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Chapter 15

# The Internalisation of Language Learning into the Self and Social Identity

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## Introduction

In recent years, scholarly interest in the role of identity and the self in language learning has grown, such that, as is evident in the current volume (see also Noels & Giles, in press, for overview), there is a multitude of perspectives and hence potential for new insights. In this chapter, I would like to talk a bit about my own interest in this theme, by addressing two questions to which many people besides me have long endeavoured to provide answers. The first question has been posed in one form or another for almost 50 years: 'How can we better support students' motivation to learn a new language?' A good answer to this question would presumably help us to facilitate students' engagement in the learning process and thereby improve not only their capabilities in a new language but also opportunities in their social world. A second question concerns the implications of such volitional engagement in the learning process, particularly for feelings of identification with ethno-linguistic groups. I think that there is a good argument to be made for the importance of learner autonomy in motivation, and that a sense of autonomy in relation to one's social world is central for developing the sense that a new language is one's own language and that one could become an active participant in another language community. But while I appreciate its importance, I am also concerned that we not forget other concerns that people have that may be as important as autonomy in supporting self-regulated learning.

## Self-Determination Theory as a Humanistic/Existential-Phenomenological Theory

### The self

My understanding of the social psychological processes involved in language learning has been informed, in part, by Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002), which is a theory rooted in

existential and humanistic philosophies. As an organismic theory, SDT assumes that human beings (indeed, all animate beings) have an innate tendency to explore and master new situations in their environment, and to assimilate the newly acquired knowledge into their existing cognitive structures, including their sense of self. This integration of the old with the new continues throughout the lifespan (Ryan & Powelson, 1991), such that development of the self is characterised by the simultaneous processes of, on the one hand, becoming increasingly differentiated and refined as a result of new experiences, and, on the other hand, becoming more and more coordinated and cohesive as a result of the synthetic process.

This process of assimilation and accommodation is assumed to be directional. SDT maintains that all persons have an innate predisposition to regulate their own behaviour in line with their 'true' or 'authentic' self. Ryan and Deci's (2004) use of the term 'authenticity' is derived from Kierkegaard, who maintained that the self is continually 'relating itself back to itself', such that with each new experience, the self considers possible actions in light of its present interests and beliefs, and then acts in a way that reflects the best correspondence with these interests. This assumption suggests that the self mindfully appraises and evaluates choices of action, and in the process organises and regulates behaviour in a way that benefits the person as a whole (cf. Dworkin, 1988). An authentic action is characterised by a sense of authorship, in the sense that one endorses and takes responsibility for one's actions. When endorsed by the whole self, actions are experienced as congruent with other values and commitments that the person holds. The emotional tone of such reflective synthesis is 'eudaimonic', involving a feeling of fulfilment of potential and a sense of flourishing by acting in a meaningful manner (Ryan & Deci, 2006; Ryan *et al.*, 2008).

Although the authentic self is assumed to be a natural endowment, the self is also in a continuous, dialectical relationship with the social and physical worlds. If these environments provide the appropriate 'nutriments' (which I will describe in greater detail later), then growth and synthesis of the self can readily take place. However, everyday life is full of obstacles that confound the easy realisation of the self, and we are often compelled to pursue courses of action that do little to support, or indeed that run counter to, our innermost beliefs and values. At such times, we experience a sense of inauthenticity and despair. Thus, the process of self-synthesis involves a dynamic in which a person struggles to realise her potential while attending to the social and physical constraints inherent to everyday life.



## The motivational orientations

This perspective on the self as engaged in an ongoing process of integration suggests a motivational typology which can describe the varying degrees of synthesis of an activity into the self. Deci and Ryan (1985; Ryan & Deci, 2002) differentiate two broad categories of motivation, which they term 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' motivation, along with a sort of antithesis to motivation termed 'amotivation'. Intrinsic motivation comes from the enjoyment felt while performing in an inherently interesting activity, as in the case of a learner who experiences a spontaneous sense of satisfaction in mastering linguistic and communicative challenges and elaborating her capacities in the new language.

