Applying Dörnyei's Motivational Strategies

John Bankier
Soka University
Alex Wright
Obirin University

Reference Data

Bankier, J., & Wright, A. (2012). Applying Dörnyei's motivational strategies. In A. Stewart & N. Sonda (Eds.), *JALT2011 Conference Proceedings*. Tokyo: JALT.

Dörnyei's process model of motivation provides a three-stage framework to describe motivation: generating initial motivation, maintaining motivation, and self-evaluation. *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom* (2001) provides a number of practical strategies, of which many can be readily applied in the classroom; however, we found that others required specific activities in order to incorporate them into our classrooms. This paper describes three classroom activities we developed using strategies from Dörnyei's framework, that focus on promoting learners' awareness of the instrumental value of English and strategies for self-motivation, as well as encouraging effort attributions by both teacher and student.

Dörnyeiによるモチベーションのプロセスモデルは、三段階の枠組みから成り立っている。それはモチベーションを生み出し、モチベーションを持ち続け、それを自己評価することである。Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom (2001)の中では、実用的な方法を多数紹介している。多くは授業ですぐに取り入れられるが、特別なアクティビティが必要な場合もあることがわかった。本稿は、Dörnyeiの方法に基づき、三つのアクティビティについて述べている。人の道具的動機に焦点をあて、自らのモチベーションをあげ、教師と生徒の両方で努力帰属を奨励することである。

Motivation is an incredibly important area for teachers and students in any field of study. We all know from experience how much motivation matters in our classrooms and in our own lives when we endeavor to learn something new. Many approaches and strategies to creating and sustaining motivation have been developed, but Zoltán Dörnyei is generally recognized as the preeminent researcher in motivation in language learning. Dörnyei's process model of motivation (described in *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*, 2001) is a way of thinking about motivation. Motivation is seen as a process rather than a single quality. In his book, Dörnyei demonstrates how learners and teachers can generate, maintain and reflect on motivation. The model described in the book and the strategies that accompany it can make a real difference in learner motivation. Dörnyei presents a very comprehensive collection of strategies which focus on the three stages mentioned above; however, the way that some strategies can be practically used is not immediately apparent. To demonstrate how everyday classroom activities can be adapted to focus on improving motivation, this paper will present three activities based on strategies within this process model.

Motivation and Dörnyei's Process Model

Motivation is generally defined as involving a "combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language" (Gardener, 1985, p. 10). In the past, motivation was generally conceived of in terms of varying degrees of instrumental and integrative motivation (Sturgeon, n.d.), in which the focus was on the instrumental or practical value of learning the language, as well as the desire for the learner to integrate his or her self with the target language culture (Lambert, 1974, cited in Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991, p. 58). This way of looking at motivation was criticized by many researchers (Dörnyei 2009; Ushioda, 2011), and this criticism led to a more complex conception of motivation. Not only are integrative motivation and instrumental motivation very closely connected, motivation itself is a complex and varied issue (Dörnyei, 2009).

In Dörnyei's *process model* (2001), motivation is seen as a dynamic quality which changes over time. Motivation is increased or decreased in response to a wide variety of influences. In addition to changing over time, the process model looks at how motivation can be influenced by different factors at different stages in the learning process. Dörnyei divides and examines the learning process in terms of three phases.

The first phase is *generating initial motivation*. This involves getting learners excited about what they are about to learn. It takes place before the students take any action to learn the language. Generating initial motivation is about increasing learners' expectancy of success and creating realistic learner beliefs about the language (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 29). Generating initial motivation includes but is not limited to strategies such as promoting integrative motivation and raising students' awareness of the instrumental value of the language.

The second phase is *maintaining and protecting motivation*. Motivation, generated initially, must be maintained or it will fizzle out and the objective will not be accomplished. This phase takes place while the students are taking some action to learn the language. Cultivating motivation in this phase includes but is not limited to strategies such as using goal setting methods and providing students with regular experiences of success.

The third stage is *positive self-reflection*. As the students complete some task on the way to their goal, they should reflect positively about the experience and themselves. In this way, they will be likely to continue on without giving up. This phase occurs after some action has been taken. Strategies to cultivate it include but are not limited to offering rewards in a motivational manner, such as finishing class early when students work hard, and promoting effort attributions in students (see below).

For each phase of Dörnyei's process model there are many possible strategies. There are many possible ways to implement each strategy, as well as many possible activities. The following section presents three activities based on the three phases of the process model, each focusing on a particular strategy.

