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Language Motivation, Use and Achievement

Soh Kay Cheng

"How is it that some people can learn a second or foreign language so easily and so well while others, given what seem to be same opportunities to learn, find it almost impossible?" (Gardner and Lambert, 1972: 131). This seemingly simple question triggered off a series of studies which has kept researchers rather busy since 1960.

Language Motivation

Lambert (1967) postulates two types of motivation for the learning of a second or foreign language. The learner is said to be *instrumentally oriented* if the purposes of language study reflect the more utilitarian value of linguistic achievement, and *integratively oriented* if the student is motivated to learn more about the other culture community, as if he has decided to become a potential member of the group.

Lambert and his associates (Ainsfield and Lambert, 1961; Gardner, 1960; Gardner and Lambert, 1959) produce evidence supporting the assertion of a positive relation between motivation and achievement in L2 or FL learning. As evidenced by the twelve-year research presented in Gardner and Lambert (1972), between Orientation Index for the learning of a second or foreign language and measures of language achievement, the correlation coefficients vary from .05 to .63, but are largely moderate with a typical coefficient between .30 and .40, suggesting between 10% to 15% common variance. Moreover, *integrative* motivation tends to correlate more strongly with oral-aural skills than with achievement in vocabulary and grammar.

Nonetheless, subsequent studies (Gardner and Lambert, 1972) yield only partial support for the earlier findings as the correlation coefficients vary from low negative to low positive. And, as pointed out by Oller (1981: 15), "Not infrequently, mysterious negative correlations arise between what appear to be an integrative motive and achievement."

The lack of correlation has also been reported by Genesee (1978).

Lambert's conceptualization of language motivation seems to have changed somewhat in later studies, at least in terms of measurement. In the initial studies, Orientation Index was obtained by asking the subjects to rank the following alternative reasons for learning a second or foreign language: (1) was useful in obtaining a job, (2) was helpful in understanding the people of the language, (3) permitted meeting and conversing with more and varied people, and (4) made one a better educated person. Subjects who ranked reasons (2) or (3) as being of high personal relevance were classified as integratively oriented, those who did not were classified as instrumentally oriented. For analysis, integrative orientation was given a high score.

In three subsequent studies (the Connecticut, the Maine, and the Philippines Studies), in addition to Orientation Index, subjects were also asked to rate themselves on integrative orientation and instrumental orientation. And, in one study (the Louisiana Study) only a rating on integrative orientation was used. A rating on instrumental orientation or the original Orientation Index was not used.

This variation in measurement methodology affords an opportunity to evaluate the relations between different measures of, presumably, the same construct, that is, language motivation. Firstly, the original method of assigning a higher score to integrative orientation and conversely a lower score to instrumental orientation will by definition bring about a *negative* correlation between the two types of motivation. However, the correlations reported are .13 (Connecticut Study), .70 (Maine Study),

and .38 (Philippines Study). Secondly, by the same token, a positive correlation is expected between integrative orientation ratings and the orientation index, but the correlations found for the three studies, in that order, are .28, -.06, and .12. Thirdly, a negative correlation is expected between instrumental orientation ratings and the orientation index, yet correlations of .07, -.21, and .17 have been found. In brief, the two types of language motivation seem to go together rather than being antagonistic, and the use of a global orientation index (with its inherent bias towards favouring integrative orientation and against instrumental orientation) may have underestimated the relationship between language motivation and language learning.

Affective Measures

The somewhat embarrassing inconsistent outcomes when affective and achievement measures are correlated have brought about an attempt at a new interpretation. Oller (1981: 20-21) is of the view that affective measures of second language measure language proficiency or intelligence. In support of this interpretation, Oller cites evidence showing that first language proficiency and intelligence are largely indistinguishable (Stump, 1981) and that first and second language proficiency are substantially correlated (Oller and Perkins, 1978). And, in Oller's (1981: 21) own words, "If the attitude measures [are] challenging the language abilities of respondents unintentionally, the seemingly strange results of the studies ... [can] be explained." Further on, Oller (1981: 24) asserts that "unless and until this option can be ruled out, the empirical basis of all proposed models relating affect and learning (or behaviour) remains in serious question." In short, Oller believes (Oller and Perkins, 1978) that the attitude questionnaire itself becomes a surreptitious test of proficiency in the target language if it is used to ask the questions.