Extrinsic motivation refers to any sort of regulation that is external to the enjoyment of the activity itself. Although many goals may be described as extrinsic, they vary in the extent to which they are under the control of the person or under the control of other people or situational circumstances that lie outside the person. For convenience, these goals are described as four separate types, but it is important to remember these types represent points along a continuum, not categorically different motivational orientations. The implication is that a student may endorse multiple reasons for language learning, tending usually to indicate reasons that are similar in degree of self-regulation.

The form of regulation that is least under personal control is external regulation. External regulation refers to the case in which one performs an activity because of an interpersonal demand or a situational contingency (e.g. working for a monetary incentive, or studying to achieve a course credit). The cause of the action is removed from the person's own wishes, and is experienced as a form of control. As long as that contingency is present, a student would engage in language learning; once removed, that engagement would desist. A second, somewhat more personally controlled, form of extrinsic motivation is introjected regulation. In this case there still exists contingencies to learn the language, but these pressures come from the person herself, rather than directly from other people or the general context. With this intrapsychic form of regulation, the rationale for performing the activity is based less on the person's own sense of priorities than on a desire to maintain self-esteem by living up to evaluative standards that are often derived from without. With such introjects, a student generally feels that she 'should' or 'ought to' learn the language, and does so in order to demonstrate that she can live up to her own and others' expectations.

Two other forms of extrinsic motivation are more self-regulated. With identified regulation, one consciously engages in an activity because it is consistent with a goal that is personally important. A student might identify with language learning because she 'consciously evaluates that

## Autonomy, Competence and Relatedness: Fundamental Human Needs and the Role of Significant Others

The development of an integrated, autonomous self is not an unproblematic journey. This human propensity interacts with aspects of the social and physical worlds that either nurture or thwart its unfolding. To achieve integration and self-determination, SDT posits that certain psychological 'needs' must be met. People within the learner's network play an important role in supporting (or undermining) these needs, in effect providing the 'nutriments' for internalisation and self-actualisation. SDT posits three fundamental needs, including autonomy competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2002).

Autonomy in language learning is a topic that has been extensively addressed (see Benson, 2006, 2007 for recent reviews). Indeed the website hosted by Hayo Reinders concerning autonomy and language learning contains over 700 articles (Reinders, 2007). Benson (1997) and Oxford (2003) have forwarded similar models to synthesise the various perspectives on autonomy in language learning. Autonomy as conceptualised in SDT does not focus on the technical skills that students must develop to pursue a learning activity outside the classroom, nor does it address how ideological positions and socially-structured relationships privilege or constrain self-authorship. Rather, it fits into Benson's psychological category and lies between Oxford's psychological and sociocultural I (Vygotskian) categories. Autonomy refers to the experience of initiation and regulation of behaviour by the self:

> Autonomy ... concerns the difference between behavioral engagement that is congruent and fitting with one's values, interests and needs (i.e., with one's self) versus alienated, passively compliant, or reactively defiant. (Ryan & Deci, 2004: 450)

Autonomy does not imply that one acts independently of environmental influences, and/or acts counter to the influence of generalised norms or the demands of specific individuals. If, upon reflection, we concur that such mandates are consistent with our values and interests, we would be acting autonomously. People in the social world can support this phenomenology of autonomy in a variety of ways, such as providing appropriate choices, encouraging self-initiation, minimising the use of controls, and so on.

Within SDT, competence refers to the feeling that one has the capacity to effectively carry out an action. Because of the need for competence, people seek out opportunities to challenge themselves and thereby develop their skills and capacities. Feelings of competence are promoted by communicating expectations that are challenging without being overwhelming, providing a rationale for how behaviours are related to



consequences, and giving guidelines and feedback that explain how behaviours can be changed to become more skilful and effective.

