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Investigating language-learning motivation: Contributions & challenges of a sociocultural theory perspective

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First, I would like to thank the Department of German for inviting me here today. It is a pleasure to be back at Georgetown to discuss the contributions and challenges in researching language-learning motivation from a sociocultural theory perspective.

I would like to start with a quandry. I am going to read for you two pieces of data from an American student of French in a summer program abroad. Prior to that program, a college junior I will call Rachel wrote the following:

I have never been abroad. I am greatly interested in French history, culture, and language. Studying in Nantes would be the perfect environment to further these interests and broaden my horizons. One of my *main* objectives is to improve my French. Being immersed in French is the *best* way to learn the language and gain fluency. Also, living with a French family will help me to achieve this objective as well as an opportunity to make new friends and learn the culture.

One month into her program, Rachel reflected on her experience abroad in her blog:

The first two weeks that I was in Nantes I was overwhelmed by the challenges I faced but had hope that things would get progressively easier with time. I was excited and scared about the possibilities and opportunities that being in France offered. I was having a lot of difficulty communicating with my host family and in class. I hoped to improve my communication skills and to get to know my family better. I still think that I face many of the same obstacles and frustrations that I did in the beginning. I still have difficulty understanding and speaking in French all the time. It is very tiring for me. As for my host family, I have not gotten to know them very well at all ... We have very little interaction ... I am no longer very optimistic that I will get to know my family better and that being around them will be any less awkward ... With the two weeks left in Nantes I want to do

some more traveling ... I also hope to explore more in Nantes. I'd like to visit a museum or go to a different park ... I want to experience more of the culture in France as well. I'd like to go to the movies and go to a different cafe or bar. At my house I don't have much interaction with people but at the cafes at least I can listen to the people talking around me.

In comparing these pieces of data, it is difficult to reconcile them, particularly since this was a dean's list student whose French instructors enthusiastically recommended her to study abroad. What happened? Why did her goals drastically shift? Is it surprising that after four years of studying French, she stopped after going abroad? Rachel's story refutes the longstanding assumption that *regardless* of students' intentions and behaviors, study abroad is a transformative experience leading to much-enhanced linguistic abilities.

One way of understanding motivational trajectories and why *some* students, like Rachel, have successful classroom experiences yet demotivating experiences abroad, is to focus on the *interaction* between the student and the learning environment. However, the challenge of finding a theory that integrates both *internal* psychological and linguistic processes and *contextual* forces shaping motivation remains. Dörnyei (2001) named this as a critical issue faced by researchers, writing, "Meeting this challenge requires more than simply adding a few situational factors to existing theories; rather, it necessitates the combination of the individualistic and the societal perspectives. We need to introduce sufficiently dynamic concepts that can bridge the gap between the two perspectives while simultaneously doing both aspects justice" (p. 16).

In response to this challenge, my presentation today has four parts-- first, I will briefly overview research on L2 motivation; next, I will explain how motivation is conceptualized in sociocultural and activity theories; then, I will highlight three challenges of researching

motivation from an activity theory perspective; and finally, I will relate L2 motivation research to our work in collegiate foreign language departments.

I. Researching L2 motivation

Research has shown that motivation plays an important role in language-learning outcomes, academic performance, and student persistence. However, researchers disagree as to what motivation is, what factors affect it, and how motivational processes function. A social psychological perspective dominated research from the late '50s until the '90s, concentrating on two orientations to L2 motivation--an *integrative* one, or identification with and willingness to adopt behavioral features of another linguistic community, and an *instrumental* one, or emphasis on the practical value of language learning. According to quantitative studies by Gardner and his associates, integrative motivation was found to predict students' classroom participation, language proficiency, and persistence in language learning.

Beginning in the early 1990s, several L2 motivation scholars called for a reopening of the research agenda and increased convergence between theories of motivation in education and psychology versus L2 motivational theories. Whereas these researchers represented various perspectives, their work foregrounded two elements they believed were not previously given full consideration --the learning *context* and students' *own perceptions* of their abilities, performances, and possibilities.

