatively affected.

According to SDT, intrinsic motivation is the target for optimal classroom learning, yet it is not easy to promote in educational activities that are not self-endorsed by students, but rather undertaken to satisfy some external demand (e.g., curriculum or job requirements, parents' wishes). However, SDT asserts that support for need satisfaction can facilitate the process of internalization; that is, the active, *natural* process of coming to endorse the value of a non-intrinsically motivated activity (Ryan, 1993). Indeed, internalization "is essential for students' self-initiation and maintained volition for educational activities that are not inherently interesting or enjoyable" (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009, p. 138).

Four different types of extrinsic motivation are described by SDT which vary in their degree of internalization and, thus, in the experience of autonomy. External regulation is the type of extrinsic motivation which is the least autonomous. In other words, the behavior is done in order to obtain a reward, avoid a punishment, or is controlled by circumstances external to the student. For instance, a student may say: "I am studying English just because I want to comply with an academic requirement." The next type of extrinsic motivation is *introjected regulation*, in which the behavior is caused by a desire not to seem incompetent in the eyes of classmates or

teachers (to avoid shame), or to seek approval from teachers or parents (to feel pride). External and introjected motivations are both types of controlled motivation. The next type of extrinsic motivation is *identified regulation*, in which the behavior is done because of its personal value and importance. For instance, a student might say: "I am studying English because it is important to communicate when in a foreign country." The final type of extrinsic motivation is *integrated regulation*, in which the value of the behavior is not only identified but also synthesized with other values and aspects of the self, as when a student says: "I am studying English because it is necessary when living abroad, which is one of my life goals and aspirations." Both identified regulation and integrated regulation—along with intrinsic motivation (e.g., "I am studying English just because I enjoy it")—are autonomous forms of motivation. Research has shown that more autonomous forms of motivation are associated directly or indirectly with more academic engagement and outcomes (Goldberg & Noels, 2006; Ma, 2009; Tanaka, 2009). From the perspective of SDT, the facilitation of autonomous motivation (internalization) helps students transform controlled behaviors (i.e., external regulation and introjected regulation) into autonomous behaviors (i.e., identified regulation and integrated regulation) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Therefore, it is important that teachers can recognize the type of motivation students bring and understand the reasons why they desire to learn the language. In addition, it is important to consider that students may have multiple reasons to learn a language and that the types of motivation can vary depending on the context.

In the next section, we offer a set of non-exhaustive strategies that can be used by teachers in their efforts to motivate students. Some of these strategies have been discussed in the SDT literature, others reflect our elaborations based on different authors and on our own research and experience within SDT and, therefore, represent a contribution to the application of this theory in second language teaching.

Autonomy

Explaining the Purpose and Benefit of Tasks

Research in learning motivation suggests that when students perceive that a lesson has personal value or relevance, they tend to engage more, make more efforts, and achieve more (Miller & Brickman, 2004; Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Soenens, & Matos, 2005; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). According to Jang (2008), students can be helped to value an activity in terms of "high task value, utility value, interest value, attainment value, instrumental value, future goals, future consequences, future time perspective, and/or intrinsic goals" (p. 798). Helping students find value for teachers' requests (rules, activities, procedures), has been referred to as providing *explanatory rationales.* A rationale is a "verbal explanation of why putting forth effort during a learning activity might be a useful thing to do" (Reeve, Jang, Hardre, & Omura, 2002, p. 185). Rationales are particularly useful for requests that students initially find uninteresting or unpleasant. According to Reeve and Su (2014), when the rationale is honest, valid, and satisfying, students have the opportunity to internalize the value of what others find important and useful. On the contrary, when students do not understand why the teacher is making certain requests, "they often view the request as arbitrary, imposed or simply meaningless busywork" (Reeve & Su, 2014, p. 355).

Therefore, the way in which teachers present requests has a direct relation to how students receive and react to them (Dörnyei, 2001). For instance, Dörnyei emphasizes the need to present a task in a way that takes into consideration students' motivation and proposes that the motivational introduction of an activity should fulfill, among other functions, the explanation of the purpose and utility of the task. Giving students instructions, describing what they will accomplish and how they will be assessed is not enough to bring about positive effects on student motivation. If students are expected to give their best when attending to a task,

it is necessary that they understand why a particular activity is important or meaningful. In accordance, Dörnyei (2001, pp. 79-80) suggests the following strategies when presenting a task:

- Emphasize that the task is a learning opportunity to be valued rather than an imposed demand to be resisted.
- Explain where the activity fits in within a sequence or bigger picture, and how it relates to the overall goals of the class.
- Describe the intended purpose of the activity and what this implies about how students should respond to it (e.g., what they should concentrate on or be particularly careful about).
- Try and make a connection between the task and the students' personal daily life and point out how the skills learnt will be useful in enabling them to achieve real-life agendas.

