

**Adult ESL Student Motivation for Participation in
Advanced Language Learning**

A. LANE IGOUDIN, M.A., PH.D.

Published in 2008 by The CATESOL Journal, 20 (1), 27-48.

Abstract

In recent years, TESOL has called for the study of the social and cognitive factors that affect adult English learners' participation in formal language learning. This research project investigated the motivational processes of 10 adult immigrant English learners which led them to take an advanced ESL reading course. Using a mix of quantitative and qualitative strategies, the study found that the surveyed group of ESL students chose to engage in advanced language learning in order to, first and foremost, join the dominant language culture and community. Instrumental reasons, though quite important to these students, appeared to be outweighed by the integrative ones. The student's social identity proved to be a major factor in this process as student motivation often originated in the disjuncture between the learner's current and desired identities. Furthermore, students viewed language education as a necessary transitional path towards integration and attainment of a desired identity.

Author

Lane Igoudin has taught various levels of ESL at Cypress, Coastline, Long Beach City, and Los Angeles City colleges. He is a Board Member of the Orange County Chapter of CATESOL. He has presented his research on motivation and identity issues of ESL learners at CATESOL, TESOL, AERA, and AILA conferences.

Introduction

TESOL scholarship, originating in the field of applied linguistics, has, at times, overlooked non-language factors and contexts that may affect language learning. Much of the knowledge, however, gained through education and psychology studies can be applicable to the populations and topics under study in TESOL. After all, in California, non-native English speakers constitute the majority of the target adult learners (63 percent) and almost a third in the country overall (Lasater and Elliott, 2004).

The research presented in this paper appropriates some of the advances gained by contemporary adult education and educational psychology scholarship that could further the research of second language attainment by adults. The literature review below begins with an overview of relevant works in education and psychology scholarship to provide a general background on the student motivation phenomenon. In its second part, the review focuses on motivation research in linguistics, specifically the studies related to second language attainment.

Review of the Literature

Adult Learning from a Social Cognitive Perspective

The foundation of adult learning theory was established in Lindeman (1926) who identified important distinctions between adult and child learning. These ideas were later developed by Knowles (1990) into a theory of *andragogy*, a model of practice and study of how adults learn, different from *pedagogy* which belongs to child and youth education.¹ Knowles and his followers assumed that due to important physical and

¹ While the term ‘andragogy’ did not take root in English-speaking countries (Krajnc, 1989), Knowles’s ideas have been extremely influential in the field throughout the world.

psychological developments in adult life, humans bring to the learning situation status, responsibilities, and functions different from those of children, including a larger body of experience, different motives, and learning needs.

More specifically, adult learning, according to Knowles (1990), is based on the following six factors:

1. *Justification for learning*, that is possession of reasons for learning, prior to engaging in it.
2. The transformation of *the adult concept of the self* into that of an independent, self-directed human being
3. *Possession of life experience* which affects adult knowledge and needs and is a constituent part of their identity
4. *Readiness to learn* which relates the timing of learning experiences to stages of human development
5. *A problem-centered approach to learning* with the immediate application of knowledge to real-life situations
6. *Motivation to learn by internal factors* (originated in the self), rather than external ones

Kidd (1973) expanded the connection between adult learning and the concept of the self, stating “all new experiences for the [adult] learner are symbolized and organized into some relationship to the self, or ignored because there is no perceived relationship” (p. 127). Voluntary participation in education thus only happens when education itself is meaningful to the adult students’ sense of who they are and what they want to be.

Kolb (1984) proposed a model of learning as a continuous cycle in which concrete experiences lead to their evaluation, conceptualization and the subsequent active experimentation. For example, a student's experience of adjustment to a new social environment leads to the development of education goals and the subsequent participation in an organized learning activity.

Learning as a psychological process happens in a multi-faceted interaction with the learner's world. Set in a social context, adult learning is not an acquisition, or receptive process but also one of externalization. Jarvis (1987) and Mezirow (1981) suggested a correlation between the adults' potential to learn and the harmony between them and the environment in which they function. "When there is disharmony or discontinuity – both subsumed under the idea of *disjuncture* – then people have to seek to adjust (learn), so that harmony can be reestablished" (Jarvis, 1987, p.79). Learning activity may occur as a pro-active, relevant, and meaningful response of the adult to the conflict generated by disjuncture. A disjuncture thus may become both "the point at which needs and wants and interests converge" (ibid.) and the start of engagement in a learning experience.