Activity 1: Promoting Instrumental Values

One way to generate initial motivation is to make students more aware of the instrumental value of learning English. The first activity (see Appendix A) raises students' awareness of this. This means showing students how learning English can help them achieve goals they value, like getting a better job. This is a relatively straightforward strategy because the teacher needs only to make the connection between learning English and a goal students already value (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 56).

The activity takes the form of a short reading about the company Rakuten. Rakuten has recently made it its goal to conduct all of its business in English by the year 2012. The article shows a concrete example of how English is increasingly being used and required in both international and domestic business. The intention is that students who have the goal of being gainfully

employed in business will, by reading the article, make the connection between English and achieving their goals.

The activity itself consists, firstly, of reading the article about Rakuten. Low frequency words are glossed to improve comprehensibility. Dealing with low frequency words through glossing is seen as a desirable way to minimize time spent on less useful words (Nation, 2009). In this activity the message of the text takes precedence over learning linguistic features, so glossing low frequency words was seen as desirable. Secondly, comprehension questions help ensure the students understand the article. Finally, the reading and comprehension questions are followed by discussion questions so that students will think more carefully about the message of the article and also gain valuable speaking practice while they do so. Discussion questions are designed to encourage students to see the value of speaking English from the point of view of companies. This will help them to consider why some companies are using English in the present and why more might require it in the future.

Activity 2: Increase the Students' Self-Motivating Capacity

In order to maintain and protect motivation, as Dörnyei (2001) states, it is not unreasonable to think that, in an age of learner-centered education, students can "do some of our motivational job" (p. 109). In other words, students can be encouraged to develop ways to keep themselves committed and motivated towards their goals. Dörnyei summarizes a taxonomy of self-motivating strategies including commitment, metacognitive, satiation, emotion and environmental control strategies (p. 110). These strategies are applied by those successful in motivating themselves to do a wide range of activities and are not limited to language learning.

The main purpose of the following activity (Appendix B) is *self-motivation strategy training*. Dörnyei recommends "organized sharing sessions" in which students share the strategies that they have found particularly useful. "Because of their direct involvement in the learning process, students often have fresh insights they can share with their peers in simplified terms" (p. 115). Learners think about their past successes in learning other skills and how this can be applied to English language learning.

The activity takes the form of a 30- to 40-minute discussion in pairs or small groups, followed by class feedback. The activity is a type of *unfocused task* (Ellis, 2003), in which the goal is sharing information rather than any particular language focus. Firstly, in the pre-task stage, learners are asked to think of something that they have done in their life which was difficult. It needs to be something on which they spent a certain amount of time, and which had a clear goal, in order for motivation to be a salient factor. Examples could include climbing a mountain or learning to play a musical instrument.

The main task consists of two parts. Firstly, when students have thought about their activity, they are asked to make notes about some basic factors of motivation: how they motivated themselves, their frame of mind, and anything which interfered or distracted them. Pairs then describe their experiences and make notes. In this way, students are reflecting on their past experiences of motivation, and begin to think about strategies that they have used. The teacher may need to guide weaker students by providing questions, such as: "What did you think about when you were (climbing the mountain)?"

In the second part of the main task, students talk to a new partner and describe what they were told by their first partner, discussing the answers to questions from the notes they have made. These questions are more specific and focus on some of the key aspects Dörnyei mentions in developing self-motivation. For instance, "Did your partner think about good things or bad

things when doing it?" refers to commitment control strategies, either in terms of thinking about positive outcomes, or "bad things" such as impending deadlines and the consequences of missing them. A typical answer for this question could be, "When she felt demotivated, my partner thought about what she was going to do as soon as she finished the homework."

By this point, students should have thought about their own motivational strategies, listened to those of a partner, and had relayed to them those of another student. In the post-task stage, students form larger groups of four and share the different strategies. Some questions are also provided to make sure students also mention different types of strategy. For instance, environmental control strategies ("How can we deal with distractions such as friends, Playstation or food?") or emotional control strategies ("How do our emotions make a difference?"). An example answer for the first question could be, "We can make a schedule for when we can play Playstation." Finally, the groups can prepare a short presentation to the class to share the best strategies that they discussed. This can be followed by some feedback from the teacher, such as a summary of the main strategies, or a short lecture on the value of self-motivation.

