

A Framework to Understanding Motivation in the TESOL Field

Un marco para la comprensión de la motivación en el campo de la enseñanza del inglés a hablantes de otras lenguas

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TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) is a field that receives the contribution of various disciplines to support its theoretical and practical foundations. In this paper, the author presents an overview of the approaches used to conceptualize motivation in psychology and apply it to TESOL. Then, a selected number of factors or dimensions of the achievement motivation construct, identified in the research about motivation in cognitive psychology, are highlighted. Based on the previous dimensions, some practical and research implications are suggested to be applied in the area of motivation to learn a second (SL) or foreign language (FL). Finally, the author supports the need to conceptualize motivation, not only from a cognitive view, but most importantly, from a socio-constructive approach, especially in the TEFL context.

Key words: TESOL, disciplines, approach, conceptualize, dimension, achievement motivation, construct, cognitive, implication, second language, foreign language, socio-constructive, TEFL

La “Enseñanza del Inglés a Hablantes de Otras Lenguas” (TESOL) es un área que recibe la influencia de diferentes disciplinas, las cuales han contribuido a sustentar sus planteamientos teóricos y prácticos. En este artículo, el autor presenta los enfoques que se han utilizado para definir la motivación en psicología y que se han aplicado al campo de TESOL. A continuación se destaca un número selecto de factores o dimensiones del constructo de motivación de logro identificado en la investigación sobre motivación realizada en psicología cognitiva. Con base en estas dimensiones, se sugieren algunas implicaciones prácticas e investigativas que se podrían aplicar en el área de la motivación para el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua o de una lengua extranjera. El autor, finalmente, sustenta la necesidad de que la motivación se conceptualice fundamentalmente con base en una perspectiva socio-constructivista y no únicamente desde la visión cognitiva, especialmente en el contexto de la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera (TEFL)

Palabras claves: Enseñanza del Inglés a Hablantes de Otras Lenguas (TESOL), disciplinas, enfoque, conceptualizar, dimensión, motivación de logro, constructo, cognitivo, implicación, segunda lengua, lengua extranjera, socio-constructivo, Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (TEFL).

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INTRODUCTION

Experts in psychology support the close relationship between learning and motivation. Some of them even affirm that motivation affects learning. In the TESOL field, Brown (1987, p. 114) states that “motivation is a key to learning” another language. In a similar way, Dornyei (2001a, p. 1) corroborates the previous assertion and adds that “skills to motivate learners are crucial for language teachers.” Given these assumptions about the crucial role of motivation in relation to learning, in this paper I refer to motivation both in psychology and in the TESOL field. To begin with, I briefly refer to traditional views of motivation. Then, the most relevant constructs and dimensions of motivation according to recent theories of motivation are presented. Next, some implications for learning, teaching and future research in the area of motivation to learn a target language are identified. Based on these constructs, finally, I highlight a definition of motivation, according to cognitive and socio-constructivist theories of learning and motivation, to be applied especially in an EFL context.

DEFINING MOTIVATION

Motivation has been defined in a variety of ways according to the appearance and development of learning and motivation theories in psychology. Below I will present a review of these definitions.

Traditional Concepts of Motivation in Psychology

Traditionally motivation was viewed in terms of *volition*, *will*, *instinct*, *drive*, or *need*, which represented a rationalist tendency of looking at psychological processes. The advent of behaviorist psychology produced a decline of theories that linked motivation with some inner force. For behaviorists, motivation should be studied in behavioral terms. Motivation was “a continual level of behavioral responses to stimuli” caused by some *reinforcement* (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996, p. 4). Later, two theories related to behaviorism, drive

and arousal theories, linked motivation with the concepts of *drive* and *arousal*. As a result, motivation was defined as *an intensity of behavior* (Geen, 1995).