Relatedness refers to a sense of belongingness with other people in one's community. It involves both a sense of caring about and being cared for by others – in other words, a sense of affection and a feeling of security. Grolnick *et al.* (1997; Ryan & Solky, 1997) maintain that an atmosphere of warmth, security, and acceptance is necessary to act in a 'spontaneous and authentic way' (Horney, 1950: 455). The exploratory spirit in all humans is most robust when persons are operating from a 'secure base' (Grolnick *et al.*, 1997: 138). The feeling that one matters to others is enhanced when others demonstrate sensitivity and responsiveness to one's concerns, devote time and resources to that person, and perform other kinds of personally validating actions.

A growing body of research supports the claim that an internalised orientation for language learning is associated with these three experiences. For instance, Noels (2001b) found that those students of Spanish who perceived their teacher as less controlling and as providing informative feedback felt a stronger sense of autonomy and competence in language learning, which in turn was associated with stronger endorsement of internalised and intrinsic reasons for learning the language. Several other correlational studies of students of French, English and German have likewise demonstrated the positive link between strong perceptions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness and more internalised reasons for language learning (Noels, 2005; Noels *et al.*, 1999, 2000, 2001).

To look more closely at how people in the learners' social world are implicated in their motivation, we asked students, including heritage and nonheritage learners, registered in undergraduate-level German courses across Canada to complete a survey concerning their motivational orientations and feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness (Noels & Saumure, submitted). We also asked them to tell us about how controlling their teachers, family members and members of the German community were of their efforts to learn German, how informative their feedback was for developing a sense of competence, and how concerned and responsive they were towards the student.

We found that, for nonheritage learners, competence, relatedness, and most strongly autonomy, predicted a more internalised orientation for learning German. The teacher played the most significant role in supporting these fundamental needs, although informative feedback and interpersonal involvement from members of the students' families and the German community also fostered a sense of relatedness. A different picture emerged for the heritage language learners. In their case, feelings of competence were relatively unimportant, and interestingly, relatedness was at least as strong a predictor of an internalised orientation

**Table 15.1** Examples of responses to the open-ended question 'What are your reasons for learning (your second language/your heritage language/ English)?'

| *Student's background* | *Response* |
|---|---|
| *Modern language* | |
| Japanese | 'I have always had an interest in Asian art, culture, etc. I had the opportunity to begin studying Japanese (I had time) at the [name of university and department]. I have always liked language, having studied German, Russian, etc. I have continued to study Japanese.' |
| French | 'I am learning French because I enjoy it and I believe a second language is valuable for working in Canada and traveling overseas, which is what I hope to do, and have been doing, in my life.' |
| *Heritage language* | |
| Dene | 'First and foremost, I believe an individual's heritage language determines where they come from and who they are as an individual. Language is the backbone of a culture. I would like to carry on my Dene heritage therefore I am willing to learn my native language to carry on my ancestor's heritage. I also want to learn because I would like to teach my 13 year old son how to speak it.' |
| German | 'It shows and tells who I (truly) am. I want to able to pass it down to my kids.' |
| *English as a second language* | |
| Chinese national | 'I started to learn English from my middle school, as one of the required course. From then on, I had to kept on learning English meet the requirement at high school and to get the university degree in China. When I started to work after leaving university, I had to work with a American colleague in my office. The need in daily-work, which is not even very much, forced me to learn English further by speaking, reading English. In order to get the chance to study in this University, I had to pass several standard examinations, like TOEFL. So, in the last several years before I came here, the main reason to improve my English is to pass those tests and make the life in Canada easier.' |



**Table 15.1** (*Continued*)

| *Student's background* | *Response* |
|---|---|
| German national | 'In high school I had to decide weather to take English or French. I choose English because it is most widely used. I went to the US to travel just 2 months before, not enough of the students chose French, so there wouldn't have been a course offered anyhow. The main reason throughout high school was that I had to take English up until grade 11, there was no other choice. In Grade 12 and 13 one still has to have one foreign language. I decided to take English because I was much better in it than in Latin (my other foreign language) and I liked our English teacher. When I decided to study in Canada, I had no other choice than to improve my English.<br>a) to be able to meet the prerequisites (TOEFL 550 points)<br>b) to follow in class<br>c) to communicate with people<br>(Listing a,b,c is not weighted I guess they are all equally important)' |