Activity 3: Promote Effort Attributions in Your Students

One aspect of positive self-evaluation is to promote effort attributions. Attributions refer to whether learners attribute success to either "natural" ability or effort. Dörnyei summarizes the way in which teachers can motivate students as "*encourage students' effort attributions* [emphasis in original]" (p. 120). That is to say, it is vitally important the students do not primarily attribute success to ability, such as being "good at languages" or "talented", but to the amount of effort that someone has put in. Focusing upon ability as a predictor of success can be extremely demotivating for students who have not been immediately successful, as well as making those students who are successful become complacent in their supposed gift for languages. Indeed, research in the field of education has strongly demonstrated the importance of effort evaluations (Bronson & Merryman, 2009).

The final activity (Appendix C) is a "Zen story", a short and oblique parable designed to generate self-reflection and discussion on an issue. According to Suler (n.d.) and MacKenzie (2009), a Zen story, or *koan,* is a kind of conversation piece, a tool which can be used to encourage people to think about particular issues. The meaning of the stories is not necessarily clear on first reading and often may come out through discussion with others. It is important for the stories to be fairly abstract, and to be open to more than one possible interpretation, in order to generate discussion. The abstractness of the stories is also part of the enjoyment of reading them; the stories are partly riddles to be decoded. Many students in Japan are likely to be familiar with these stories. The activity is also a form of *consciousness raising* (Ellis, 1991; Willis & Willis, 1996), as students are given a text and asked to draw their own conclusions about it.

Three different passages were written, of which two are provided in Appendix C. The first is designed to be fairly explicit, and the second more abstract, in the sense that the underlying message is less clearly stated. The second passage is best used with learners who are comfortable with uncertainty and used to less concrete texts. The procedure for both passages is the same. The first passage is used as an example. In the activity, students are first introduced to the concept of the Zen story, through translation or a short explanation, such as: "Zen stories are short stories which seem simple, but have a deep message behind them. The reader needs to think about the story and understand the message." This could then be followed up with some discussion on Zen stories that students know, such as the famous story "A Cup of Tea" translated by Reps and Senzaki (1998).

Students then read the main story. For lower level groups, teachers can improvise some simple comprehension questions to check understanding of the overall meaning of the text, such as "Who was Aka?", "What happened at the end of the story?". These are then followed up with questions designed to encourage students to discuss the message behind the story. In the third story, two characters (Aka and Kuro) are praised with ability or effort attributions, and react differently; the character who is praised in terms of ability reacts negatively to lack of success and gives up quickly. The question "Why did Aka give up but Kuro did not?" has learners consider what led to positive or negative motivation. The following question, "What should Aka's mother have said to him?" asks learners to consider the negative effects of Aka's mother's ability attributions. Finally, learners are asked to reflect on similar situations that they have encountered.

The purpose of the Zen stories, as opposed to more concrete stories, is first to provide a context for promotion of effort attributions: a situation in which they are shown to be necessary. The Zen story also helps to promote the message of effort attributions, as students are likely to be familiar with the concept of wisdom coming from such riddles. The process of determining and discussing the meaning also makes it more likely that the idea will "stick" in learners' minds as something they have discovered, rather than been told.

Conclusion

The three activities shown here attempts to address three aspects of Dörnyei's motivational strategies in an accessible and classroom-friendly way. In our attempt at the activities, learners responded well, though not always in ways that we had expected. For instance, in an earlier version of the Rakuten lesson, some students came to the conclusion that they needed to make sure they avoided companies that required English when applying for jobs. This highlights the important role teachers play in guiding students towards positive and motivating conclusions.

Bio Data

John Bankier began his teaching career in Japan, before moving to New Zealand to complete his CELTA and gain practical experience teaching students from a wide variety of nationalities. He returned to Japan, and worked for a foreign language college in Tokyo while studying for his M.S. Ed. TESOL at Temple University, Japan campus. He took up a full-time position at Soka University, Tokyo, where he now works on the award-winning International Program. He also works at Jissen Women's University.

Alex Wright began his teaching career in Japan after graduating from Oberlin College in America. He began working in conversation schools and soon enrolled in Temple University Japan's program for English teaching. Soon after finishing his M.S. Ed. TESOL degree Alex began working at J. F. Oberlin University in Japan where he still works now. He also works at Jissen Women's University.

References

Bronson, P., & Merryman, A. (2009). *Nurture shock.* New York: Hachette Book Group.

Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dörnyei, Z. (2009). The L2 motivational self system. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self.* (pp. 9-42). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Ellis, R. (1991). *Second language acquisition and language pedagogy*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning*. London: Edward Arnold.

Gardner, R. C., & MacIntyre, P. D. (1991). An instrumental motivation in language study: Who says it isn't effective? *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 13*, 57-72.

MacKenzie, I. (2009). *The 10 very best Zen stories for travelers*. Retrieved from http://matadornetwork.com/bnt/the-10-very-best-zen-stories-for-travelers/

Nation, I.S.P. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing*. London: Routledge.

Reps, P., & Senzaki, N. (Eds.) (1998). *Zen flesh and Zen bones: A collection of Zen and pre-Zen writings*. (1998). Boston, MA: Tuttle Publishing.

Sturgeon, C. M. (n.d.) . *Aptitude, attitude and motivation as predictors in foreign language learning*. Lee University. Retrieved from http://leeuniversity.academia.edu/cmsturgeon/Papers/141702/Aptitude_Attitude_and_Motivation_as_Predictors_in_Foreign_Language_Learning

Suler, J. (n.d.). *Why tell a Zen story?* Retrieved from http://www-usr.rider.edu/~suler/zenstory/whytell.html

Ushioda, E. (2011). Language learning motivation, self and identity: Current theoretical perspectives. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 24*(3), 199-210.

Willis, D., & Willis, J. (1996). *Consciousness-raising activities*. Retrieved from http://www.willis-elt.co.uk/documents/7c-r.doc

Appendix A

Activity 1: The Instrumental Value of English (Intermediate and Above)

Japanese companies planning to make English their official language

Rakuten, the Internet shopping company, have followed Fast Retailing, the operator of the Uniqlo clothing chain, in announcing that English will be their **official in-house** language from 2012. Some other large companies, such as Nissan, hold management meetings in English, but the announcements by Fast Retailing and Rakuten could well be the start of a new **trend**.

The Mainichi reports on the Rakuten announcement: Mikitani (the Rakuten President) said that he has decided using English as a common language is necessary for the company to grow into a global corporation. Rakuten has already begun requiring **executives** to use English at meetings and in meeting materials. Mikitani said making employees communicate in English would be needed for Rakuten to successfully expand its business operations worldwide and to hire **capable** employees overseas. He then **hinted** at the possibility of partially moving the company's **headquarters'** operations abroad necessary.

Comprehension Questions

1. Which companies started using English as their official language?
2. Who is required to speak English at meetings?
3. Why does Mikitani want Rakuten to use English?

- Trend 流行
- Executive 幹部役員

- Capable 能力のある
- Official 公式な
- In-house 社内の
- Hint 暗に意味する
- Headquarters 本社

Discussion Questions

1. What are the advantages for Rakuten if all of their employees use English?
2. Will English become more important for Japanese businesses in the future?
3. If you were an employer, how important would it be to hire someone with good English skills?

Article from **ELT News**, July 1, 2010. Retrieved and adapted from http://www.eltnews.com/news/archives/2010/07/japanese_compan.html

Appendix B

Activity 2: Increase the Students' Capacity for Self-Motivation (Intermediate and Above)

Motivating Yourself

1. ***Think of something that you have done in your life that was difficult.***
   a) You spent time doing this thing
   b) You had a goal

Examples:

Climbing Mt. Fuji / Learning to play the piano / Taking part in a Judo tournament / Getting a new job / A difficult test

2. ***Make notes to get ready to tell your partner.***

Think about:

a) How you motivated yourself
b) What you thought about when you were doing it
c) What things made it difficult for you

Student A: Tell your partner about it.

Student B: Listen to your partner and make notes. Ask questions if necessary

3. ***Now talk to a new partner and tell them about what you heard.***

Discussion questions

1) What did your partner do?
2) How did your partner motivate himself or herself?
3) Did your partner think about good things for bad things when doing it?
4) Did your partner think about his or her goal?
5) What things made it difficult for your partner?

4. ***Get together in a group of four people. Discuss these questions:***
   a) What are some good techniques we can use to motivate ourselves?
   b) How does the environment affect us?
   c) How can we deal with distractions such as friends,

Playstation or food?

d) How can our friends of family help us?

e) How do our emotions make a difference?

