

The Motivational Benefits of Content

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Content-based instruction has long been recognized as an effective method of teaching language and recent developments in CBLT have brought content back to the focus of language teachers. This review analyzes the motivational benefits of content in light of recent developments in motivational theory and to suggest how language teachers can best apply knowledge of interest, relevance and authenticity to motivate university students in Japan.

Content-based instructionが言語教育における効果的な手段と認識されて久しいが、近年の CBLT 分野における発展的な研究成果は、あらためて言語教育者の着眼点を内容や文脈を重視した学習へと戻しつつある。本論文では、最近の理論を通して、学習者の動機付けにおけるCBLTの有効性についての分析を行う。そして、日本の大学教育において、言語教育者が学生の教材内容に対する関心や関連性、信頼性についての知識を、実際に学習者の意欲向上に応用していく方法を提案する。

The Motivational Benefits of Content

This paper aims to investigate how educators at the tertiary level in Japan can best use content in order to increase learner's motivation. Current research that specifically addresses the motivational impact of content-based approaches in Japan is at an early stage of development. However, the study on content, which is an ongoing development in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), has long been recognized as an important vehicle for language learning (Korn, 1978). Most

teachers would accept the idea that learners should be aware of the relevance to the content and its utility while they are learning, as well as the importance of the language skills (Tomlinson, 2011). As Cook states, “the information content of the lesson...should correspond to the motivations of the students” (p. 39; see also Korn, 1978; Papalia & Zampogna, 1974), the relevancy of content to learners’ language learning is approved as a significant motivational factor. Therefore, in this paper, reviewing four major motivational theories, we examine how educators could recognize and handle content-based teaching for learners, and offer our viewpoint on what is the best applicable factor to motivate students.

The Evolution of SLA Motivation

Before we analyze the motivational benefits of content, it would be better to consider what motivational concepts and models have been used. There are two motivational concepts that SLA provides for educators at the tertiary level: integrative and instrumental motivations.

The concepts of integrative and instrumental motivations have been controversial since they were first introduced to second language teaching by Lambert and Gardner in the 1960s and 1970s (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Integrative motivation results in the learning of language in order to take part in the culture of its people (Cook, 2008; Gardner, 1960, 2010), while instrumental motivation results in language learning to achieve a career goal or for some practical reason. Hence, we can recognize integrative motivation as more culture-oriented and instrumental motivation as career-oriented.

These two concepts are yet quite clearly seen in mainstream materials in Japan and around the world. However, although these concepts have obvious utility in the development of SLA materials, the motivational model has been questioned in recent years. For example, Dörnyei (2001) argued against its relevance in EFL contexts, where a second language does not mediate between two different ethno-linguistic groups as in Canada, because English is increasingly seen as being an international communication tool that is not specifically associated with one ethno-linguistic group (see also Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, pp. 71-73). Irie (2003) also pointed out its specific relevance to Japan in that neither

an instrumental nor an integrative orientation in Japanese university students has been found to clearly correlate with proficiency without other mediating factors. Irie suggests that other related factors, such as mastery or an interest in international communication, could be more influential in motivating Japanese students.

Further, Gardner has recently argued in a defense of his own work that the model includes a generalized factor within instrumental motivation, but is in fact primarily concerned with integrative motivation (Gardner, 2010; Tomlinson, 2011). Some studies in Japan also concluded that instrumental motivation actually remained “multifaceted” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Kimura, Nakata, & Okumura, 2001), which shows that such motivation involves so many different factors for individual students, such as intrinsic-instrumental-integrative motive, extrinsic instrumental motive, language use anxiety, preference for teacher-centered lectures, and negative learning experiences (Kimura et al., 2001, Nakata, & Okumura, 2001), that it becomes extremely complex to analyze, and many studies use their own specific factors or derivations of factors in order to make analysis possible (Irie, 2003). Dörnyei (2001, p. 260) sees such local modification of factors as a natural consequence of attempting to apply a model in a different social context from that in which it was developed.

Thus, modern SLA motivation research would seem to have moved on from the simplistic concepts of integrative and instrumental motivation (Cook, 2008; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; MacIntyre, Noels, & Moore, 2010). Nevertheless, Gardner’s model and his extensive use of quantitative survey techniques remain highly influential in the study of motivation in Japan (Dörnyei, 2001; Stout, 2008) and many teaching materials in use today still follow his model.