Applying this concept to the adult immigrant experience, it appears that fundamental life changes brought about by immersion in a society communicating in an unfamiliar language, compounded by the necessity to function in it, may cause disjuncture in these adults' lives and prompt them to seek language education in order to adjust to these changes. Some immigrants may seek language education immediately upon arrival, for others, the language disjuncture may occur later in their lives when higher levels of language proficiency (i.e., beyond the survival skills) may be needed for

various reasons. Deficiency of knowledge combined with an evolved self-concept set in a specific socio-cultural milieu may then generate a new need – a need to learn.

What Is Motivation?

My preferred definition of *motivation* explains it as “the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect” (Keller, 1983, p. 389).

Motivation is not a stable condition. Keller pointed out *relevance* of the learning situation as a prerequisite to sustaining motivation over time. Relevance extends beyond the learner’s education goals to include the fulfillment sought from the learning process for the psychological needs of achievement, affiliation, and, ultimately, power. A failure in a learning situation dissolves a student’s motivation, causing *learned helplessness* (Bandura, 1982; deCharms, 1984; Weiner, 1984) or *amotivation*.

Through the influence of sociocultural and situated cognition theories, educational psychology recognized that student motivation also varies according to the multiple *contexts* in which learning occurs, e.g., culture of learners and the classroom setting (Volet & Jarvela , 2001).

Motivation for Language Learning

Study of motivation for language learning began in 1959 with Gardner and Lambert’s sociolinguistic study of English-speaking students studying French as a second language in Montreal. Gardner and Lambert identified two factors that shared variance in common with the measure of L2 proficiency: *Language Aptitude* (language learning

ability) and *Motivation*, the latter comprised of attitudes towards the L2 community, interest in learning L2 and reasons for learning L2.

Following a series of studies (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner & Smythe, 1975), Gardner proposed a ‘socio-educational’ model of second language acquisition which centers on two overarching classes of reasons for language learning called *orientations*: the *Integrative Orientation* (desire to learn a language in order to interact with, and perhaps to identify with, members of the L2 community) and the *Instrumental Orientation* (driven by the learner’s practical goals, such as attaining an academic goal or career advancement). The two orientations are not always mutually exclusive.

The socio-educational model has undergone a few changes (Gardner and Lambert 1959, 1972; Gardner, 2001), and though none of the proposed full versions of the socio-educational model of L2 motivation have been found universal for all L2 learning contexts (Au, 1988; Canagarajah, 2006), the integrative/instrumental dichotomy continues to dominate the field.

To test his socio-educational model, Gardner developed and extensively used the *Attitude/Motivation Test Battery* (AMTB), a set of Likert scale subtests with which he would assess motivation constructs. The AMTB has been used “pervasively” (Jacques, 2001) in motivation research, with some of the studies involving large samples, up to 4,500+ participants at a time (Dornyei & Clement, 2001). Recently, qualitative methodologies for motivation research began to emerge as well, employing interviews and observation to study language learning motivation (Ushioda, 2001; Syed, 2001).

A further distinction was made between *intrinsic* (learning for self-accomplishment) and *extrinsic* (driven by external circumstances) factors in student

motivation (Brown, 1991). Brown asserted that most research showed the “superiority of intrinsic motivation in educational settings” (p. 247).

Early 1990s saw a surge of interest in language learning motivation, following Crookes and Schmidt 1991 article “Motivation: Reopening the research agenda” in *Language Learning*. In 1994 alone, *The Modern Language Journal (MLA)* published seven articles on the subject. Several important books combining current studies with historical overviews have been published on the subject. One of them, “Motivation and second language acquisition” (Dornyei & Schmidt, 2001), which followed a AAAL 200 colloquium included 20 research reports and overviews, featuring language learning motivation research from all around the world.