Attempting to broaden the concept of L2 motivation, Dörnyei and his colleagues elaborated a comprehensive *process* model of motivation with three levels--the language, learner, and learning situation. Later, this model was refined to include *longitudinal* aspects of motivation, a critical addition given studies showing that motivation tends to drop off as the cognitive burden of learning increases.

Also beginning in the 1990s, coinciding with the cognitive revolution in psychology, researchers began focusing on how students' *engagement* in language learning is shaped by their thinking, drawing on attribution, self-determination, and social cognitive theories. For example, the roles of *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivations and their relation to other motivational constructs have been investigated using self-determination theory.

The concept of *self-regulation*, or the process by which learners activate and sustain cognition, behavior, and motivation was relatively absent from SLA research until a decade ago, and research on how learners develop motivational self-regulation skills is still limited. Of the three types of self-regulatory strategies identified by Dörnyei (2001)--motivation-maintenance, goal-setting, and language-learning strategies--only language-learning strategies have received significant attention. Yet as the field of educational psychology focused more on self-regulation, SLA researchers began exploring related constructs including *perceived competence*, *willingness to communicate*, and *self-efficacy*. The common thread among these is a view that learners need *more* than motivation from within, they must also see themselves as agents of the processes shaping their motivation.

As this brief overview suggests, L2 motivation research has evolved significantly during the past two decades. However, the *interaction* among language, learner, and the learning environment remains under-explored. As this citation highlights, since language acquisition and use are inherently social processes, the learner cannot be separated from his or her environment. So the challenge is to find a way to bridge the gap between the inner world of the learner and the surrounding environment. One framework that *does* posit a meaningful interaction among language, learner, and environment is activity theory.

II. An Activity-Theoretic Approach to L2 Motivation

Vygotskian cultural-historical psychology, often called sociocultural theory in SLA research, is a theory of mind recognizing the critical role that social relationships and culturally constructed artifacts play in organizing human thought. *Mediation* is a central concept, meaning humans' relationships to the world are established using physical and psychological tools with language as the primary tool for directing and controlling behavior. Research informed by sociocultural theory, rather than focusing on learning *outcomes*, is primarily concerned with learners' mediated participation in social interactions. *Learning*, from this perspective, is first organized and regulated by more competent others (like a parent or teacher) with the goal that the learner will eventually appropriate regulatory means and assume an *agentic* role in learning; thus, the ultimate goal of learning is independent problem solving. A key notion in the relationship posited between the learner and the learning environment is *affordances*, or particular properties of the environment relevant to an active, perceiving organism. As Van Lier explained, "If the language learner is active and engaged, she will perceive linguistic *affordances* and use them for linguistic action" (2000, p. 252). Here we see the critical role of learner agency, or as Van Lier (2004) put it,

Information cannot just be transmitted to us, we must first be active, then pick up language learning information that is useful for our activities. We may need assistance ... but we cannot be just passive vessels into which information is poured (p. 97).

The role of affect, *including* motivation, in cognition and learning was little explored in Vygotsky's empirical research. Nonetheless, the interrelatedness of affect and cognition was clearly posited in *Thought and Language*, when he wrote:

Thought is not begotten by thought; it is engendered by motivation, i.e., by our desires and needs, our interests and emotions. Behind every thought there is an

affective-volitional tendency, which holds the answer to the last ‘why’ in the analysis of thinking. A true and full understanding of another’s thought is possible only when we understand its affective-volitional basis (1986, p. 252).

Vygotsky further specified that affective processes were not static but “nomadic,” meaning that they change over time as they interact with other internal and external processes (1987, p. 334).

Activity theory, founded by Leontiev, one of Vygotsky’s students, unifies various concepts from sociocultural theory and explicitly focuses on the *motivational* dimension of human activities. This framework focuses on the relationship between humans as active agents and their external sociocultural milieus as they engage in purposeful behavior, motivated by specific *needs*. According to Leontiev, a need becomes a *motive* once directed at an *object*, the activity’s focus or orientation. Motives, which explain *why* someone engages in an activity, are inherently unstable, gaining or losing power depending on the conditions, content and course of activity. Activities are instantiated as goal-oriented actions, and *goals*, in contrast with motives, have clear start and end points and relate to specific actions. Like motives, goals are unstable as they are modified, postponed and abandoned during the course of activity.