Self Determination Theory, Internalization and the L2 Motivational Self System

Another competing motivational theory is Self Determination Theory (SDT) (Black & Deci, 2000; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001; Irie, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000), where the concepts of extrinsic motivation are placed on a continuum between the level of external control by the educator and the level of internal

self-regulation by the student (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). In effect, the more a social environment, such as a classroom, supports the human needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness, the more determined the students within that environment will be (Black & Deci, 2000; Deci et al., 2001; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2000;). It has been argued (Carver & Scheier, 2000; Reeve, Deci, & Ryan, 2004; Tomlinson, 2011), that a theory based on autonomy may not apply to collectivistic orientated societies, such as Korea and Japan. However, Jang, Reeve, Ryan, and Kim (2009) have found that there is statistical evidence that SDT is equally applicable amongst Korean students with their collectivistic cultural orientation, and Fukuda, Sakata, and Takeuchi (2011) present evidence from a study of Japanese university students that interventions based on SDT and SDT's relatedness aspect have a positive motivational influence.

The interwoven nature of feelings of competence and feelings of relatedness to peers in SDT also seems to relate well with sociological and educational discussions of the Japanese self (Dörnyei, 2001; Greer, 2000; Law, 1995; Weiner, 2009), where students may avoid situations that cause anxiety due to lack of support for or a perceived conflict between competence and relatedness (Andrade & Williams, 2009; Graham-Marr, 2011; Irie, 2003). This also matches data on the impact of directly controlling behavior exerted by Israeli teachers on students, such as controlling the pace of student learning, not allowing different opinions or giving non-negotiable directives, that suggests anxiety is a good predictor of poor motivation according to SDT (Assor, Kaplan, Kanat-Maymon, & Roth, 2005; Gardner, 2010).

There is quantitative evidence from a questionnaire survey of Japanese university students suggesting that studying abroad has an intrinsically motivating effect on Japanese students as interpreted using SDT (Kimura et al., 2001), and Sasaki (2011) argues that using Dörnyei and Ottó's (1998) process of L2 motivation as a research base line, more motivated students in the later phases of that temporal model may have internalized motivations as per SDT to study L2 writing more. This mixing of theories is not unusual and Dörnyei (2005) proposed the L2 Motivational Self System as a comprehensive synthesis of past research including the graded internalization of external motives as described by

SDT, although there are differences in where the boundaries are drawn (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, pp. 79-82).

The L2 Motivational Self System comprises three main components. These are the Ideal L2 Self encompassing integrative and internalized instrumental motives, the Ought-to L2 Self encompassing less internalized forms of instrumental motivation, and the L2 Learning experience encompassing situated motives related to the immediate environment, such as the impacts of the teacher and peer group (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Ryan (2009) shows how SDT's intrinsic and extrinsic motivational continuum relate to the L2 motivational self in the context of his experiences teaching in Japan, and Taguchi, Magid, and Papi (2009) have shown that this system is applicable to Japanese students at the quantitative scale. In Taguchi et al.'s (2009) study, it was found that Japanese students are most influenced by the preventative influence of instrumentality in the Ought-to L2 Self. Japanese students in the study were negatively influenced by extrinsic motivations that defined the person they thought they ought to be. This matches evidence of the negative impact of anxiety resulting from external regulation on Japanese students as discussed previously (see Andrade & Williams, 2009; Graham-Marr, 2011; Irie, 2003).

Therefore, the question remains whether anxiety can be reduced through the use of content that is related to the choices that Japanese university students make in their choice of degree. Is it possible to reduce student anxiety and improve motivation in language lessons by using content that is derived from or directly related to their major? Does the student's choice of major correlate with their ideal L2 self or their ought-to L2 self?