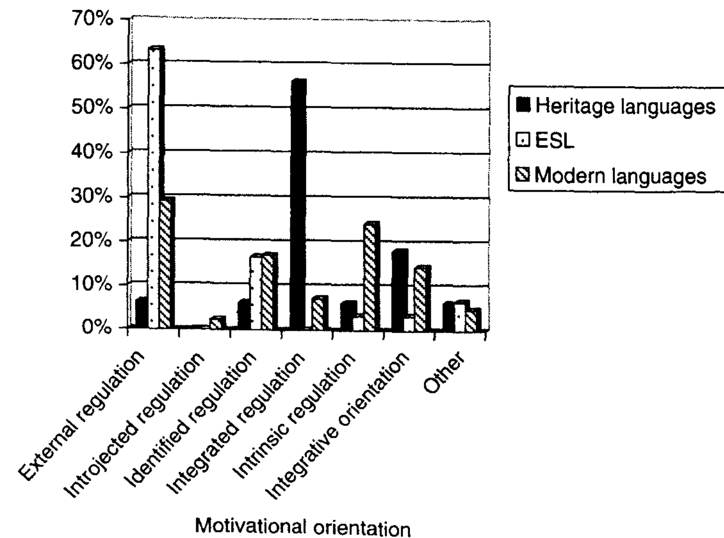


**Figure 15.1** Percentage of respondents who endorse each orientation as a function of the language learning context

activity as important and meaningful to herself' (Ryan & Deci, 2003: 258). Integrated regulation is the most internalised and self-determined form of regulation; in this case, the activity fits in with other goals, beliefs and activities that a person already endorses, such that performing the activity is a realisation and expression of the self.

As noted earlier, these motivational orientations can be contrasted with the experience of amotivation. When amotivated, people either do not engage at all in the activity, or they act passively, going through the motions to carry out an activity that makes no sense to them until they can escape it. Amotivation arises under various, related conditions: when a person does not value the activity or the outcomes it could yield; when one feels a sense of incompetence in performing the activity; and/or when one feels that their actions are irrelevant for bringing about the desired consequences. Although amotivation generally connotes passive disinterest, it is not far removed from the active resistance that some students demonstrate when they feel that others are imposing an activity or identity on them (Norton, 2007; see also Ushioda, 2003).

## Motivational Orientations and Language Learning Contexts

I have argued elsewhere that such a model of motivation captures well the experiences of many language learners across a variety of contexts (cf. Noels, 2001a). It is, however, tenable that groups of learners differentially internalise language learning depending upon the exigencies of their social environment. In some circumstances, learning a new language may involve a certain 'urgency', in the sense that the language is necessary to sustain basic necessities. For instance, immigrants to a new country may be faced with the very immediate necessity of developing English competence in order to get a job, find appropriate accommodation, and so on. This utilitarian focus, possibly combined with discriminatory encounters with the target language community, can potentially undermine the learner's desire to engage in a more personal way with that community (cf. Norton, 2000). Under such circumstances, the learner may only slowly and perhaps reluctantly take on the language as part of her identity. In other contexts, learning a language may be less pressing; although developing skill in the language may garner certain practical benefits, the pursuit is primarily enjoyed as an engaging hobby. And in yet other contexts, learning the language may be neither particularly useful nor particularly enjoyable, but may serve as a touchstone for one's identity and sense of belongingness to an esteemed community.

Some preliminary findings from a study of 103 ESL, heritage language (HL), and modern language (ML) students point to systematic differences between groups of learners (Noels *et al.*, in preparation). University-level students registered in a language course answered the open-ended question 'What are your reasons for learning (your heritage language/a second language/English)?' Students generally provided extensive and well articulated responses to this question, often including multiple reasons for language learning. In a preliminary analysis, participants' responses were coded (by coders blind to the purpose of the study) with regard to the major theme evident in the answer, using a coding scheme that reflected the types of orientations outlined by SDT, as well as Gardner's (1985) integrative orientation and a general 'other' category.