Traditional Concepts of Motivation in TESOL

Since 1972 we have been familiarized with two related concepts of motivation in TESOL: *instrumental* and *integrative* motivation. Gardner and Lambert (1972), for example, studied foreign language learners in Canada, the USA, and the Philippines over a period of 12 years in order to determine the effects of attitudinal and motivational factors on language learning success. As a result of their studies, they proposed two types of motivation: *instrumental* and *integrative* motivation. On the one hand, a learner instrumentally motivated wants to learn the L2 in order to fulfill a particular objective e.g. gaining a certain kind of qualification, improvement, employment prospects, getting a higher degree, etc. On the other hand, a learner with integrative orientation has a genuine interest in the L2 community. He wants to learn the L2 to communicate with the people who speak that language in order to relate to them and to understand their culture. These concepts were so powerful that many authorities and teachers in the TESOL field claimed that integrative motivation was an essential requirement for successful L2 or FL learning.

If we compare these concepts with those in psychology, we find them to be much related to the concepts of *extrinsic* and *intrinsic* motivation proposed by Deci (1972).

Even though Brown wrote the second edition of his well-known book, “Principles of Language Learning and Teaching” in 1987, he still refers to motivation in terms of *drives*, *impulses*, *stimulus*, and *needs*. On page 114, he states: “Motivation is commonly thought of as an inner drive, impulse, emotion, or desire that moves one to a particular action. More specifically, human beings universally have needs or drives that are more or less innate, yet their intensity is

environmentally conditioned.” Brown goes on to define motivation as “an inner drive or stimulus, which can, like self-esteem, be global, situational, or task-oriented” (p. 115). In conclusion, although Brown refers to motivation as an inner drive, he still shows an influence of behaviorist learning theories in his concept of motivation.

Recent Concepts of Motivation in Psychology

The theories of psychology developed in the late 1950s and in the 1960s questioned the limited views of the behaviorist theories to explain both learning and motivation, and proposed the study of motivation from a cognitive perspective. Consequently, motivation was conceived to be a process influenced by people’s beliefs and thoughts. Based on an analysis of the cognitive psychology theories developed in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, Pintrich and Schunk (2001) defined *motivation as a process of instigating and sustaining goal-directed activity*. This conceptualization was supported by the intensive research conducted by researchers who proposed various hypotheses to support the presence of some factors or dimensions within the construct of achievement motivation.

ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION CONSTRUCTS

From a cognitive perspective, many researchers have studied a number of achievement motivation constructs that influence behavior. *Ability and competence beliefs, self-efficacy, task values, achievement goals, control beliefs, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and achievement attributions* are prominent examples of these constructs. Researchers are also interested in finding the relationship between the previous internal motivational constructs and the external indicators of motivation, such as choice, effort, and persistence in doing different tasks. For the purpose of this paper, I will refer to the findings concerning the constructs of *ability* and *efficacy*

beliefs, and task values in relation to achievement behaviors. I will also mention some of the findings concerning achievement goals since they have been frequently used in the motivation research. Additionally, I will highlight some implications of the findings in each motivational construct for attempting to attain the students’ motivation to learn a second or a foreign language.

Ability and Efficacy

Ability and efficacy beliefs come from three general research traditions: expectancy-value theory (Eccles, 1983; Eccles, Adler, Futterman, Goff, Kaczala, and Meece, 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 1992, 2002), self-perceptions of competence research (Harter, 1982, 1985; Stipek, 1981, 2001), and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1989; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). These constructs refer to the people’s responses to the questions ‘Can I do this task?’ or ‘Can I succeed in this task?’ (Eccles & Wigfield, 1985). Research in these theories has indicated that students’ beliefs about their abilities and efficacy to perform academic tasks are essential motivational variables to predict their achievement behaviors.