So as we see in this diagram - three levels comprise an activity and only at this level can an activity be directly observed by others. For example, a motive to lose weight might lead to the activity of exercising, and the goal to workout daily. This can only be observed directly as a person walking on a treadmill. But not everyone going to the gym has the same motive for activity. Some may be going to meet other people while others go to recover from heart surgery. To return to our own interests as educators, this scenario becomes problematic when you have different people with different motives working together in the same classroom. As Lantolf

(2000) pointed out, "Students with different motives often have different goals as the object of their actions, despite the intentions of the teacher" (p. 12). In other words, *why* you are engaging in the activity strongly impacts *how* you carry out the actions comprising it.

Taking this a step further, activity theory also says that what begins as one activity can reshape itself into another as it unfolds. Thinking back to the quotes I read about Rachel and her study abroad experience, this was precisely what happened when her activity of cultural and linguistic learning abroad degenerated into mere tourism.

From an activity theory perspective, *motivation* results from the alignment of a motive and goal with a sense of participation in a new community of practice, either actual or imagined. Based on the insights of Leontiev, Engeström and Markova, Kim developed a schematic representation for this process. This conception foregrounds learner *agency* as individuals position themselves in relation to learning and others in the environment. However, agency is a co-constructed phenomenon, constantly renegotiated with those around the individual. For example, in Kim's (2007) thesis, he explained:

[C]onflicts between the subject, object, and tools and the subject's community as well as rules and division of labor may hinder the transformation of a motive into a motivation.

For example, if tension exists between an L2 learner and her L2 community, such as a homestay family or an ESL class, her motive to learn the L2 may not be transformed into a motivation. (p. 39)

Here, Kim makes an implicit reference to *second-generation* activity theory, as proposed by Engeström. In this conception, Vygotsky's formulation of tool-mediated and object-oriented action is expanded in the lower triangle to take the shared nature of activity into account.

III. Challenges of researching L2 motivation from an activity theory perspective

Now I am going to focus on three specific challenges of researching L2 motivation from an activity theory perspective-- *conceptual*, *methodological*, and what I am calling *the research-practice interface*. To make each of these concrete, I will link them to research I've done on L2 motivation for students moving from the traditional classroom to the study abroad environment.

Conceptual challenges

Despite recent diversification in L2 motivation research, lack of conceptual clarity continues, and I will discuss two related issues. The first is grappling with the tendency toward *reductionism*. The second is *articulating conceptual tools* for analyzing L2 motivation consistent with activity theory.

Paralleling numerous arguments by applied linguists in recent years for epistemological reorientations in SLA research, L2 motivation researchers have begun embracing "education-friendly" approaches by incorporating insights from related disciplines. However, L2 motivation research has not escaped a bent toward *reductionism*, or the tendency[y] of explaining psychological phenomena by their underlying bio-physiological substrate ([or] reductionism 'downward') and, conversely, reducing the complexity of personal psyches to social-explanatory constructs, or reductionism "upward". Indeed, research that conceives of L2 motivation as an individual difference factor comprised of sub-variables can be considered an example of downward reductionism. For example, in Gardner's socio-educational model we see the integrative motive as comprised of *integrativeness*, *attitudes towards the learning situation*, and *motivation*. Further, motivation is posited as the combination of effort, desire, and attitude. So beyond defining sub-variables of motivation, we still need to define those sub-concepts' sub-components by using other psychological terms. In other words, this definitional procedure is ongoing and could be viewed as conceptual circularity.

At the other end of the continuum is *upward* reductionism, represented within L2 motivation research as a focus on *macro*-sociological perspectives. For example, Norton criticized the construct of L2 motivation and re-conceptualized it as *investment*, or "the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language, and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it" (p. 10). Using socio-economic metaphors of investment and capital, Norton attributed learners' involvement in language learning and the target language community to *macro-social* structures such as gender, ethnicity, and class. Thus invisible yet existent elements in the social environment are foregrounded rather than individual psychological considerations.