The results of this content analysis raise two important points. First, the findings underscored that SDT usefully contributes to our theoretical framework representing the experiences of language learners across different contexts. Almost 95% of the responses had a major theme that could be classified within the typology outlined by Self-Determination Theory (see Table 15.1 for examples of responses) or the integrative orientation category. Across the full sample, the theme of external regulation was particularly evident in 32.0% of the cases, introjected regulation in only 1.0%, identified regulation in 13.6%, integrated regulation in 20.4%, intrinsic motivation in 14.6%, and integrative orientation in 12.6% of the cases. Only 5.8% of the responses reflected themes that did not fit well within the scheme.

Second, the results indicated that features of the context of acquisition can have quite profound implications for the experience of language learning. As seen in Figure 15.1, there were clear differences between the groups in terms of the endorsed reasons ($\chi^2 = 56.91$, df = 12, $p < 0.001$). Inspection of the adjusted standardised residuals (Haberman, 1978) showed that, as the main theme, integrated regulation was reported more frequently by HL learners and less frequently by ESL and ML learners than would be expected by chance alone. External regulation was a main theme for more ESL learners and fewer HL learners than would be expected by chance. Finally, intrinsic regulation was a main theme for ML students marginally more frequently than would be expected by chance.

It seems, then, that students in dissimilar circumstances can have quite different foci in learning. The importance of the context of learning for motivation has been noted by many others, who have suggested that we need to be more attentive to the student's network of interpersonal contacts, the relative status of ethnolinguistic groups under consideration, the opportunities for direct contact with the language community, the heritage background of the learner, among other dimensions (cf. Clément & Kruidenier, 1983; Clément *et al.*, 2007). It is my opinion that a comparative perspective can most constructively reveal how these aspects of context shape the learner's experience, and, reciprocally, how the learner shapes the context to meet her needs and aspirations.

as autonomy. Regarding the role of significant others in supporting these feelings, the teacher played only a small part. Instead, the family members and members of the German community played the leading roles in promoting heritage learners' autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

There are two main points to take away from these findings. First of all, this comparative analysis again emphasises that the social context dramatically affects motivational dynamics, even for students registered in the same course. Different people played more or less significant roles in students' internalisation of language learning. Indeed, in some circumstances the teacher's impact may be inconsequential relative to the weight that family and community members bring to bear. The second point pertains to the importance of autonomy in supporting self-determined regulation. These results emphasise that although autonomy is important, it is not the sole basis for internalisation. Rather competence and particularly relatedness are also foundational for self-determined motivation.

## What are the Implications of Internalisation for Social Identity?

Research carried out in our lab and by researchers elsewhere has demonstrated that more self-determined extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation have several implications, including more positive affective responses to learning the language (e.g. less anxiety, more positive attitudes), increased motivational intensity and engagement in the language, better linguistic skills (e.g. grades and self-assessments), and increased use of the target language (see Noels, 2001a, for review). An issue that we have been exploring in several recent studies is whether more internalised reasons for learning a language are linked to increased identification with the target language group. It would seem reasonable to suggest, at least in contexts where a target language community is readily identifiable, that as language learning and use become increasingly integrated within a person's sense of self, one might increasingly feel a sense of belonging to that ethnolinguistic community.

Some studies support this contention. For instance, several correlational studies indicate a link between self-determined extrinsic and intrinsic orientations and ethnic identity or integrative orientation (Noels, 2001b, 2005; Noels *et al.*, 2001). To look more closely at this issue, Erin Goldberg and I studied graduates of French immersion and other intensive language programs in which students receive a substantial portion of their academic curriculum in French (Goldberg & Noels, 2006). The university students who participated were registered either at the English-speaking campus of a western Canadian university or at the university's French-language campus. None of them had a Francophone ancestral background. We were interested to know if the students' choice of campus was related to their motivational orientations for learning French. More specifically, we reasoned that those people who opted to pursue their university studies primarily in French would have internalised the language to a greater extent than those people who decided to study in English. We also thought that if students felt that they were learning the language because it corresponded with their values, interests, and sense of self, they might engage in a more Francophone lifestyle and adopt a Francophone identity.