Ability beliefs refer to the people’s self-evaluation of their own competence in different areas. Researchers in achievement motivation have found a relationship between ability beliefs and academic performance. Ability beliefs predict students’ achievement performance in different areas such as reading and mathematics (Eccles et al., 1983; Meece, Wigfield, & Eccles, 1990; Nicholls, 1979; Stipek & MacIver, 1989). Self-efficacy is a major construct in Bandura’s theory and it refers to the “people’s judgements of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). The efficacy expectations to achieve in different tasks constitute a major determinant of people’s choices, willingness to expend effort, and persistence. Research has demonstrated that children’s efficacy beliefs relate to their academic performance. In addition, when children are trained to believe and

to be more efficacious, they achieve better in various subject areas such as reading and math (Schunk, 1991b).

The previous findings in the achievement motivation research suggest that students who believe they are competent and efficacious language learners should be expected to be more motivated, to engage in second/foreign language learning (S/FLL), and to achieve better in S/FLL activities. This means that ESL/EFL teachers should try to guide and help their students to have a high self-concept about their own abilities and capacities to learn another language and to become more efficacious language learners.

Task Values

Subjective task value is a construct proposed in Lewin's, Tolman's, and Atkinson's expectancy-value models and later elaborated and supported in Eccles et al.'s (1983) social cognitive value model (Wigfield, 1994). Task values deal with the people's incentives for doing an activity. These values are concerned with the answers to the questions 'Should I do this task and why?' or 'Do I want to succeed and why?' Task values have been defined in terms of the following four components: intrinsic interest, value attainment, utility, and cost value (Eccles et al., 1983). Intrinsic interest value refers to how much individuals like and enjoy doing an activity. Attainment value corresponds to the importance of a task and the importance of doing well on an activity. Utility value is defined by the usefulness of an activity in terms of the people's future goals. Cost refers to the perceived negative aspects or the demands of doing one task. Cost also refers to the fact that if people engage in one task, they will be deprived of any benefit or enjoyment of engaging in other tasks (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). Researchers have mainly studied the nature of the first three subjective task values and their relation to student choice of activities and achievement performance. A major finding of these studies is that while students' beliefs about their abilities and expectancies for success predicted their performance in language arts and

mathematics, their subjective task values predicted both intentions and actual decisions to continue taking language arts and mathematics courses (Eccles et al., 1983; Meece et al., 1990; Wigfield & Eccles, 1992).

The results of the previous research have implications as regards motivation to learn another language. First of all, when students value S/FLL in terms of its intrinsic interest, they are more motivated to study another language. Secondly, if they believe that learning another language is very important, they will likely engage in language learning activities; and finally, when they recognize the usefulness of learning a second or foreign language for their future goals, they will most likely feel highly motivated and choose to engage in S/FLL activities.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and goal orientation are three major constructs also used to explain and support the value component. Personal causation (de Charms, 1968), mastery motivation (Harter, 1978, 1981a, 1981b), self-determination (Deci, 1980; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991), and emergent motivation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1978, 1985) are the major theories that studied the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation constructs. The role of goals and goal orientation have been discussed in the theories proposed by Nicholls (1984), Ames and Archer (1987, 1988), and Dweck and Leggett (1988). Research in these theories assumes that this set of constructs is critical to motivation. People could self-evaluate as competent and efficacious as regards an activity, but they may not do it if they do not have a purpose or reason for doing the activity.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation (IM) refers to people's internal desire to engage in an activity for the pleasure and satisfaction it produces (Deci, 1972; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Harter, 1981a). IM is based on theories that view learning as a self-initiated, spontaneous, and natural psychological process (Rigby, Deci, Patrick, & Ryan, 1992). In contrast, extrinsic motivation (EM) refers to people's

decisions to do something for extrinsic reasons or incentives. The EM construct is based on theories that maintain that learning occurs because of the presence of external incentives, rewards, requirements, and social control. IM and EM refer to the first part of the questions stated above, 'Do I want to succeed?' or 'Should I do this task?' In the mastery motivation perspective, IM related positively to perceived competence and internal control (Harter, 1981b; Harter & Connell, 1984). Students who believed they were competent showed greater IM than students who thought they had lower competence (Boggiano, Main, & Katz, 1988; Gottfried, 1985, 1990). There is also a positive relationship between IM, competence, and task difficulty. Children enjoy more and perceive a higher competence when they succeed at difficult tasks (Harter, 1978, 1981a).