Furthermore, teachers can ask students to think of different ways of using the language in future opportunities. When students can establish connections between what they have learned in the classroom and the possibilities of using this learning for their needs in the real world, their motivation for learning a language can increase.

Providing Choices

According to Black and Deci (2000) and Reeve (2009), motivating teachers provide choice and decision-making opportunities to students and make them feel autonomous to learn. These teachers convey the message: "I am your ally; I will help you; I am here to support you and your strivings" (Reeve, 2016, p. 130). Furthermore, teachers who provide choices and decision-making opportunities create a sense of accomplishment in students. This feeling of accomplishment, in turn, can increase motivation and desire to be more productive in the classroom.

Giving choices in the classroom is not just about doing anything, but about offering options that are

connected to students' needs, preferences, goals, and desires. In this case, the choices create an opportunity for self-realization that is experienced as motivating for the students (Katz & Assor, 2007). Some research indicates that when the choices are not connected to students' interest, volition, and goals, the act of choosing itself is not what motivates them, but the value they find in the options in relation to their self and personal goals (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Reeve, Nix, & Hamm, 2003; Reynolds & Symons, 2001).

When giving choices, it is important not to offer numerous or complex options. According to Iyengar and Kamenica (2010), too many choices can create frustration in students, which can affect their ability to choose and commit to one option. The authors argued that when students feel overwhelmed by too many choices or believe that they could make a wrong choice, they may, instead, decide not to choose, or may ask another student or the teacher to choose for them. Additionally, research has shown that offering choices of intermediate difficulty support competence and are, therefore, motivating. However, when choices are too easy or too difficult motivation tends to be undermined (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

Types of choices. Different researchers (Alfi, Assor, & Katz, 2004; Assor et al., 2002; Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon, & Barch, 2004; Stefanou, Perencevich, DiCinto, & Turner, 2004) suggest different ways to support choice and decision making:

- let students choose the format in which to present ideas
- ask students how they would like to develop a specific task
- ask students to find ways to solve a problem
- allow students to formulate goals and propose tasks
- allow students to decide on the work methods and how they would like to be assessed
- ask for students' input into the lesson plan
- let students make decisions regarding how they want to tackle learning tasks (method, self-pace) or

who they want to group with (in pairs, individually, small group).

These types of choices are motivating because they are based on the students' interests and preferences.

Competence

Scaffolding

In learning a language, students can be more motivated when they are provided with the necessary guidance to perform activities. Providing step-by-step directions and enough support throughout the different instructional stages enhances students' motivation by keeping them on task, managing their behavior, and avoiding confusion during lessons (Larkin, 2001; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Tucker et al., 2002).

Offering support during instruction has been called *scaffolding*, which refers to the temporary assistance instructors give students in order to help them complete a task that students would not be able to achieve on their own. The term is associated with Vygotsky's theory (1978) of Zone of Proximal Development (zpd) and is described as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). More specifically, teachers scaffold instruction when they change the level and amount of support in order to suit the cognitive capacities of the student. For instance, when a student is having difficulties with a particular task, the teacher provides more support and, over time, less support as the student masters the task.

Van de Pol, Volman, and Beishuizen (2010) distinguished several scaffolding techniques to support the learning activities. The authors argued that a teaching strategy qualifies as scaffolding when it is used in an unplanned way and when the teacher gradually assigns the responsibility to the student.

Some of these techniques or means of assisting instruction are:

Modeling. Of all our senses, seeing is the one with which we learn best, therefore, instructors should always show students a sample of the expected product or production before they are actually asked to perform an activity. For instance, if a teacher assigns a narrative essay, a model should be presented along with the assessment rubric in order to guide students and inform them of the expected outcome. A second type of modeling is "talk-alouds," which require the teacher to verbalize the thought process or problem-solving strategy while demonstrating the task. In the case of language learning, it can be done during the explicit explanation of grammar or when giving the solution to an activity such as a scavenger hunt or a webquest (Hogan & Pressley, 1997).