The results provided some support for this hypothesis. Although quantitative measures did not show a difference between groups, qualitative responses to the question 'Are you continuing your French language training? If so, why and if not, why not?' were coded into categories reflecting the motivational orientations posited by SDT. Students at the French-language campus described their orientations in a more self-determined style than those at the English-language campus. Moreover, several people at the English-language campus indicated that they had no reason to study French or had postponed their studies until a later time, although none at the French-language campus did.

This difference between groups in how internalised their reasons for language learning were corresponded with differences in patterns of identity. For both groups, Anglophone identity was stronger than Francophone identity across all situational domains examined (i.e. with family, with friends, at school, in the community). This pattern indicated that learning French did not interfere with the students' feelings of identity with their culture of origin, suggesting these people experienced an additive form of bilingualism. However, the differentiation between identities was attenuated for the French-campus students in the school domain. For these students, their Francophone identity was stronger and their Anglophone identity was weaker in the school domain than in other situations. Moreover, their Francophone identity was greater and Anglophone identity weaker than that reported by the English-campus students, but only in the school domain. Hence, being immersed in a French environment at school, which includes opportunities to interact in French with classmates and professors, had an enhancing effect on these students' Francophone identities. By no means do I want to suggest that simply because a person feels that learning French is an important part of who she is, she will be able to successfully claim an identity as Francophone. Certainly more is involved in such identity claims, including meaningful use of the language and receptivity and validation from members of that community. But an important piece of the puzzle is the student's own sense of ownership of the new language, which would help to legitimate such identity claims in her own eyes as well as the eyes of others.

The students examined in this study might well be considered advanced language learners who have had considerable exposure to the language and possibly the French community. To test the generalisability of this link between internalised motivation and ethnolinguistic identity, we looked at this issue in students registered in a first-year French course at a western Canadian university (Noels, 2007). The participants, who were all native speakers of languages other than French (primarily English), completed a questionnaire that assessed their motivational orientations; sense of autonomy, relatedness and competence in the language learning context; their effort and engagement in language learning; and their feelings of ethnic identity in the educational domain. We analysed the relations between these variables using structural equation modelling, and the results showed a good fit of the proposed model to the data (see Figure 15.2). The more that students felt that their needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness were satisfied, the more they indicated intrinsic and self-determined extrinsic reasons for learning the language, and the less they felt amotivated. More intrinsic and self-determined reasons for language learning corresponded with more motivated engagement in language learning, which in turn was linked to increased identification with French speakers. Thus, consistent with Goldberg and Noels's (2006) findings, the results indicated that if learners feel that they are learning the language because it is expresses their values and interests, they will likely identify with the target language community.

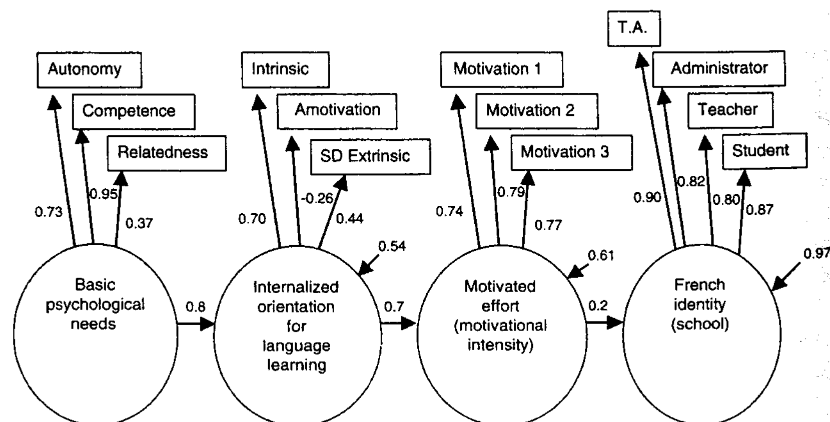


**Figure 15.2** Final structural equation model for first-semester French students, with standardised coefficients. Note: $\chi^2 = 88.92$, $p < 0.01$, CFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.08