The idea that people's perceptions of control influence behavioral outcomes has been discussed in de Charms' (1968, 1984) personal causation theory and in Rotter's social-learning theory (1966, as cited in Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Research has supported a positive relationship between internal locus of control and motivation and achievement in school (Phares, 1976). Students who perceive behavioral outcomes (successes, failures) to be under their control (internal control) should be motivated to engage in academic activities, expend effort, and persist in challenging tasks. On the contrary, students who believe that their behavioral outcomes are not under their control (external control) should be expected to be less motivated, to expend less effort, and to give up on difficult tasks.

Self-determination theory has focused on some human's innate organismic needs for competence and self-determination (autonomy). The positive relationship between competence and IM found in other theories has been corroborated in this theory. The more competent individuals perceive themselves to be at an activity, the more intrinsically motivated they will be at the activity (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The need for self-

determination or autonomy involves people's experience of choice and the opportunity to use those choices as the determinants of their own actions. Research has studied the relation of self-determination to IM (Ryan, 1993). Children who perceived the classroom environment as autonomy-oriented reported greater internal control over behavioral outcomes. In addition, they reported higher perceived competence and mastery motivation (Ryan & Grolnick, 1986). Research has also found that choice of activities affects IM (Swan & Pittman, 1977; Zuckerman, Porac, Lathin, Smith, & Deci, 1978).

An issue debated in motivational and educational research relates to the role of extrinsic rewards on IM. In general, the results of research indicate that IM decreases when children receive rewards for doing activities that are intrinsically interesting (Lepper, 1981, 1983; Lepper & Greene, 1978; Lepper & Hodell, 1989; Pierce, Cameron, Banko, & So, 2003) or for just working on tasks regardless of level of performance (Cameron & Pierce, 1994, 2005; Deci & Ryan, 1991). However, nontangible incentives such as verbal praise and positive feedback enhance IM if these contribute to raise children's perceived competence (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991).

The results of the previous research have implications for learning a target language. Students who believe they are competent language learners would show greater IM to learn another language than students who think they are not competent language learners. In addition, children might feel more motivated intrinsically and perceive higher competence when they succeed at challenging, autonomous, novel, and authentic language learning (LL) tasks. Furthermore, teachers should be careful about the use of incentives in their second/foreign language classes. Students will be more motivated to learn another language if they perceive language learning as an enjoyable activity for its own sake. The teachers' verbal praise and positive feedback that would produce an increase in motivation to

learn a language is the one that provides information about the students' progress in their S/FLL competence.

Achievement Goals

Achievement goals refer to the purposes people have in choosing and doing a variety of tasks. They correspond directly with the "whys" of behavior. Goals represent answers to the questions 'Why should I do this task?' or 'Why do I want to succeed?' (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). Various types of goals have been defined and studied in the motivational field. The best well-known classifications of achievement goals have been proposed by Dweck and Leggett (1988), Nicholls, Cheung, Laver, & Patashnick (1989), Schunk (1991a), and Locke and Latham (1990).

Dweck and Leggett (1988) defined two major types of goals: performance goals and learning goals. Performance goals reflect such questions as 'Will I look smart?' and 'Can I beat others?' Performance goal-oriented people tend to maximize favorable evaluations of their ability and to minimize unfavorable evaluations of their ability. Children will tend to select activities they know they can do. Learning goals reflect questions such as 'How can I do this task?' and 'What will I learn?' Individuals with this type of goal orientation want to increase their competence and master a task. They tend to select challenging activities (Brophy, 2004). Nicholls et al. (1989) also developed a similar typology of goals. They called them ego-involved goals and task-involved goals. Additionally, they referred to other types of goals called work-avoidance goals. Individuals with these goals attempt to avoid tasks or to do the least schoolwork they can.