Edsall and Saito (2011) found that Japanese students studying for an art degree showed a significant increase in instrumental motivation after taking a content-based EFL course that derived its content from art and art history; however, the study's aim was to investigate the use of questionnaires and relied on Gardner's (1960, 2010) model of integrative and instrumental motivation. It was not intended to test the correlation of content-based instruction with SDT or the L2 self motivation system. There is some evidence from China that language lesson content that directly relates to students may promote both listening skills

and motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; MacIntyre et al., 2010; Ren, 2011). Lutes (2009) found that content directly related to the majors of his Japanese students had a noticeable motivational benefit, while Kember, Ho and Hong (2008) found that establishing various links between students and lesson material improved motivation in university classes across disciplines. In addition, the intervention protocol successfully used by Fukuda et al. (2011) requires material that is directly linked to the students (Stout, 2008).

Material that is intended to directly link with students is often aimed at the future professions or jobs of those students, and Taguchi et al. (2009) suggest that the usefulness of English proficiency in finding a job in Japan is a factor in how L2 motivational factors correlate. However, they also suggest that the Japanese ideal L2 self is not strongly linked to a professionally successful self image, and that a personally agreeable L2 self is more important because English proficiency is viewed as only one qualification for a job after graduation.

Taguchi et al. (2009) also found that the motivation of Japanese students majoring in English correlated less with the ideal L2 self, which is usually associated with greater L2 acquisition, than those Japanese students not majoring in English. Given SDT and the L2 self motivation system, more motivated students might be expected to show the opposite correlation with the ideal L2 self correlating more with the motivations of English majors than with non-English majors. This suggests that there is a very weak link that needs to be addressed between what motivates students to study a particular degree and the English courses that those Japanese university students take, as those students have not internalized their L2 motivations.

This is a complex area of research, but teaching methodology and the content therein have potential roles in the immediate learning environment of the L2 self motivation system and in the internalization central to SDT despite the paucity of research in this specific area. Further research is also needed given the increasingly complex picture of motivation that has emerged as psycholinguistics have adopted the principles of dynamic systems theory from mathematics and the physical sciences (Black & Deci, 2000; De Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2007; Deci et al., 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

A Dynamic System of Motivation

Recent developments in SLA motivation research have been examined by MacIntyre et al. (2010) who list fifteen key motivational concepts in SLA, such as acculturation, action control, complex dynamic systems, integrative motivation, international posture, L2 motivational, learner autonomy, task motivation, self-determination and willingness to communicate, etc. However, they recognize that there are a large number of gaps in our knowledge that lie between these concepts, thus leading them to recommend a multi-paradigm approach to motivation research (MacIntyre et al., 2010), or, in other words, a combination of approaches that best addresses the needs of the research. This follows on from Dörnyei's suggestion that there need not be one solution to the problem of analyzing motivation (Dörnyei, 1998; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011), while suggesting that these concepts should be considered more holistically. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) go on to evaluate that historical and current perspectives on motivation, particularly process-oriented perspectives, are evolving into a much more complex dynamic system involving a conglomerate of interconnected factors rather than single uniform factors (Black & Deci, 2000; Deci et al., 2001; Dörnyei, 1998; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2000). De Bot et al. (2007) take this argument further, arguing that a dynamic system theory characterized by complete interconnectedness be applied to the whole of SLA.

Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) consider this to be an inevitable extension of current motivational theories. From a teaching perspective, this may be somewhat confusing as it moves away from traditional cause-effect relationships, such as the carrot and stick approach. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) categorize this more holistic approach as one system with the three sub-systems of motivation, cognition and affect (emotions). Dynamic system models of motivation are often envisaged as a continually changing network of goals that interact by conflicting, converging with, and compensating for each other as students actively manage those goals (Dowson & McInerney, 2003). In other words, it is a complex dance where the preferred moves (the attractor states) are continually negotiated and where the starting position on the dance floor (the initial state) has a large impact on where it finishes (De Bot et al., 2007, citing Shanker & King, 2002).

How Content Interest Plays a Role in Motivation

If both SLA motivation and SLA are to be characterized as possessing complete interconnectedness where the strength of these connections continually changes and the initial state has a large impact, then lesson content must have some part to play in determining attractor states for Japanese EFL students. However, this level of complexity can only be explored through the examination of a small conglomerated part of the whole system or one small sequence of the dance (De Bot et al., 2007; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). One example of such a motivational conglomerate that appears to be related to content is the broad concept of “interest” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 93).