## Issues to Consider

I hope so far to have demonstrated the utility of SDT for understanding language learning motivation. The theory organises many, seemingly disparate, ideas regarding motivational orientations in a manner that can be applied across a large range of contexts. It is a useful guide for posing research questions and effectively predicts patterns of relations between many of the variables that have interested scholars who study the sociopsychological processes involved in language learning. It underscores the central role of the self in language learning, particularly the importance of internalisation of the learning activity, which is a topic of considerable interest in recent discussions of motivation. For instance, it is closely aligned with Dörnyei's (2005, this volume; see also Csizér & Dörnyei 2005a, 2005b) discussion of a motivational self-system that regulates behaviour, cognition and affect. Drawing from the work of Markus and Nurius (1986) and Higgins (1987), Dörnyei argues that the capacity to visualise oneself as a member of a language community of some kind is the key mechanism by which motivation is sustained (cf. Norton's (2000) 'imagined community'). In line with SDT's differentiation between more or less internalised forms of extrinsic motivation, Dörnyei maintains that more idealised guides for language learning are associated with a self-promotion focus (e.g. studying to realise an important aspect or potential of the self). In contrast, guides associated with an 'ought' self are prevention focused (e.g. studying because of a sense of duty or obligation).

The SDT framework is not inconsistent with recent calls by sociocultural theorists to reconceptualise the monolingual language learner as a multilingual language user. It fits in very nicely with approaches to learning that emphasise the role of social interaction, the importance of zones of proximal development and optimal challenges, and the idea that human beings are self-regulating organisms (cf. Ryan & Powelson, 1991; Ushioda, 2006). SDT has been quite mute on the themes that critical theorists have raised regarding power and ideology in specific social interactions and the struggle of learners to recraft their sociostructural position to bring about personal and social change. Recently, however, Landry *et al.* (2005) have argued that language socialisation involves not only the experience of self-regulation as outlined by SDT but also the experience of conscientization (cf. Freire, 1983), and have attempted to integrate these experiences and others in a comprehensive model.

But there remain several issues that I feel need to be more extensively addressed with regards to this theory. Over the years various critiques have been levelled at SDT. Space precludes an extensive discussion of these but I will suggest three areas that I feel are particularly important, not only because of what they might tell us about language learning and

use, but also because of what they might have to say about motivation and the self more generally. First, the claim of a true, authentic self runs counter to the assumptions of many constructivist theorists. Many scholars have forwarded the idea that we have dynamic, multiple, relational selves, which are constructed and negotiated within specific interpersonal interactions in particular social contexts. These multiple selves are a normal, adaptive part of human life, and are not necessarily indicative of identity fragmentation or distress. This perspective contrasts with the arguably positivistic overtones of the SDT notion of an 'authentic' or real self that is fostered or undermined by the social context. From this perspective, when identities are relatively isolated, compartmentalised, and 'disintegrated', one is likely to experience poorer well-being; when identities are integrated and unified within the psyche, they represent the full endorsement of the self, and this contributes to better well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2003). A rapprochement between these contrasting points of view is sorely needed, perhaps one that speaks to a dialectical balance between constancy and change in self-processes.