This obviously is an interesting but bold interpretation which depends very much on the interpretation of correlation. However, it also implies that if the language of the questionnaire is not challenging (i.e., it is at a level which the subject can understand), then affective measures will *not* be proxy measures for language proficiency.

Language Use

The dictum *learning by doing* has been with us for a long time and one of the most valid conclusion

in the psychology of learning is that children learn what they do. Yet, in studies of second or foreign language learning, the extent to which the learner uses the language has been conspicuously neglected. At the theoretical level, the model proposed by Gardner (1975) includes these components: social context, attitudes, motivation, and achievement (linguistic and non-linguistic). The model of Oller and Perkins (1978) relates verbal intelligence, first language proficiency, second language proficiency, and affective measures. In both cases, language use is the missing link.

Of late, researchers have begun to look into language use as a predictor of language achievement. For instance, Jiyono and Johnstone (1983) found reading activity accounting for 34% of language achievement variance among grades 6-9 pupils. It is also noteworthy that reading activity makes the largest single contribution in their path model.

However, questions can be asked with regard to the relations between extrinsic (instrumental) and intrinsic (integrative) motivation, their relations with language use and this with language achievement. Questions can also be asked about the relative strengths of direct and indirect (via language use) contributions of the two types of motivation to language achievement.

Method

Criterion The criterion of this study was the mid-year Chinese Language examination results obtained by the subjects in their respective schools. They were taken as an indicator of the subjects' attainment in the language. Two points of importance need be mentioned. First, it should be readily appreciated that the school language examination was largely based on written rather than on oral language. Secondly, since different schools set their own examination papers, the marks obtained by subjects in different schools are not comparable and therefore cannot be legitimately pooled for analysis purposes.

Predictors There were three predictors in this study, namely, *extrinsic motivation*, *intrinsic motivation*, and *language use*.

Extrinsic motivation was defined by motives or reasons for learning a language which were extraneous or instrumental in nature. With reference to language attitude measures of previous researchers (e.g., Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Sharp *et al.*, 1973), the Extrinsic Motivation Scale was constructed. The four items forming this scale simply

asked the subjects to indicate the extent to which it was true that they learned Chinese for *passing examination, convenience for working in the future, further study, and pleasing parents*.

Intrinsic motivation was defined by motives or reasons for learning a language which were more directed to the language and its culture for their own value, that is, taking language learning more as an end than a means. This was measured by the Intrinsic Motivation Scale which listed four items for the subjects to indicate the extent to which it was true that they learned Chinese for *appreciation of the culture, making friends with Mandarin-speaking peers, knowing the Chinese Language better, and being interested in the Chinese Language*.

For the third predictor, language use, the subjects were asked to indicate the extent to which they had *spoken Mandarin, watched TV series in Mandarin, read Chinese books (other than textbooks), and read Chinese newspapers*.

All questions were asked in Chinese. The language (Chinese) and format of the twelve items (four for each predictor measure) were carefully kept at a simple level to minimize the probability of language proficiency compounding scores for the three predictors.

Split-half reliabilities corrected for test length, using the Spearman-Brown formula, were calculated for the three predictor measures separately for the six groups of subjects (see below). The medians of the reliabilities were 0.51 for the Extrinsic Motivation Scale, 0.41 for the Intrinsic Motivation Scale, and 0.41 for Language Use. Though not high, these reliabilities were within the range normally found in attitude scales of similar nature, and in view of the very short test length of four items each, the predictor measures could be considered as having acceptable reliability.

Subjects The sample consisted of 248 Secondary 1 to 3 pupils from five schools. There was a preponderance of girls and the boy-girl ratio was 4:6. Chinese dialects were the principal home language for 60.1% of the pupils though 24.6% spoke mainly Mandarin at home. English was the principal home language for only 14.9%.