As teachers, we often take the definition of interest for granted. Our students are interested in this or that, and, unfortunately, the list of things that students are not interested in can sometimes be somewhat long. However, to really address this issue, we need a firmer definition. In the educational psychology literature, one definition of interest is as referring to “a learner’s predisposition to reengage particular disciplinary content...over time and the psychological state that accompanies this engagement” (Renninger, 2009, p. 106). While a distinction can be drawn between generalized interest in an educational subject and interest in learning a second language, this distinction is often connected with Gardner’s integrative model of motivation (Dörnyei, 1998; Gardner, 2010) that has been challenged as being too narrow in focus (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1998; Gardner, 2010). Given the idea of total interconnectedness (De Bot et al., 1997) then, a broader definition informed by the wider educational sphere better suits the purposes of this discussion.

Hidi and Renninger (2006) more explicitly define interest as “the outcome of an interaction between a person and a particular content” (p. 112), but we, the authors, would view interest as the predisposition to actively engage with content and exploit that content in achieving goals. How can we as teachers say that lesson material has interest for our students if the students do not consider putting that material to some use? As discussed below, students may actively engage with material in order to minimize that engagement and reduce the time that they have to spend on it. In such a situation, the only interest present might

be an interest in bringing the lesson to an early end.

The students must choose to do something with the material other than simply endure it, and using SDT as a model for analysis, Katz and Assor (2006) found that choice can be a positive influence on motivation when those choices are relevant to student interests and goals (see also de Sousa & Oakhill, 1996). Moreover, Assor, Kaplan, and Roth (2002) state that “the primary task of the teacher is to try to understand their students’ authentic interests and goals” (p. 273). This complements data from Fukushima University where teachers were more successful in motivating student autonomy by following a guided autonomy syllabus that required a direct link between the students’ own immediate goals and interests with relatedness, modifying how successful each individual teacher was (Fukuda et al., 2011). Thus, to understand how to more easily align our teaching with student interests, we must have some element of choice, but this is not the only factor that we need to consider.

Renninger (2009) describes the advantages of well-developed interest in a list of attributes that learners with such a psychological state display. Such learners (1) independently re-engage with content, (2) raise curiosity questions, (3) self-regulate to obtain both questions and answers, (4) possess positive feelings, (5) persevere through frustration and challenge, and (6) recognize the contribution of others. These are attributes that we as language teachers would like to see in our own students. They are also attributes of positive motivation that both SDT and dynamic systems models would recognize.

However, data suggests that very few students, both outside and within Japan, have well-developed interest in the language being taught (Fukuda et al., 2011; Hiromori, 2003; Irie, 2003; Lipstein & Renninger, 2006) and that teachers often misidentify students at a low stage of interest as having well-developed interest because such students ask a lot of questions, seek feedback, and complete assignments in order to end engagement with the content more quickly (Renninger, 2009). Thus, if we are to consider motivation in SLA, teachers should attempt to develop a broad state of interest in their students towards using English with non-language topics, and not just cater to an “interest in foreign languages” as narrowly defined by Gardner (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Enforcing activities

aimed primarily at such a narrow interest would suppress autonomy according to SDT and have a highly negative impact on student motivation (Assor et al., 2002), and attempting to stimulate one type of motivation over another may even have a negative impact given the complete interconnectedness of a dynamic systems view. So, we as teachers need to recognize and carefully deal with a multitude of factors involved in motivation and interest towards content topics.

Here is the gap that Hiromori (2003; see also Stout, 2008) identifies between the focus of research in Japan and what teachers want to know about motivation: how to actually motivate students. This is where content-based teaching methods may have a part to play in motivating students, by taking advantage of an already existing psychological state of interest. There are students at the tertiary level studying languages who have a well-developed “interest in foreign languages”, but the vast majority of students are probably at much lower levels of interest, as shown by some researchers (Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Irie, 2003; Lipstein & Renninger, 2006; Renninger, 2009; Stout, 2008), and may only be studying a language, such as English, as a compulsory subject in their degree program (Fukuda et al., 2011).