The question remains, though, where activity theory might fit within this continuum. On one hand, Kim's figure could be seen as *downwardly* reductionistic, in that it *does* conceptualize motivation as the constellation of motive, goal, and motivation. However, Engeström's activity system could be viewed as the opposite tendency given its focus on macro-structures such as rules, division of labor, and communities. I would argue that as a framework, activity theory represents a conceptual middle ground, incorporating both a focus on *learners' own* intentions and characteristics *as well as contextual* factors. In addition, activity theory's insistence on the dialectic interaction between the learner and environment distinguishes it from many approaches that claim to take contextual elements into account yet incorporate them as a sort of afterthought. But rather than singing the praises of activity theory *too* loudly in comparison to alternative approaches, I want to move on to a second challenge, that of *articulating conceptual tools* for researching L2 motivation from an activity theory perspective

In comparison with previous approaches, L2 motivation research taking a sociocultural or activity theory perspective is still in its infancy, with the first study by Gillette in 1994 and later

studies published during the past decade by Kinginger, Lantolf and Genung, Kim, Douglass and myself.

In a sense, this dearth of research is *surprising* considering that since 1985 over **300** publications and dissertations have appeared on L2 teaching and learning from a sociocultural theory perspective. Ushioda hypothesized that two reasons underlie the absence of a substantial line of inquiry on L2 motivation among sociocultural theory researchers. First, the theory's motivational dimension remains under-developed given that sociocultural theory scholars outside Russia have tended to focus on its cognitive aspects. Second, motivation research using sociocultural theory necessitates a different *strategy of inquiry* from that which has dominated past L2 motivation research. That is to say, rather than relying on surveys in large-scale studies, sociocultural theory oriented research has used learner diaries and interviews in small case studies.

I concur with Ushioda that a pressing need exists to develop appropriate conceptual tools for analyzing L2 motivation. To take one example, consider the constructs of *motive, object, and goals*, recalling that human activities are motivated by specific biological or culturally constructed needs that become a *motive* once directed at an *object*, and that activities are instantiated concretely as goal-oriented actions. So how exactly do we define the *object of activity*?

This question was considered in a special issue of *Mind, Culture, and Activity* (2005) wherein Kaptelinin claimed that the usefulness of the concept of object is "undermined" by problems related to its meaning (p. 4). He attributed this confusion to the fact that Leontiev developed the concept of object of activity *theoretically*, without elaborating on its use in empirical research.

In his original conception, Leontiev (1981) described the object of activity as "something at which an action is directed... something to which a living creature is somehow related" (p. 49). Although this definition may *seem* transparent, how do we make sense of Leontiev also describing the object of activity as "its true motive" (p. 62)? Kaptelinin (2005) grappled with this confusion, writing: "If the object of activity is its true motive, then two concepts ... mean basically the same thing. The advantages of having another concept that has the same meaning ... are not clear" (p. 13).

Another potential hurdle for research examining the role of *goals* in the emergence of motivation relates to the fact that, according to Engeström (1999), goals "are formulated and revised concurrently as one acts, and they are commonly explicated clearly *only retrospectively*" (p. 381). If this is true, is it possible to observe learners' goals as they unfold? If not, are researchers left to rely only on retrospective accounts? The same can also be said for motives, since as Wertsch (1985) pointed out, motives are *transparent* to participants in activity and not readily accessible to conscious reflection. This, along with the fact that motives and goals are not stable, complicates the researcher's task of explaining the activity of individuals by uncovering the motive and interrelationship of motive with the selection of goal-directed actions.

To illustrate this challenge, let's look at some data related to L2 motives. In these statements by Rachel, there is a lack of consistency regarding motive, yet it would seem inappropriate to interpret this as a *shift* or evolution in motive. What does seem clear is that it is questionable whether her primary motive was linguistic. I would argue that her motive was pragmatic, based on beliefs about the value of knowing a foreign language that she had internalized. In comparison, in a second example, one of Rachel's classmate's, Molly, displayed more coherence in statements about why she was studying French.