Data Analysis Correlations involving the criterion were calculated for the six groups separately. However, as the scales for the three predictors were the same for the groups, correlations between these measures were first calculated for the groups separately and then averaged by Fisher's z-transformation.

Results and Discussion

Correlations between Predictors First of all, it will be interesting to find out the extent to which extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation and language use are related. For the 248 pupils, the correlations obtained are:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| • Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation | .05 (not significant) |
| • Extrinsic motivation and language use | .21 ($p < .01$) |
| • Intrinsic motivation and language use | .50 ($p < .01$) |

Correlations between Criterion and Predictors

The main interest of the present study is in the extent to which extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation and language use predict language attainment. For the sample as a whole, the medians of correlations obtained are:

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| • Extrinsic motivation and language attainment | -.15 (not significant) |
| • Intrinsic motivation and language attainment | .37 ($p < .01$) |
| • Language use and language attainment | .50 ($p < .01$) |

Partial Correlations between Intrinsic Motivation, Language Use and Language Attainment Since both intrinsic motivation and language use have shown sizeable correlations with the criterion, it will be informative to ascertain the relationship between the criterion and one predictor, with the other controlled. The medians of partial correlations are:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| • Intrinsic motivation and language attainment | .18 (not significant) |
| • Language use and language attainment | .39 ($p < .01$) |

Regression Analysis To what extent does extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation and language use contribute to the prediction of language attainment? To answer this question, the three predictors were entered into the regression equation in that order. Regression analyses were run for the six groups separately since, as explained earlier, the Chinese Language examination marks used as the

criterion were not comparable. For a general indication, medians of the per cent variance were calculated. The multiple R's corrected for number of predictors was .531 and the median of percentages of variance predicted 33.6%. In terms of median, 21.3% of language attainment was predicted by language use, 5.9% by intrinsic motivation, and 3.7% by extrinsic motivation. It was obvious that two-thirds of language attainment variance were not explained.

One of the fundamental questions is whether extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are independent of each other. The results suggest that they are quite independent and clearly not mutually antagonistic as implied by Lambert's original conception of the Orientation Index which implies a negative relationship. It appears that research on language motivation will benefit by treating measures of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation as two separate variables. And not doing so may mean not only losing information but, perhaps more seriously, creating conceptual artefacts and interpretative difficulties as well.

Another fundamental question is whether affective measures are proxy measures of intelligence and language proficiency, as suggested by Oller. In the present study, the language difficulty level of the instruments was kept at a very low level by asking simple questions using simple words. This rendered them *unlikely* as proxy measures. The results which show a low negative correlation between extrinsic motivation and achievement, and a moderate positive correlation between intrinsic motivation and achievement indicate that the two sets of affective measures have been tapping something beyond intelligence and language proficiency; otherwise, the two sets of questions will have to behave in like manner and return with zero correlations since the language level has been kept minimally low.

As discussed earlier, language use as a variable does not seem to have been accorded an important

place in studies of second or foreign language learning. It may have been taken for granted and attention has been paid to it only rather recently. The results of this study indicate that language use is obviously a variable intervening between motivation and achievement of no small importance, as it accounts for much greater proportion of achievement variance than measures of motivation. It is a psychological as well as a pedagogical truism that pupils learn what they do — they learn the language they use.

The negative relationship between extrinsic motivation and achievement cannot be explained with the data collected here. If one has to hazard a guess, it may be a result of the anxiety or mental block induced by such an emphasis, as it is a well-known fact that anxiety interferes with higher mental processes (which language learning definitely calls for). This seems to suggest that the relationship between language learning and anxiety needs to be studied.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding its limitations in terms of the sample and analysis, the study shows quite clearly that (1) intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are not mutually antagonistic as earlier construed, (2) intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are unrelated, representing two different dimensions of language motivation, and (3) language use, much neglected by research in the past, is actually an important variable intervening between language motivation and language proficiency.

The implication for language teaching seems to be that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on learning a second language for its inherent, cultural value rather than on some utilitarian purposes. And, since the use of a second language is importantly related to language proficiency, it is necessary to create situations and opportunities for using the language in and out of school. ■

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