5. ***Make a list of four useful things that you learned from the discussion. Get ready to make a 3-4 minute presentation to the whole class about them.***

Appendix C

Activity 3: Promote Effort Attributions in Your Students

Zen Story I ***(High Elementary and Above)***

Two families of jugglers lived close together in a small village near the city. The boys of the families were training to be jugglers like their parents. The boys' names were Aka and Kuro. From when they were small, they trained together, and both boys learned quickly and well. Each day they would practice, and then they would go home to their parents who would ask them about their day.

"How was your day, Aka?" his mother asked him.

"It was hard, mother. We practiced throwing four balls today, but I learned it after all that practice."

"That's because you are a born juggler, my boy, " Aka's mother **praised** him, "just like your father and your grandfather. Juggling is **in your blood**."

Aka was pleased. "I'm glad I have this blood, mother!"

Kuro's mother asked the same question; "How was your day, Kuro?"

"It was hard, mother. We were learning how to throw four balls today. It was tough, but I got it after we practiced together."

His mother praised him; "Of course, my son. It's because you worked so hard for so long."

Kuro was proud of himself for working hard.

The next week, Aka and Kuro practiced with **knives**. It was hard, and both boys made many mistakes. They almost cut themselves many times with the knives, until finally their teacher told them to go home and rest.

Aka said; "I thought I was a skilled juggler, but today I failed so many times. My mother must have been wrong – juggling is not in my blood. I'm **giving up**."

Kuro, however, said; "Juggling is hard, but I understand that I need to keep working. I won't give up."

Aka did give up juggling, and became a pig farmer. Kuro, on the other hand, became a rich and famous juggler.

Questions

1. Why did Aka give up but Kuro did not?
2. What was different about the praise they were given?

3. What should Aka's mother have said to him?
4. Have you had a similar experience to Aka or Kuro? Think about something you have been successful or unsuccessful at.

- ほめる praise
- 血を引く in (one's) blood
- 包丁 knife (pl. knives)
- あきらめる give up

Zen Story II *(Intermediate and Above)*

Noda was a monk in a monastery. Each day when he meditated he was unable to keep his concentration, and he was frequently scolded by the master. Yugen was another monk who had recently arrived at the monastery. Noda watched him every day as he meditated, perfectly quiet and still. Since the first day Yugen had arrived at the monastery, he had never been scolded by the master

Noda spoke to the master; "It is impossible for me to learn to meditate as well as Yugen. He is such a naturally calm and still person. But I cannot keep still and cannot concentrate like him."

The master said, "You must try. It will come in time."

Each day, Noda meditated. After a few moments, each time he would begin thinking about Yugen, and how it was possible that somebody could be born with these skills. Noda wondered if Yugen's family had also been skilled in Zen meditation.

Then, Noda felt the master's stick hit him on the back. He had not realized it, but again he had moved to watch Yugen. He had not kept his concentration.

Noda spoke to the master again; "I cannot concentrate when I meditate, master. I think I was not born with these skills. Look at Yugen; he seems to make no effort at all."

The master said, "You must try. It will come in time."

As the days passed, Noda made less and less effort in his meditation. The master hit him with his stick, but Noda had lost his focus and no longer tried to meditate or keep still. Yugen, meanwhile, sat quietly.

When Noda spoke to the master, the master only said; "You must try. It will come in time."

After Yugen had been at the monastery for a month, it was announced that a great Zen master would be visiting the monastery to talk to the monks. Noda was excited. Perhaps now he would be able to ask another Zen master his question, and find out why it was that Yugen was so naturally better than him at meditating.

All the monks went to the great hall and sat and waited for their great Zen master to arrive. When he entered the hall, Noda stood up in surprise. The Zen master was Yugen.

"Yugen!" Noda asked, "You are the master?!"

"That is correct," Yugen answers.

"How is it possible that you were born with such great skill at meditating?" Noda asked.

"Born?" Zen master Yugen asked Noda in surprise, "but I am nearly 100 years old!"

- Zen: 禅宗
- Mediation / meditate: 座禅
- Monastery: 僧院
- Concentrate: 止める
- Monk: 僧侶

Questions

1. Why did Noda think that Yugen was naturally good at meditation?
2. Why couldn't Noda concentrate?
3. How did Yugen become good at meditation?
4. What should Noda do now?

Note: Formatted versions of these handouts for classroom use are available at http://www.daydreamnation.co.uk/teaching