Offering explanations. Teaching learners from different age groups is also an important factor when scaffolding activities. For example, kindergarteners are unable to follow simple directions or a story line and to name common objects and may find it difficult to express themselves clearly. Elementary students have problems with temporal and spatial concepts (e.g., before-after, some, few) and blending sounds and they still have difficulties finding words. Secondary students find it difficult to gain information from class lectures and textbooks, to express their thoughts in writing, and to participate in classroom discussions.

As a result of the aforementioned difficulties, teachers need to be able to explain to learners how the target language functions at all levels having in mind learners' cognitive and cultural limitations. At the beginning of instruction, explanations in language instruction should incorporate all the components: syntax, semantics, and pragmatics and should be repeated in different language exercises and contexts. Hogan and Pressley (1997, p. 17) explained that "as the learners gain experience, explanations consist of only hints or key words, which prompt the learners to recall important information and that, eventually, explanations are removed altogether."

Providing and contributing clues. It is common to find instructors that try to fill the class gaps with answers to their own questions. Instead of supplying an entire solution or detailed instructions, the instructor can provide clues or suggestions to help the student develop the thinking skills that will facilitate learning and give a three to five second period of wait time for students to give an answer.

When students display limited proficiency or while trying to find out how much students know about any given topic, the teacher can ask them to contribute clues or ideas rather than ask them for direct participation (Hogan & Pressley, 1997). In addition, during a class discussion, for instance, the teacher can add her/his own ideas to guide the discussion, to make corrections, or simply to keep the conversation going.

Ellis and Larkin (1998) also proposed a *four-stage scaffolding* model that we consider as a way to gradually fade the teacher support and transfer the responsibility to the student, to wit: (a) the teacher demonstrates, (b) the whole class practices, (c) a small group practices, and (d) the individual student practices. During the first stage teachers can use scaffolding techniques such as modeling and offering explanations. During the second stage, instructors can also offer explanations and provide clues. During the third stage, instructors can invite students to participate and provide and contribute clues and, throughout all the stages but especially during the last stage, instructors should provide individual students with detailed feedback and ask questions that elicit linguistically and cognitively engaging responses.

Providing Descriptive Feedback

Feedback of great quality is that which is "highly specific, directly revealing or highly descriptive of what actually resulted, clear to the performer, and available or offered in terms of specific targets and standards" (Wiggins, 1998, p. 46). Descriptive feedback helps students revise their own performance in order to meet the learning objectives.

According to Muñoz-Restrepo (2017), feedback needs to be based on the learning objectives and the actions the students need to take in order to perform better and not on merely grades and judgments about their progress. When providing feedback, the author suggests avoiding comments such as "good work", "excellent!", "you need to improve", and so on, since they are not descriptive of the behavior. Instead, she recommends the use of descriptive feedback, such as: "Your presentation was developed in an orderly and organized way. You included specific information that supported the topic. The content was powerfully focused and informative. Your performance related directly to the task specifications" (p. 122).

Feedback is more likely to be effective when students understand the learning objectives and the criteria by which their performance will be assessed. As noted by Wiggins (1998):

> Students must have routine access to the criteria and standards for the task they need to master; they must have feedback in their attempts to master those tasks; and they must have opportunities to use the feedback to revise work and resubmit it for evaluation against the standard. (p. 64)

Some common characteristics of effective feedback as cited in the literature are:

- It is specific to each student's performance and not standardized. Providing individual, face-to-face feedback allows the student to interact with the teacher by expressing opinions, clarifying doubts, and establishing agreements. This, in turn, leads to a mutual understanding between teacher and student of the comments provided (Higgins, Hartley, & Skelton, 2001; Ivanić, Clark, & Rimmershaw, 2000). In this sense, feedback can be seen more as a dialogue between teacher and student where the student is an active and responsible participant of his learning process. By making sense of the different sources of information received from the teacher, the student can make decisions to enhance his learning or his learning strategies (Carless, Salter, Yang, & Lam, 2011).

- It is descriptive, non-judgmental, and non-coercive. It is based on regular observations of student behavior and not on explanations or judgements related to the students' performance. For this reason, it is advisable to concentrate on the student's behavior and not on the person, describing what she has or has not done with respect to the learning objectives. Teachers can also show that they are actively listening to the student (rephrasing what the student has just said, nodding, asking clarification questions, etc.). Likewise, coercive language like: "You should…" "You have to…" "You must…" or generalizing statements "You always…" "You never…" need to be avoided because this type of language acts as an external imposition that does not empower the students and does not motivate them or encourage them to reflect on their behavior.