Schunk (1991a) and Lock and Latham (1990) referred to the specificity and the generality of goals. Specific goals include specific and short-term criteria to accomplish an activity. These goals are achieved quickly and can result in higher efficacy, more effective learning, and greater motivation. General goals incorporate general and long-term standards to accomplish something. Although these

goals can be accomplished, they need a longer period of time. Research has shown that these goals can best be accomplished when they are divided into a series of short-term and specific manageable subtasks (Schunk, 1991a). Schunk has also discussed the importance of the difficulty of a goal. People are more likely to spend more effort and time on a difficult goal than on an easier one. However, the difficulty should not be extreme, but moderate, so that individuals can feel a sense of progress and an increase in their self-efficacy and motivation. Researchers using goal theory orientations have indicated that the students' types of goals can affect their choice of activities and their achievement performance. Those children who have learning or task-involved goals are more likely to be more motivated in school than the ones with a performance goal orientation (Ames, 1992; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Nicholls, 1979; Nicholls et al., 1989). An important finding in the achievement goal research indicates that just setting goals is not enough to enhance motivation and learning automatically. For this to happen, goals should have the qualities of being specific, short-term, and moderately difficult (Schunk, 1991a).

In the area of goals, a few researchers have recently become interested in the social aspects of motivation. For example, Wentzel (1991) proposes that students have multiple achievement goals including not only academic ones but also *social goals*. According to Wentzel, high and low achievers differ in their goal orientation. While high achievers tended to combine academic and social goals, low achievers tended to focus on social goals only.

The previous theory and research in achievement goals have important implications for S/FLL motivation. Those students who have specific learning or task-involved goals would tend to select more challenging and more moderately difficult tasks than students with performance goals. In addition, the former students should be more likely to engage in S/FLL and to get a higher language learning achievement. This means that teachers should guide

and help their students to be more conscious learners by means of planning and stating task-involved, specific, short-term and moderately difficult goals, when studying and learning a target language.

However, the cognitive theories of motivation were questioned in the 1980s and 1990s for their exclusive focus on the individual and their minor concern for the role of the social context in the learning and motivational processes. It appears that the first author who referred to motivation from a socio-constructivist perspective was Eva Sivan, who wrote a review paper based on a research study in 1986; but before dealing with this topic, let me provide a general overview of socio-constructivism.

Socio-constructivism is not just one theory, but a group of theories that refers to human cognitive development and students' learning in the classroom. Most of these theories drew strongly from the work of Vygotsky (1978) and his followers (e.g. Cole & Bruner, 1971; Lave, 1988; Rogoff, 1990; Wertsch, 1991; as cited in Hickey, 1997). In general, socio-constructivism emphasizes the role of socio-cultural aspects, collaboration, and negotiation in thinking and learning. In addition, socio-constructive theories state that the cognitive activity is a developmental process influenced by individual differences, socio-cultural factors, and interpersonal relations. This means that for socio-constructivists, the cognitive activity, the cultural knowledge, tools and signs, and assisted learning are three central components in order to understand the processes of human cognitive development, students' learning, and teachers' instructional activity (Sivan, 1986).

Taking into account that cognitive development, learning, and social context are closely related to motivation, some researchers thought that the socio-constructive approach could be used to enhance the understanding of the nature and way that motivational processes take place. In this way, a socio-constructive approach provided a framework for understanding motivation as a social process negotiated by the participants involved in

an interaction event. In addition, it was proposed that socio-constructivism help to reconceptualize motivation, especially in school contexts, along these dimensions: (a) it allowed for a discussion of context and cultural issues that influence motivation and how motivation is shown; (b) it allowed for a discussion of the intrapsychological function of the individual; and (c), it allowed for a discussion of interpersonal relations that influence, shape, and maintain motivation (Sivan, 1986, p. 216).