Some recent studies focused on relations between specific motivational factors, rather than the overall picture. Jacques (2001), for instance, found that low motivation among the students who study language solely as a university requirement correlated to their preference for non-challenging learning activities. Other studies focused on the *contextual* factors in student motivation which may shape student motivation and the ability to achieve their learning objectives. Julkunen (2001), for example, attempted to collect data on learner motivation at the micro-level, that is before, during, and after performing different types of tasks and in different educational settings. He found that certain tasks in certain settings corresponded to higher levels of motivation.

Social identity, a person’s definition of his or her ‘meaning in the world’ and value to others (Eckert, 2000), has emerged as a new focus in the study of student motivation. As early as 1977, Taylor, Meynard, & Rheault showed that contact and threat to identity related more significantly to L2 proficiency than instrumental or integrative motivation.

Recent studies have exposed additional links between language learning and the learners' changing perspective of themselves in a new language environment. For example, Peirce (1995) introduced the concept of *investment* in learning a dominant language in order to “acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources [and] increase the value of [the learners'] cultural capital” (p. 17), while Sfar & Prusak (2005) suggested learning itself to be the closing of a gap between the learners' actual and projected identities.

Recent qualitative studies offered a vision of language learning motivation as a dynamic, longitudinal process in which the learners' cognitions and beliefs (Ushioda, 2001), or the relevance of the curriculum to the learners' interests (Syed, 2001) directly affect involvement in learning.

Motivational Processes among ESL Learners

Only recently did linguists begin to distinguish between second and foreign languages learners in the study of motivation and to propose that “the dynamics involved in learning these two different types of language may be quite different” (Gardner, 2001, p. 11). So far, the overwhelming majority of motivation studies seem to be in foreign language (FL) class settings. The very volume of 20 motivation studies from which Gardner's quote is taken contains no studies of ESL students.

Noels, Adrian-Taylor, and Johns (1999) found that ESL students to whom English was a pre-requisite to learning other subjects and/or obtaining an academic degree were more driven by extrinsic motives for learning than heritage and non-heritage EFL learners. This was consistent with Gardner and Lambert's (1972) hypothesis about the

significance of the instrumental orientation when there is an urgency about mastering a second language.

The motivation survey of 580 adult immigrants at a community-based ESL program in Toronto rated highest the following motives for learning English: linguistic needs, basic skills, cultural awareness, social interaction, and resume writing (Paper, 1990). The study found no noteworthy differences in motivations according to age, education level, and length of residence. The significance of integrative orientation in the results led the author to recommend the inclusion of teaching of Canadian culture into the program curriculum.

Volition for immigration to the U.S. emerged as another motivating factor affecting language learning in a qualitative study of adult ESL students in New York City (Brilliant, Lvovich, and Markson, 1995). “Students who make an active, internally motivated choice to leave their country of origin,” they noted, “seem to make a smoother transition and to acquire English language more readily than do students whose decision to leave was a passive one” (p.58). Similarly, Menard-Warwick (2005) situated ESL experience of immigrant Latinas within a larger sociopolitical context, in which factors such as immigration and connected to it life events served as motivating or amotivating factors for language learning.

Consistent with educational psychology, *student beliefs* appear to play a central role in adult learning experience and achievements which made them a subject of motivation research. In one such study, Bernat (2003) assessed the beliefs of 20 unemployed Vietnamese students in a vocational ESL course in Sydney, Australia. The students scored highly on both motivational orientations: 85% of respondents expressed

the (integrative) desire to get to know English-speaking Australians better and have friends among them, while all respondents agreed that learning to speak English well would give them better employment opportunities.

Research Question

Prior research on motivation for language learning established a link between the adult students' motivation and engagement in language learning activities. It revealed that student beliefs, attitudes and goals, influenced by the sociocultural context of their lives, played an important role in their motivation for language study. These studies, however, did not look specifically at the motivational processes of adult immigrant students engaged in advanced second language study at academic institutions. In other words, there is a lack of understanding as to why this group of students, many of whom have family and work obligations, would seek language education past the survival skill level.