Comparing Molly and Rachel's comments, one provides coherent comments seeming to point to a well-defined motive for L2 learning, whereas the other does not. When a lack of coherence occurs among statements made by the same learner, it is left to the researcher to decide whether this represents a shifting motive for language-learning activity, a shorter-term goal, or insufficient data to identify the concept in question. Although longitudinal data collection and triangulation may help address this issue, these examples demonstrate the ongoing challenge to maintain systematicity in analyzing data and minimize undesirable conceptual confusion.

Methodological challenges

I'm now going to turn to the second challenge related to research design. Even after the L2 "motivational renaissance" of the 1990s, parallel transformations did not occur in how research was conducted. At present, a significant divide continues between large-scale quantitative studies and studies reflecting a qualitative orientation, the latter far fewer than the former. As Kinginger (2009) argued, this divide is unproductive and has "serious consequences for the interpretability of both varieties of scholarship" (p. 216). In addition, other scholars have called for going beyond dichotomous understandings of L2 motivation research.

Quantitative L2 motivation research has typically compared the influence of numerous affective and cognitive variables on a given outcome such as GPA to identify what variables predict that outcome. Thus, motivation has been understood as a stable trait in a given population rather than as an individual phenomenon. Although these studies have been valuable in identifying recurrent motivational constructs, they have not been without criticism, as it is difficult to compare different studies given variability in how motivation is operationalized by different researchers. Further, given that this research is typically based on one-time surveys of

large numbers of students, the nature of the data does not lend itself to answering WHY motivational characteristics exist or HOW they evolve over time. In addition, since findings are based on group averages and linear relationships determined through statistical procedures, they tend to cancel out the idiosyncratic variation of individuals. As Byrne astutely stated, "[W]here that program works it has done great service in elucidating causality. The problem is that *it works where it works* and it does not work everywhere" (2005, p. 101).

In comparison to quantitative studies, qualitative L2 motivation research departs from a fundamentally different premise: rather than viewing motivation as a stable trait, it is seen as open to temporal and contextual variation. As a result, motivational phenomena are explored with a focus on person-in-context, rather than on context as independent variable and an aim to capture the relationship between persons and the contexts in which they act (Ushioda, 2009). To date, qualitative L2 motivation research has been built primarily on diary studies and interviews of individual learners or small groups of learners. This reliance on small sample sizes has led to criticism, including the inability to generalize to larger populations and the creation of too complex or too narrow theories based on individual case studies.

Given the dissimilar conceptions of L2 motivation and research design held by quantitative and qualitative paradigms, as a qualitative-leaning researcher, I sometimes struggle to see the relevance of quantitative studies for my work. Yet it is also challenging to defend a *purely* qualitative paradigm as the key to uncovering unique insights about L2 motivation. For example, in my own research, a critique could be made of what I reported as the primary motives of L2 learners studying abroad. As we see in this interview data, a clear distinction can be seen between what I called linguistically oriented motives—highlighted in black--and pragmatically

oriented motives—highlighted in orange. But one could argue that these are similar as *intrinsic* versus *extrinsic* motivations and I need not have conducted interviews to figure this out. Has this been a mere change of garment from questionnaire to interview? If not, what *does* qualitative research bring to the table?

I would argue that the *dynamic* nature of motivation is best explored through detailed analysis of learners' motives, goals, and participation in L2 communities based on qualitative data. As an example, let's take the case of Sam, a study abroad participant who was initially quite shy, but, over time became known within his peer group as the "dictionary guy," something he said he was quite proud of, since peers ended up approaching him to figure out the meaning of certain words, resulting in him feeling much more comfortable socially. So whereas Sam did not claim to have many linguistic goals, he repeated several times in his blog and interviews similar goals about oral French and wanting to be understood by French people. We see in this quote that it appears his successful interactions with his homestay mother enhanced his motivation. In the anecdote below it, we see that Sam reflected on certain modes of participation within the L2 community that he viewed as valuable and that he saw himself in an agentic role, as he identified specific actions carried out in pursuit of a goal and alternative courses of action not pursued.