According to this theoretical framework, some socio-constructivist theorists, based on some tenets of socio-cultural theories, have proposed conceptualizing cognitive, motivation and socio-cultural factors as interdependent factors (Rueda & Dembo, 1995; Hickey, 1997; Oldfather & Dahl, 1994). Consequently, motivation is not a process instigated by the individual. Instead, motivation is a socially negotiated cultural norm that "results in an observable manifestation of interest and cognitive and affective engagement" (Sivan, 1986, p. 210).

Recent Concepts of Motivation in TESOL

In the 80's and 90's the concepts of motivation in TESOL were influenced by some traditional concepts coming from psychology. For example, Harmer (1983, 1994) and Brown (1994) highlight the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Brown affirms that "Yet another but perhaps the most powerful dimension of the whole motivation construct in general is the degree to which learners are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to succeed in a task" (p. 155). Although Harmer (1983) refers to motivation in terms of 'goals', he is still influenced by the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which, by the way, are wrongly defined and applied to the classroom situation, since he says that "*extrinsic motivation* . . . is concerned with factors outside the classroom, and *intrinsic motivation* . . . is concerned with what takes place in the classroom" (p. 3).

A more recent concept that parallels the beginnings of a new trend in motivation theories in psychology is the one advanced by Littlewood in

1984. He defined motivation as “the crucial force which determines whether a learner embarks on a task at all, how much energy he devotes to it, and how long he perseveres” (p. 53). This definition corresponds to Schunk’s (1989) cognitive theory which supports cognitive views of motivation and proposes the following three observable behaviors to infer the presence of motivation: choice of tasks, effort, and persistence (as cited in Pintrich & Schunk, 1996, 2001).

Although Littlewood’s (1984) concept is more up-dated, it is not in accordance with the new achievement motivation theories, and the most recent socio-constructive theories of motivation, which have started to be incorporated in the TESOL field. On the one hand, some writers, such as Oxford and Shearin (1994) and Crookes and Schmidt (1991), called for a broadening of the TESOL research agenda in order to include the contemporary cognitive approaches to motivation developed both in psychology and in education. The first authors to do this were Williams and Burden (1997), who stated that motivation was a complex and multidimensional construct influenced by internal factors (e.g. intrinsic interest of activity, perceived value of activity, sense of agency, mastery, self-concept, attitudes, affective states, developmental age and stage, and gender) and external factors (e.g. significant others, the nature of interaction with significant others, the learning environment, and the broader context). In addition, they defined motivation as follows:

- a state of cognitive and emotional arousal
 - which leads to a conscious decision to act, and
 - which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort
- in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals) (p. 120).

As can be seen, this definition of motivation is essentially cognitive, although they claim that it “fits within a social constructivist framework” (p. 120). However, when they present their simplified model of motivation, they acknowledge the role of the social context, especially when people try to sustain

the effort needed to complete an activity. According to Williams and Burden, this effort takes place within a socio-cultural context, which influences the choices people make to fulfill a task.

On the other hand, although Dornyei (2001a, 2001b) does not provide a specific definition of motivation for learning a target language, he provides a framework of L2 motivation composed of three levels: the language level, the learner level, and the learning situation level. The language level refers to such aspects of L2 culture and community, and their “intellectual and pragmatic values and benefits” for the learner (Dornyei, 2001a, p. 19). The learner level encompasses the personal characteristics brought by the people to the learning process such as self-confidence (as the most relevant one). Finally, there is the learning situation level, which involves course specific motivational components related to the syllabus, the method, the instructional materials, and the learning tasks; teacher-specific motivational components dealing with the teachers’ behavior, personality, and teaching style, and group-specific motivational components, such as goal orientedness, norm and reward system, group cohesiveness, and classroom structure. Dornyei (2001a) refers to his model as an educational approach to L2 motivation because of its emphasis on motivation in the classroom.

Having in mind the social nature of learning and teaching a language in an EFL context, I think that approaching motivation from cognitive and socio-constructive views has more power to explain this construct than pure cognitive theories. For this reason, I would like to propose a definition of motivation to learn another language that integrates some components of the previous theoretical approaches.