The need to further the study of the adult ESL student motivation is reflected in the questions on the 1998 "Research Agenda for Adult ESL," prepared by the National Clearinghouse on ESL Literacy Education with support from TESOL: "What are the participation patterns of adult English learners in formal programs? What factors promote or inhibit participation?" (p. 4). More recently, TESOL has again called for research that views English language learning as a process of individual change, specifically, in "relation between social context and internal cognitive changes" (2004 TESOL Research Agenda, 2C).

The current research project focused on the motivational processes within adult immigrant English learners engaged in advanced academic ESL learning and addressed

the following research question: Why do adult immigrant learners of English take advanced academic ESL courses?

Methodology

Subjects

This study focused on a 6-unit reading course at Long Beach City College which satisfied the study requirements by being an advanced community college ESL course and also because students of immigrant backgrounds (as opposed to international students) constituted the majority of the class. The course served as a last required step before transferring into the mainstream English curriculum.

Ten adult students enrolled in this course served as study subjects. The gender distribution in the class was 30% male versus 70% female. The age distribution was spread out relatively evenly within the 17-39 range, averaging age 30. Half the students were married. Half of the participants also had children. Two out of ten were caretakers of older parents or relatives. Most students were employed; two unemployed. Nine study participants spoke Spanish as their first language, and the other one spoke Khmer. The Spanish speakers came from Mexico (6), El Salvador (2) and Ecuador (1).

The students' education background prior to the community college ESL program varied. Three students completed 6-9 grades in their native country. Five others completed a high school equivalent, including two who earned a university degree in their native countries. Three students earned a high school/GED diploma in the U.S. The length of stay in the U.S. varied widely among the students, with the largest group (5) falling in 4.5-6-year range.

Data Collection

The data was collected in several ways. First, the participants were surveyed with an Attitude Motivation Test Battery which tested their response on 6 *value components* identified in prior research on motivation for language learning. The first three aligned stronger with the Instrumental end of the orientation dichotomy ('professional and educational goals', 'communication needs with important others' and 'encouragement for language learning from relevant others') while the second three components ('attitudes towards L2 speakers and culture', 'volition of immigration to the U.S.', 'enjoyment of language learning as a cultural activity') with the Integrative side of motivation. The additional value component section tested was Motivational Intensity. Each construct was tested with, at least, four statements. The results were tabulated, and a mean and standard deviation were calculated for each question. The survey also included a non-rated section which collected relevant sociocultural data which may influence motivation for engaging in academic language study, including participant demographics, as well as projected educational and professional goals.

The survey results were triangulated with the data from the interviews with students to deepen the understanding of the reasons leading to student motivation, observation of classroom behaviors which may manifest student motivation, and analysis of course-related documents.

Findings and Discussion

The study findings portray adult motivation for language learning as a highly complex phenomenon, but also one that has identifiable trends. The study operationalized motivation as *sustained interest in formal second language learning* manifested through participation in formal L2 learning activities.

First of all, the study results revealed adult immigrant learners' participation in advanced academic language learning as a self-directed, goal-oriented process. Consistent with the educational psychology theories (Mezirow, 1981; Jarvis, 1987), sources for motivation for language learning were often found in specific instances of disjuncture between the adult students' language proficiency and their needs arising from the social context of their lives.

Adult student participation in academic language learning is not a random process but a conscious act often originating in the learner's acculturation and socialization in a new society.

For example, Lucia, one of the participants, felt isolated in her social circle. Her friends spoke fluent English and had to switch to Spanish when addressing her. The sense of separation and embarrassment motivated her to resume her English studies.

Lucia: I've been meeting people, they are from Central America or South America. They are here living probably 15-20 years already, so they speak English very well. So, one of them, we are friends, but sometimes I feel like we cannot be together, we cannot be friends because I'm not at the level she is. Sometimes, that push me down because I have a big, big difference, because she

... speak English very well and Spanish, and I don't. And sometimes when we go to places together, sometimes I understand what people tell me, sometimes I don't and I feel so embarrassed. That's why I'm here trying to improve myself. She told me, c'mon, mija, you have to go to school, I didn't do it. That happened, like, 6 months ago that I decided to come to college. I had started already another school, I finished 3 years and then I stopped.