For example, Life, Falout, and Murphey (2009) found that science majors were less motivated than English majors to study English; however, they did not attempt to explain this difference at the university level and instead argued for improved teaching of English at junior and senior high schools. Assuming that Japanese university students studying science are likely to have a different ought-to L2 self (see discussion of L2 self motivation system above) from English majors, it seems that this may have been an opportunity to utilize content interest, and Life et al. (2009) do indeed conclude that students should be more involved in negotiating the design of curricula and syllabi. Given that such non-English majors are possibly unmotivated by traditional university English courses, it seems more advantageous to exploit student interest in the content of their degree program, where such student interest is more likely to be at a higher stage of development, in order to motivate their language studies.

Content, Content-Based Instruction, and ESP

Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989) (cited in McGrath, 2002) list eight forms of content: (1) content from another academic subject, (2) student-contributed content, (3) the language itself, (4) literature, (5) culture, (6) interesting facts (Cook, 1983), (7) learning to learn, and (8) specialist. All of these content types can be used to address student learning, but how these content types can be used to address motivation will depend on how well-developed student interest is in each area. For teachers at the tertiary level, the last category of “specialist,” including content from the main degree subject of the students, seems the most suitable for content-based approaches, and many such approaches seem aimed at this area of interest.

Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) has been used in second language teaching for some time to facilitate learning as well as motivate students. Mehisto, Frigols, and Marsh (2008) claim that this may date back to around the third millennium BC. For example, Fujiwara (1996) notes that experience has proved the efficacy of content courses in encouraging language learning and that CBLT can also be used to increase student attendance. In analyzing bilingual education, Cummins (1984) drew a distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) relating to basic, automatic language skills and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) relating to high levels of linguistic ability specific to context and demanding higher cognitive skills, but Cummins explicitly links the two concepts of interpersonal communication and content (Cummins, 1984; D’Angelo & Costa, 2011; Horn, 2011). In addition to failing to address a broad range of other student motivations, the danger of focusing on integrative motivations is that this may result in courses only focused on BICS and distanced from the skills of CALP, which might provide insufficient cognitive demand for the students, further resulting in student demotivation (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010; Cummins, 1984).

There are several forms of CBLT, comprising full immersion, sheltered instruction, content and language-integrated learning (CLIL), and traditional forms where content is used to illustrate modalities of a notional syllabus. There are other models and approaches (Archibald et al., 2006; Snow & Brinton, 1988)

that are often envisaged along a spectrum from content-driven to language-driven (Met, 1998) or from the mainstream classroom to the traditional language classroom (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989). Lightbown and Spada (2006) define CBLT from a language teacher's perspective as "Second language programmes in which lessons are organized around subject matter rather than language points" (p. 197).

Often the objectives of CBLT are stated in terms of content, and achieving these objectives is seen as sufficient evidence of language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), but, in order to actually teach the target language, the different forms of CBLT can have either a functional or notional underlying syllabus. Evans, Hartshorn, and Anderson (2010) note that, when designing content-based materials, it is important to link language and content, which is most easily done with such an underlying syllabus. Linking the language with content that is directly relevant to students' degrees matches autonomy-enhancing behaviors (Assor et al., 2002) and has been found to have a positive impact upon student motivation (Snow & Brinton, 1988; Snow, Met, & Genesee, 1989). For example, Lutes (2009) found that content that was relevant to the major disciplines of his Japanese university students had a noticeable motivational benefit in task-based learning where there is already a high degree of autonomy. Lasagabaster (2011) also concluded that a content-based approach had a positive impact on Spanish EFL students at the secondary level.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has received a lot of attention after being adopted by various bodies including the Council of Europe, as well as numerous countries across Europe (Marsh, Mehisto, Wolff, & Frigols Martín, 2010). It has been claimed that CLIL has a completely balanced dual focus on both content and language that does not place more importance on one or the other (Coyle, 2006; see also Coyle et al., 2010). However, the resultant differences between CLIL and traditional CBLT are not so clear (Paran & Deller, 2010) and, for example, Dalton-Puffer notes that the term CLIL has come to dominate discourse in Europe (Dalton-Puffer, 2007). However, it could be argued that the terms CLIL and CBLT are not interchangeable: CLIL appears to be a subset of CBLT, sharing many of the features of sheltered instruction in

both theory and application (Archibald et al., 2006; Echevarria & Graves, 1998; Henao, 2011).