Sam's verbalizations illustrate Vygotsky's notion that human thinking is crystallized by language. They also demonstrate another advantage of narrative data described by Kramsch: "they mak[e] participants become conscious of the paramount importance of context and how manipulating contextual frames and perspectives through language can give people power and control" (1993, p. 252). Viewed this way, qualitative research built on learners' ongoing verbalizations and written narratives triggers reflection and thus influences subsequent learning

behavior. In other words, participating in such research has the potential to function as an important mediational element between learners and the object of their learning activity.

As you weigh the characteristics of quantitative or qualitative approaches, you might be thinking, why not combine the two? -- a solution advocated by Dörnyei, who suggested that mixed methods may lead to more balanced findings. This might seem a logical choice given the temporal and contextual dimensions of L2 motivation. However, mixed methods research has been criticized on the grounds that in attempting to breach the quantitative-qualitative divide, depth of analysis may be sacrificed and the quality of studies may suffer.

The greatest challenge for adopting mixed-methods in sociocultural theory-oriented L2 motivation research is the need to integrate differing research epistemologies. Whereas quantitative design typically involves *reification*, or transforming learners' motivation into numbers based on survey data, qualitative design focuses on narrative data. For this reason, the role of reification in mixed-method design requires careful implementation given the potential for distorting findings.

Although both paradigms have limitations, it is questionable whether those limitations can be neatly resolved by simplistically combining the two. Looking forward, this situation could be improved through the elaboration of rigorous methods for explaining L2 motivational phenomena over time and in diverse contexts and examination of whether quantitative and qualitative inquiry can be combined *in principled ways* that do not sacrifice the integrity of the research.

The research-practice interface

I am now going to turn to the third challenge, of identifying how L2 motivation research should inform educational practice. Historically, the link between research and educational practice has been weak in the L2 motivation field, a characteristic shared with many other areas of SLA research. As Dörnyei lamented in 2001, “It is questionable whether motivation research in general has reached a level of sophistication that would allow scholars to translate research results into straightforward educational recommendations” (p. 103). I would say that even now, a decade later, it remains questionable whether L2 motivation research has offered practitioners many meaningful insights for improving teaching and learning practice.

However, as this citation explains, activity theory aims to *unite* theory and practice. In other words, the researcher cannot study participants' thoughts and behaviors from afar but should be compelled to intervene and facilitate learners maximizing their development. In recent years, such intervention has been vigorously pursued by sociocultural theory researchers in studies on scaffolding, concept-based grammar, and dynamic assessment. However, these studies focus primarily on *cognitive* forms of mediation in classroom settings rather than helping students learn to take an increasingly active role in their own learning in and beyond the classroom.

But is intervening in language learning to support the growth of motivation feasible? How might this be done? Does every learner need such support? I believe these questions are critical to consider based on my research wherein I have noted a pattern of seemingly successful classroom L2 learners who lack motivation maintenance strategies or concrete goals related to L2 learning.

For example, let's consider Chad's experience. As the first and second data excerpts suggest, Chad, who studied abroad to accelerate progress toward a certificate program, had a

social goal of making friends with his host family. But, from the start, he underestimated the linguistic and cultural differences he would face. Once in France, Chad ended up abandoning this goal, and he described his frustrations frequently in his blog. For example, he wrote,

When my host family speaks to each other, I rarely understand the topic of conversation unless they take the time to work with me and explain what they're talking about. This happens often ... the family has many things to talk about when they all come home from school, work, etc., and little time to work with me.

At the program's end, Chad said he had been "lost in the shuffle" of the family and did not form meaningful friendships. For him, despite opportunities to process his thinking through the mediational tools of blog entries and interviews, this was not enough to re-orient his learning behavior or enhance his motivation.

So could different forms of intervention be imagined? In my opinion, options might include a frank conversation before study abroad about realistic expectations for a short-term program, differences in forming friendships with European adults versus a U.S. roommate, and time management between the homestay family versus study abroad peers. Other tools could be used, such as readings on cultural adaptation, peer-to-peer discussions, or a panel of former study abroad participants who share insights with those preparing to go abroad. Once abroad, blog reflections could serve as a starting point for informal follow-up interviews wherein the researcher could assist the student in formulating short-term goals for interaction with the host family. In Chad's case, he needed more explicit mediation by the researcher to help him find strategies for establishing meaningful interaction with the family and, given his statements about the family *needing to work with him*, he needed to be pushed to reflect on the teacher-ly role he was ascribing to his family while failing to be agentic in investing in their lives.