The second pertains to the differentiation of intrinsic motivation from internalised forms of extrinsic motivation. Koestner and Losier (2002) describe many similarities between intrinsic and identified regulatory styles, including high levels of involvement, positive affect, and internal sense of control. They differ from each other, however, in terms of their motivating force and regulatory guides. Personal importance is the motivating force in identified regulation, such that one regulates one's behaviour in terms of personal values and identity. In contrast, attraction or interest in the activity is the motivating force for intrinsic motivation, and the emotions that emerge as a result of engaging in the activity serve as the regulatory guide. I puzzle, however, over the notion of 'interest' – surely an activity cannot be itself inherently interesting, but rather interest must originate from the person. Moreover, to be interested in something suggests that one makes, or at least would be inclined to make, meaning of that activity. If this is true, then intrinsic motivation is defined quite similarly to internalised extrinsic motivation, in that one's motivation derives from that which one finds personally meaningful. Perhaps Koestner and Losier (2002) have resolved this definitional indeterminacy by positing that regulatory guides are learned in the case of identified/integrated regulation and genetically inherited in the case of intrinsic motivation. It is plausible that some people may be genetically predisposed to enjoy verbality generally, which eventually becomes channelled into enjoying learning new languages. In contrast others may only come to enjoy language learning as a result of socialisation and internalisation. It remains to be seen how this premise could be tested.



Evidence for the distinctiveness of internalised extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation might come from their different associations with fundamental needs and behavioural consequences. Koestner and Losier (2002; see also Ryan & Deci, 2002) claim that, although autonomy is an important antecedent for both motivational types, it combines with competence to support intrinsic motivation, but combines with relatedness to foster internalisation. With regard to behavioural consequences, internalised extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation have been shown to differ in how well they predict behaviour relevant to achieving long-term goals: somewhat counter-intuitively, identified regulation is often the stronger predictor, a pattern that we have also seen in our own research, whereby identified regulation more strongly correlates with the intention to continue language studies than does intrinsic motivation. Koestner and Losier (2002) suggest that seeing an activity as interesting may not be sufficient to engage fully and effectively in that activity, but rather one must see the activity as personally important. Hence they suggest that it may be often worthwhile to encourage the development of an identified style of regulation in addition to intrinsic motivation. In sum, there is arguably a conceptual overlap between intrinsic and internalised extrinsic motivation, and differentiation between these constructs merits more theoretical consideration, empirical inquiry, and reflection on their implications for application.

In my view, the greatest challenge for SDT, and for the concepts of autonomy and agency more broadly, arises from the premise that autonomy is universally the cornerstone of motivation. The primacy of autonomy seems appropriate in Western societies where individualism is a deeply vested cultural value. Its centrality, however, must be examined in other, so-called 'collectivistic' societies where autonomy may not be as emphatically cherished. Although investigation of SDT in non-Western societies has only just begun (see Ryan & Deci, 2006, for a brief review), the cross-cultural relevance of autonomy for language learning has been well discussed and debated, particularly with regard to language education in Asian countries. Some claim that traditional pedagogical approaches that include authoritarian teaching styles and exacting assessment criteria are detrimental to students' sense of competence and autonomy (e.g. Yang, 1998). Others maintain that stressing autonomy in language education may be inappropriate in contexts where social interconnectedness and respect for authority are emphasised (cf. Farmer, 1994; Ho & Crookall, 1995; Jones, 1995; Riley, 1988). Still others argue that autonomy in Asian countries may assume a form different from autonomy in Western nations, where collaboration and interdependent learning rather than solitary and independent learning are encouraged (Aoki, 1999; Aoki & Smith, 1999; Littlewood, 1996, 1999). To date, however, there has been little empirical

work to examine learner autonomy and language learning motivation from a cross-cultural perspective. Such a comparative approach, along with a consideration of other dynamics such as relatedness and competence, I believe will help us to better understand the place of autonomy in motivation and self-regulation.

## Conclusion

I began this chapter by highlighting two questions that seem to run through much of the recent work on the social psychology of language learning. The first concerned how we might better support students' motivation to learn a new language. The second pertained to the implications of motivated involvement in the learning process for feelings of social identification. I hope that I have convincingly demonstrated that SDT, which highlights the importance of internalisation and self-determination for motivated effort, can serve as a useful guide for answering these questions. At the same time it is important that one not be 'in thrall' to this or any other theory (cf. Thomas, 1997). Although I find SDT to be an insightful standpoint from which to consider language learning motivation, I believe that our understanding of this domain will grow as we test the limits of our theories, and stretch beyond their boundaries.

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