- It should not be overwhelming. It is common for teachers to want to point out every single mistake made by the students. However, this might be overwhelming and discouraging for the student and, therefore, limit the possibilities of effectively using feedback to improve learning.

- Feedback should be timely given. If there is an assessment activity, feedback should be given soon after the assessment so that the event is still fresh in the mind of the student and teacher.

Relatedness

Demonstrating Appropriate Teacher Behavior

According to a survey conducted by Dörnyei and Csizér (1998), teachers' behavior was considered to be the single most important tool for motivating students. The survey also concluded that this "tool" was one of the less considered and used in classroom practices. In the remainder of this section, we suggest some

strategies that can help teachers develop or enhance feelings of relatedness in the classroom.

Show your own enthusiasm. Show and talk about your own enthusiasm for the subject, the course, and your methodologies. Additionally, talk to students about the importance of learning an L2 and how it enriches your life experience.

Take students' learning process seriously by:

- genuinely demonstrating to students that you care about their learning process
- making yourself available for academic issues
- believing in your students' capacities to achieve goals
- offering specific advice or instructions when needed
- responding as soon as possible when help is requested
- correcting quizzes, tests, and papers promptly (one week)
- using available technology to send relevant or interesting material
- encouraging extracurricular activities and, if possible, offering assistance
- showing concern and talk to students when something is not going well

Maintaining a Good Relationship With Students
According to Dörnyei (2001):

teachers who share warm, personal interactions with their students, who respond to their concerns in an empathic manner and who succeed in establishing a relationship of mutual trust and respect with the learners are more likely to inspire them in academic matters than those who have no personal ties with the learners. (p. 36)

Some strategies that can help teachers establish relatedness with students are:

Develop a personal relationship with your students by:

- remembering students' names
- getting to know about their lives outside the school
- communicating with your students in an open, honest, and caring manner
- demonstrating a positive, non-judgmental attitude toward your students
- holding your students responsible for what they do without criticizing, comparing, or judging them
- showing interest in their hobbies and talents
- getting to know their strengths and weaknesses
- including personal topics in class activities

Establishing group norms. Establishing a logical set of norms to be used in the classroom eliminates confusion and constant, repetitive questions; saves time; and helps to create a more organized, efficient classroom where students are clearly aware of what is expected of them. This set of rules will help students to accomplish the different classroom activities in a more effective and orderly manner, thus increasing student motivation to learn (Ehrman & Dörnyei, 1998).

It is important that these group norms are established with input from all group members so that students will have some measure of ownership over them. When there is consensus, it is more likely that students will accept and comply with the established rules. According to Dörnyei (2001), it is helpful and important to have rules "for the students," (e.g., don't be late to class) "for the teacher" (e.g., mark tests and homework within a week), and "for everybody" (e.g., let's try to listen to each other).

When establishing class rules, take into consideration:

- Formulate and discuss possible norms
- Discuss with students the rationale for each norm
- Try to phrase rules in a positive and simple manner
- Specify consequences for the violation of the norms
- If possible, post the rules somewhere in the classroom
- Make rules as few as possible
- Once rules are agreed upon, make sure that they are consistently enforced

- Advocate enforcement of rules and good behavior, but overlook minor incidents in certain situations

Protecting Self-Concept and Confidence

Coping with a subject that is new and, in most cases, difficult makes the majority of people insecure and vulnerable. That is the reason why one of the most motivating things that an L2 teacher can do for a student is to help her/him develop or maintain a good self-concept. Students with a positive self-concept have more confidence in themselves, take more risks, have more frustration tolerance, and are more successful in general (Roman, Cuestas, & Fenollar, 2008).

A teacher cannot develop self-esteem for a student. However, according to Dörnyei (2001) teachers can have an impact on students' self-image in a positive way. If students realize that the classroom is a safe place where they feel that their self-worth and dignity are protected, they gain confidence. By being empathic, offering guidance, support, and honest encouragement, a positive self-concept is not imposed, but fostered overtime.