But it is, admittedly, challenging to imagine how *one* person playing multiple roles -- as was the case when I collected this data and served as program director and faculty member-- could simultaneously support the differing motivational needs of groups of students, short of having a team of researchers and psychologists on hand. To my mind, the first steps should begin *long before study abroad* in nurturing learner agency and self-regulation strategies, which brings me to my final points.

Conclusion

I have argued that sociocultural theory provides a useful orientation to for researching L2 motivation but does not escape the challenges faced by other theoretical orientations. In addition, I highlighted the value of activity theory, a sub-theory of sociocultural theory, for studying the interaction among *language, learner, and environment*, an interaction that remains under-theorized and under-researched.

The data that I have shared with you demonstrate both the *unstable* nature of L2 motivation as the conditions of learning shift and the *challenges* to L2 motivation experienced by learners beyond the classroom. Particularly when the goals of language learning are no longer imposed on learners by their teachers in contexts such as study abroad, it appears many struggle to relate their *motives* for language learning to the pursuit of concrete linguistic *goals* and to maintain motivation. This begs the question, then, of whether the conditions and activities of classroom study *promote* self-regulated learning or the development of motivational self-regulation strategies. How might we then incorporate an emphasis on this within our own context of teaching? A few ideas related to three areas.

For *motivation maintenance*, reflecting in writing on one's struggles and accomplishments as a learner can be extremely valuable, and a tool such as blogging can

be used dialogically, meaning the instructor provides feedback and assistance to help learners find ways to maintain or enhance motivation. Another way to facilitate motivation maintenance is *portfolio assessment*, which can help learners develop agency by having choices regarding what is and is not assessed and taking stock of linguistic development over time.

Second, in relation to *goal setting*, research that I've conducted has revealed that even "good language learners" have problems articulating specific linguistic goals and establishing concrete sub-goals. Although goal setting can be accomplished through blogging as a discrete element of a course, it can also be incorporated as a required oral or written component of an assignment (for example, answering questions like "What were your goals for this recording? Were you able to accomplish them? If not, what obstacles did you face?") or as a beginning of term or end-of-semester activity—for example, responding to questions such as "What did you set out to accomplish this term and was this achieved? What will your linguistic goals be in the future? Why?"). As with motivation-maintenance activities, students should be provided opportunities for discussion and reformulation of goal statements, and goal setting should be a *recurrent* element rather than a haphazard occurrence. In my own teaching, incorporating goal setting has allowed me to better understand students' learning behavior and why and how they invest (or fail to invest) time and effort in their studies. By doing so, I've been able to give more specific guidance to individual students on how to maximize learning. One example of this is from a beginning of term Language Autobiography in an advanced creative writing in French course. (goals related to grammar, proofreading)

Finally, research that I have conducted has revealed the challenge of linking students' linguistic goals with means of achieving those goals. Like the example I just showed you, "I want to improve my grammar," this is often seen when students say things like "I want to be more fluent" or "I want to have a bigger vocabulary." For this reason, we should offer our students explicit guidance in *language-learning strategies* appropriate to specific levels and courses. As an example, lower-division courses might have an orientation on maximizing oral participation in class or for finding useful resources for completing homework. An advanced literary-cultural course might incorporate a session on conducting research and evaluating online materials or a review of the lexical and grammatical elements involved in making a persuasive argument in speech or writing, using textual examples such as a film clip or a speech.

In conclusion, a need exists for L2 motivation research that aims to inform our work as teachers, and, sociocultural theory offers a unique grounding to pursue such work. It is my hope that, as Lantolf and Pavlenko wrote, future research will continue the pursuit of "changing the material circumstances under which individuals operate, to help people move their learning and development forward" (2000, p. 157). Thank you.