CLIL has received most attention from teachers and researchers at the secondary level with a focus of research on CLIL models that involve cooperation between subject (content) teachers and foreign language teachers (Hunt, 2011). However, content teachers can more easily teach in their first language (L1), and one important reason for the adoption of CLIL in Europe appears to be the intention of politicians to consolidate teaching resources rather than improve them (Paran & Deller, 2010).

The importance of CLIL to a discussion of the motivational benefits of content is that the approach explicitly recognizes the symbiosis or interconnectedness of different factors affecting teaching in applying the 4C's approach, with the C's being content, communication, cognition, and culture (Coyle et al., 2010; D'Angelo & Costa, 2011). At the teaching level, the theory behind CLIL demands that teachers think about the interaction of all of these factors and balance both linguistic and cognitive demands in order to motivate their students and enhance language learning (Coyle et al., 2010; Smith & Paterson, 1998). The recognition of cognitive engagement has been implicit in materials design for some time (Bowen, 1972), but explicit recognition of how interconnected methodology and materials design are with cognitive engagement has taken longer to become more widely discussed (Arnold & Brown, 1999; Tomlinson, 1998, 2010).

Although research into CLIL is at an early stage of development, there are positive accounts of possible motivational benefits, including increased on-task behavior and increased levels of student interest (Coyle, 2006; Hunt, 2011; Inés Pistorio, 2009; Seikkula-Leino, 2007). Development of the approach has also attempted to adopt modern motivational research, including a focus on the effects of authenticity and relevance (Coyle et al., 2010). The claimed benefit of authenticity is in how CLIL attempts to address a broader spectrum of student interests. Thus, as for the larger set of CBLT methodologies, the motivational benefits are linked to relevance and interest (Dupuy, 2000; Snow et al., 1989). Despite the fact that current empirical research presents an unclear picture (Taguchi et al., 2009; Life et al., 2009), it seems logical for students who have

chosen to study biology at university level, for example, to study English that is relevant to their chosen field of interest, and this is something that has been recognized for some time in English for Specific Purposes (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is another content focused approach, where the content area, usually a specific job or vocational area, is the basis for a syllabus that addresses needs identified within the specific content area and usually involves activities from that area. Thus, the content of ESP courses fits into the “specialist” category of Littlejohn and Windeatt’s (1989) aforementioned content types, and this approach has the obvious utility that it is easy to convince learners of the relevance of the material (Tomlinson, 2011). From the perspective of SDT, enforcing a strict ESP program that is derived from a specific degree specialization may reduce choice and the opportunities for criticism or voicing a personal opinion different from those of the teacher, thus having a negative impact on student autonomy and motivation (Assor et al., 2002; Black & Deci, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). ESP programs that only address a limited number of linguistic registers, such as those only used for specific job situations, may also reduce the opportunities for students to experience feelings of competence through optimal challenges (Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, ESP requires content that is more obviously relevant to the students than CBLT, as the specific vocation associated with the ESP course is often a long-term goal of the student, such as becoming a medical professional or a flight crew member, and as we have discussed, relevance is a key point in addressing student motivation (Dupuy, 2000; Snow et al., 1989).

How Relevant is Relevance?

We have argued so far that addressing students’ authentic interests and goals is important in motivating students, based on both SDT and dynamic system models of motivation (Assor et al., 2002; Dowson & McInerney, 2003); however, to do so we must also address relevance of the content material. Keller (1983) defines relevance as the extent to which a student feels that instruction is connected to important needs, values, or goals. Numerous studies have attempted to address

relevance across educational settings including Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language (TESOL).

Frymier and Shulman (1995), in a statistical study addressing the relevance of teacher communication as a motivational tool, found that relevance was a key concept in reducing demotivation. Given the modern view of motivation as a dynamic system (De Bot et al., 2007; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; MacIntyre, et al, 2010), it would seem that relevance is just one aspect of the motivational system, albeit an important one.

Kember et al. (2008) found in a small qualitative study that students at the tertiary level could become highly motivated if the relevance of the content of their degrees was established more explicitly, and especially if made relevant to the professional future of the students, with the most positive results seen in the initial stages of a course. They found that abstract theory was demotivational and that without being shown a context in which to apply theory, it became hard to grasp the meaning of that theory. Students who were shown where to apply such theory could also test their own understanding as well as demonstrate how relevant that theory is. As a result, those students were more motivated.