Build self-concept and confidence by:

- providing sufficient preparation (pre-task activities) for all classroom activities
- letting students know you are there if they require assistance with a given task
- making the success criteria as clear as possible
- anticipating frustration or possible obstacles to learning (if necessary, address these in advance with students)
- creating multiple opportunities for students to succeed
- helping students identify their strengths and build on them
- providing honest recognition and encouragement as often as possible
- avoiding social comparison

- avoiding criticism and correcting students in ways that might feel humiliating or embarrassing
- avoiding putting students on the spot without some measure of consent
- correcting (discipline) students with empathy and understanding rather than anger and lecturing

Communicating Effectively

Communication is one of the essential elements necessary to create an emotional environment that makes it easier for students to be open to what is new and difficult. According to SDT, teachers' communication style can be associated with students' motivation and experiences of psychological need satisfaction.

Acknowledge feelings. Instead of dismissing, denying, judging, or criticizing students' opinions, comments, answers, or attitudes, acknowledge their feelings. When a student is bombarded with criticism, comparisons, threats, or advice, she/he finds it difficult to think about her/his problem or take responsibility. Instead, she/he will become fixated on teachers' angry, humiliating, or lecturing behavior. Therefore, welcome students' feelings and thoughts; do not dismiss students' negative remarks, but rather try to get students to describe or explain what it is about the activity that is not, for example, interesting, fun, and so on.

Protecting Motivation

In order to protect motivation for future experiences, it is vital that teachers teach their learners to explain past successes and failures in a constructive way. In doing so, attribution theory is very useful; this is a psychological theory (Weiner, 1986, 1992) around the idea that subjective explanations about failure or success in past events play a significant role in future decisions, actions, and experiences. A student might attribute failure to stable and uncontrollable causes such as *lack of ability* rather than to changeable factors that are within his control such as not enough effort, not

enough time dedicated, lack of concentration, competing thoughts, and insufficient use of appropriate learning strategies. Some of the most common attributions in an educational setting are ability, effort, past difficulties, luck, mood, family background, help or hindrance from others (teacher or group), and the language program, method or materials (Tse, 2000; Ushioda, 2001; Williams & Burden, 1999).

According to Dörnyei (2001) two of these attributions—ability and effort—have been identified as the most influential causes in Western cultures. Attributing failure to ability is extremely discouraging whereas believing that we did not work hard enough is a *constructive attribution*.

Promote failure attributions for past failures by:

- helping learners explain failures by insufficient effort or lack of appropriate learning strategies, rather than by lack of ability
- helping students set and assess their goals realistically. Help them understand that because they don't succeed in a specific task or goal, that does not make them a failure or any less of a person
- doing your best to refuse ability attributions, instead make it clear that the goal, the activity, or the curriculum are within the students' ability range
- helping students clarify faulty thinking that leads to misinterpretations of events
- help students channel defeatist self-talk and thinking, while acknowledging student disappointment

The implementation of motivational strategies depends on each individual teacher's willingness (and persistence) to improve her/his teaching practices. Further, it requires the ongoing support from the administration through in-service programs where teachers are guided and accompanied by continuous support and tools to measure the impact of the strategies.

Conclusion

We have presented a series of motivational strategies aligned with SDT. According to this theory, intrinsic motivation can be enhanced or maintained by fostering three basic psychological needs present in all human beings. These needs are: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Some of the strategies described to provide feelings of autonomy are: offering rationales for requests that students initially find boring or not pleasant and giving meaningful choice opportunities to all students. To enhance feelings of competence, we have suggested diverse strategies to scaffold learning and to provide feedback. Finally, we described multiple ways to promote relatedness within strategies such as demonstrating appropriate teacher behavior, maintaining a good relationship with students, establishing group norms, protecting self-concept and confidence, communicating effectively, and protecting motivation.

It is important to mention that all the strategies provided can be effective in different socio-educational contexts. As Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) claimed:

> no motivational strategy has absolute and general value because such strategies are to be implemented in dynamically changing and very diverse learning contexts, in which the personality of the individual learners and the teacher, as well as the composition and structure of the learner group, will always interplay with the effectiveness of the strategy. (p. 224)

This statement implies that, before choosing any strategy, a motivating teacher needs to identify the students' needs and motivational orientations as well as the context, the dynamics of the group, and the students' learning stage (McEown et al., 2014). Based on this, a teacher can introduce in his daily lesson plan one or two strategies, examine their impact and devise further actions.

The experience of working with SDT-based strategies can help teachers to widen their views and practices concerning motivation, going beyond beliefs and traditional forms of motivating students which

are usually based on rewards and punishments. This implies a gradual change of paradigm from a behaviorist and artificial form of motivating to a more humane and natural way to enhance or maintain motivation.

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