Motivation is a dynamic and an interactive process composed of beliefs, wants, reasons, and goals mediated by socio-cultural and historical conditions to learn a second or a foreign language. To support the previous definitions, let me refer to its main components. Motivation is a process,

rather than a product, because we can not observe it directly; instead, we have to infer it through some behaviors such as choice of activities, effort and persistence, and the individuals' verbalizations. In addition, this process is both dynamic and interactive. Its dynamic nature is exemplified through the person's internal processes stimulated by her/his wants, beliefs, aims, etc., and through her/his external and overt behaviors in order to accomplish her/his aims.

However, motivation is not only an internal process, as cognitivist psychologists affirm; it is also an interpersonal and an interactive process because human beings' activities take place in a social context where individuals interact and influence each other. In addition, there should be an interaction between the internal and the external factors which influence each other and affect people's motivation. In addition to affecting each other, there should be an interaction among these factors both internally and externally.

Based on cognitive theories, I state that motivation is a process composed of beliefs mainly about people's own abilities, expectancies, and self-efficacy to do a task; intrinsic task values, attainment and utility values to fulfill an activity, and goals that individuals have in mind to direct their actions.

Finally, I state that these internal cognitive processes are mediated by socio-cultural and historical conditions due to the socio-cultural nature of human activities. However, I do not believe that human beings are completely shaped by the social context, as the behavioral and some social theories promote. On the contrary, human beings have to be considered active, reflective, critical and creative agents of what surrounds them and of the information that they receive from others. The socio-cultural context serves as a mediator and a facilitator to accomplish people's goals, reasons, and actions. This is supported mainly by socio-cultural, and socio-constructive theories (Blumenfeld, 1992; Guthrie & McCann, 1997; Hickey, 1997; Turner, 1995; McInerney & Van Etten, 2002).

In the processes of learning and motivation, I firmly believe that the students play this type of active and responsible role, and, based on the interaction between their own physical, cognitive, linguistic and affective capacities and the historical and real context, make their own decisions, support them with reasons and act on their environment in order to attain a specific goal, such as learning a second or foreign language. The role of the socio-cultural and the historical conditions is very important to have in mind, especially in an EFL situation where the surrounding context is different from an ESL situation, and these conditions should undoubtedly influence the effectiveness of learning and teaching a target language.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article I have presented an overview of the conceptualization of motivation both in psychology and in TESOL. I began with a brief presentation of traditional concepts of motivation within the rationalist and the behaviorist approaches to learning. Taking into account the limited views of these approaches and their simplicity in explaining motivation, I continue with the conceptualization of motivation in cognitive psychology. In addition to providing a more concrete definition, this approach is supported by intensive research that revived the interest in motivation and showed that this psychological process is very complex, multi-dimensional, and dynamic.

Given the nature of the object of our study, that is language, motivation has been studied from different perspectives than the ones used in psychology, such as Gardner's and Lambert's socio-cultural and educational approach (1972), which was considered a landmark in L2 motivation and attitude that stimulated a lot of research in TESOL. However, although in cognitive psychology research in motivation has been intensive, rich, and revealing, it appears that in TESOL few studies have been conducted within this approach (Dörnyei, 2001; Williams & Burden, 1997). In this article, I

have selected a number of cognitive factors that have been intensively researched in achievement motivation and have suggested some implications for research and practice in the TESOL field.

Theorizing motivation from purely cognitive approaches does not provide a clear and a complete explanation of the complexity of motivation. For this reason both in psychology and in TESOL, approaching this construct from a socio-constructive and a cultural view has been proposed. Consequently, the author stresses the need to continue supporting this trend, together with the cognitive view, and for that purpose he proposes and elaborates a definition that needs to be tested in research and practice. Finally, it is argued that given the social nature of human behavior and the specific socio-cultural and historical characteristics of teaching and learning English in a foreign context, this view of motivation can have a more powerful capacity to explain the motivation to learn a target language.

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