The study goes on to discuss the motivational benefits of different types of relevance including local relevance, relevance to everyday applications, relevance to current issues, and relevance to professional development and career prospects. However, one of the most pertinent points to take from this study is the importance of mapping the position and establishing the relevance of a discrete subject, such as a compulsory English class, within a student's university and professional career. Given a course where such relevance was established, students were found to become highly motivated and develop a more intense level of interest. Assignments that were both relevant and authentic to future career paths also proved to be highly motivating in the study.

Kember et al.'s study covered a variety of disciplines with a small sample. However, even given the shortcomings of this study, relevance appears to be an extremely important motivational aspect at the tertiary level as students have chosen to take a specific degree at a university usually with a long-term view to the future. This also fits with our discussion of relevance in relation to SDT,

where relevance is seen to have a direct impact upon student autonomy (Assor et al., 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

James (2012) found in a study of motivation amongst L2 English students taking an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course at a U.S. university that their motivation to transfer the skills learned in the course was interconnected with their motivation to learn English. The students were more motivated to learn when the skills learned were obviously relevant to their other courses. Although the study was focused on the motivation to transfer skills outside the EAP course, the relevance of the EAP course to the students' other courses was a factor in their overall motivation (see also Lutes, 2009).

The impact of the relevance of English language courses in relation to students' degree focus can also be seen in a study by Crisfield and White (2012) that found that both usefulness and interest are important factors in motivating students learning English as a second language at Canadian universities. The study also found that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses that are specifically more relevant to the students are ranked more highly for usefulness and interest than general ESL courses. In essence, ESP courses seen as more relevant by the students were more motivating. This leaves at least one further question of whether material that is relevant and of interest also needs to be authentic if it is to have a positive motivational impact.

Getting Real with Authenticity

Authenticity is pertinent to a discussion of motivation and content, because some proponents of content-based approaches (Snow et al., 1989), particularly proponents of CLIL, claim this as one reason why a particular approach is beneficial. Coyle et al. (2010) claim that authenticity and relevance are "key to successful learning" and that CLIL provides an easier route than traditional communicative language teaching to achieving that goal (Coyle et al., 2010), though they stop short of drawing a direct line between authenticity and motivation.

The effect of authenticity on motivation is a topic that has been discussed for a long time in both research and teaching circles (Gilmore, 2007). The effect of

authentic materials on motivation has been studied, but empirical results that back up claims that authenticity of materials has motivational benefits are extremely scarce (Gilmore, 2007; Peacock, 1997). While students with higher levels of intrinsic motivation have been shown to display different learning behaviors from those with lower levels of intrinsic motivation, such as increased explorative curiosity, when interacting with more authentic e-learning material, they did not significantly outperform students with lower levels of intrinsic motivation using the same materials (Martens, Gulikers, & Bastiaens, 2004). Peacock (1997) found that authentic materials had an observable, positive impact on classroom behavior with a statistically significant increase in on-task behavior and a similarly significant improvement in observed classroom motivation. However, students' own feelings of motivation, as reported through questionnaires completed by the students, did not improve until the final stages of the research project. Students also reported that the authentic materials used were actually less interesting than artificial materials. This suggests that authenticity has very mixed results when used to improve motivation and remains problematic. This is in contrast to the study by Kember et al. (2008) that found authentic assignments had a beneficial impact on motivation.

Gilmore (2007) has pointed out that one of the problems of discussing authenticity is that there is a wide range of definitions of the term, and most definitions focus on authenticity as applied to materials in that they are derived from natural native language. There has been less research focus on task authenticity, or whether the learning activities have some meaning in being useful and relevant to the student (Guariento & Morley, 2001; Herrington, Oliver, & Reeves, 2003), and task-based learning has been identified as a suitable vehicle for both CBLT and CLIL (Cendoya & Di Bin, 2010).

Guariento et al. (2001) suggest addressing the possible differences between these two areas of authenticity research by sacrificing the authenticity of texts in favor of task authenticity (Guariento & Morley, 2001), and it is possible to infer from their work that task authenticity does have a motivational benefit. Authentic tasks may be more likely than an authentic text to address student interests as implied by Assor et al. (2002) (see also Lutes, 2009), given that an authentic

text does not provide as much freedom for students to try applying abstract theory to check their understanding (Kember et al., 2008). As discussed above, complementary data from Peacock (1997) suggests that levels of self-reported student motivation and interest are reduced in the reverse situation where authentic materials are given priority, so it would seem that task authenticity may have a larger positive impact on motivation, but questions remain.

Further research has been conducted into task authenticity in the wider field of education. For example, Herrington et al. (2003) found in a review of several studies that both authentic tasks and authentic settings can motivate students to engage with online learning environments, including one study that focused specifically on a TESOL setting (Herrington et al., 2003; cf. Martens et al., 2004). Thus, it would seem that, despite the paucity of specific SLA motivation research, authenticity of content materials and tasks has a role to play in student motivation and language learning (Lutes, 2009; Peacock, 1997). The question is how can we as teachers combine relevance, interest, and authenticity in order to motivate our students?

What Do Teachers Need to Know about Motivation?

Without more specific direction for teachers in how to motivate their students with content, applying content seems difficult if teachers are to adopt motivation-conscious teaching as advocated by Dörnyei (1998) and attempt to address the specific motivations of their students. However, if content is aligned with an area where student interest is known, or could be expected to be well developed, such as the major subject of their degree, then it could be expected to yield positive results. Why not teach art and design students the vocabulary and expressions necessary to discuss their work in English? Why not teach science students how to discuss experimental procedures and methods of analysis in the target language?

As we have discussed, there is a gap that both Hiromori (2003) and Stout (2008) have highlighted: currently little empirical evidence exists to conclusively prove that one particular approach has a more significant impact on SLA motivation than other approaches, though there is some evidence that content-based approaches have motivational benefits. Although the question of which of

these approaches is better remains, there is evidence that relevance may be a more important factor. In a recent empirical study of CLIL compared with traditional immersion and ESP, Fernández-Santiago (2011) found that EFL university students following an immersion course were outperformed by those on a CLIL course. However, those students following an ESP course outperformed everyone else on most achievement measures, and the same study concluded that students preferred the ESP course to CLIL. In that situation, language learning was more easily achieved through ESP rather than CLIL. It may be possible to argue that the greater relevance of the ESP course encouraged students to be more determined (Deci et al., 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2000), but further research would be necessary to conclusively prove such a statement.

Corrales and Maloof (2009), in a study looking at medical students following a CBLT-based EFL course, conclude “content-based instruction appears to be an effective language-learning methodology for this context” (p. 21). Thus, it appears that using relevant content aligned towards student interest in context will help students be more determined and motivated. However, given the multi-dimensional nature of motivation and the fact that many English classes contain students from different disciplines, it may be best to maintain a post-method condition or a post-method approach where one method is not enough. An approach where we as teachers apply critical thinking to our application of teaching methodologies, and use our professional judgment to mix methods in order to fulfill the needs of their students, instead of uncritically following one specific, narrow methodology as discussed by Canagarajah (2004) and Richards and Rodgers (2001). This area of mixing approaches and trying to address relevance and student interest remains a potentially fruitful topic for future research, both at the peer-reviewed journal level and at the level of action research (Burns, 2009; Legutke & Schocker-v Ditfurth, 2009) for teachers trying to motivate their students.

Conclusion

In summary, current thinking on SLA motivation, and particularly Self Determination Theory, suggests that content has an important role in providing

relevant lessons aligned with student interest in order to motivate students. In university classes where students are drawn from the same or similar disciplines, it would be difficult to argue against the use of content-based approaches given the potential motivational benefits. Such approaches are intended to promote student autonomy and focus on relevance, interest and authenticity. Why not teach students language that is useful and relevant to one of the biggest choices that most young adults can make, their university degree subject? We cannot assume as language teachers that what we are interested in is also interesting for our students.

While teacher enthusiasm for a subject can be highly motivational, establishing relevance to a students' chosen degree subject and future career are important in improving student motivation. Given the impact of globalization on the ownership of English as an international language, moving away from an integrative cultural viewpoint to a more holistic and dynamic approach that tailors the content of English courses so as to establish relevance and reduce student anxiety may lead to noticeable improvements in student motivation. Thus, content-based approaches are worth further investigation by teachers at the tertiary level in Japan.

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