Interviewer: *Why did you start again?*

Lucia: *Because of her and other friends. Sometimes when I go out with her and her friends, all of them speak English. She just speaks Spanish, all people speak English and she has to sometime translate to me something and I feel embarrassed, so embarrassed.*

Anabel's poor English skills were detrimental to her career growth. To her, learning the language and moving up the employment ladder went hand in hand.

Anabel: *First thing I want to know the language, everything that is English – all the pronunciation, I want it get better because my work. I get this right, speak with everybody, and I want to be able to understand, sometimes I don't understand some words. That is why I'm here and I want to get my degree, administrative assistant. That's why I'm trying to do that. [...]*

Interviewer: *How long have you worked at this office?*

Anabel: *Three years. It's gonna be three years. But I'm moving up because my English and my school. Before I start in the warehouse and then I*

jumped to the QC {quality control}, then went to the clerk, and now I'm revenue auditor.

Second, students' goals reached beyond the immediate language learning and were tied to a desired career path. Study participants clearly projected their professional aspirations and set their education goals in order to achieve them. Ninety percent of students planned to transfer to the mainstream curriculum to obtain an academic degree or vocational training. On the survey, they showed strong support (88%) for the notion that they study ESL in order to achieve a better job in their current or different profession (92%) and that there are tangible financial benefits in it for them (88%). Patricia stated it succinctly in her interview: *"I wanna get a better job and I wanna learn more English because I wanna get a career."* The study participants rated even higher (94%) the motive of completion of the ESL program in order "to enter an educational program to prepare for the job of my choice."

Furthermore, the quality of language also mattered too, in that they did not just want to acquire a language, but a certain level of language to achieve their goals.

Interviewer: *Why are you still taking [ESL] classes if your English is so strong?*

Daniel: *Well it's strong, but I think I need to be prepared for [---] what I want to do. Instead of talk, talking, street talking and all that. I need another step.*

To another student, Tomas, who had completed his university education and worked as an engineer in Mexico, 'good English' was necessary to recapture his

academic success in the U.S.: *“If I want to get a Master degree, I need English. If I want to keep studying here, I need to speak good English to understand and write and listen.”*

In this process, the ESL program was viewed as transitional step towards achieving a long-term education goal. The participants’ projected workplace language environment gravitated towards English-only as did their desired language practices. For example, six subjects desired long-term careers in English-only environments and three others in bilingual workplaces.

Third, the study revealed that the surveyed students’ attitudes were strongly oriented towards integration into the English-speaking society, a trend which appeared to play an equal, if not a dominant, role in their participation in language learning. Overall, this value component received a 75% (‘Agree’) rating. Communication with English speakers was rated the highest (90%) as a motive for learning, while the English speakers’ culture was viewed positively as well (76%). The study subjects exhibited a markedly high level of desire to join the English-speaking community (82%) and use English most of the time (86%).

They also demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm about learning English as an activity (84% overall). “I really enjoy learning English” and “I enjoy using English outside of class when I get a chance” statements were particularly highly agreed with, 94% and 98% respectively. Interestingly, this high level of enthusiasm about language learning ran at times contrary to individual academic performance.

In comparison to the integrative components, career aspirations, immediate communications needs and other ‘tangible’ benefits arising from English proficiency appeared be equally or less important to the adult learners. In other words, students

wanted to learn English because they liked the English-speaking Americans and their culture, and wanted to be part of it, whether or not such learning was to bring them financial rewards. Moreover, motivation for formal language learning appeared linked to student socialization in the new culture, specifically, their desire to assimilate. This became evident through a strong correlation between the strength of surveyed integrative components within a student's motivation and his/her projected identity as a member of the L2 culture. Stronger integratively-oriented students appeared to edge ahead of the instrumentally-oriented ones in the intensity of their motivation.

It must be noted that the line between instrumental and integrative motives for language learning was often blurred (which concurs with the literature review). For example, the aforementioned interest in working at English-only workplaces or the existence of communication needs with L2-speaking friends could be viewed as a mix of both instrumental and integrative phenomena.

Fourth, *social identity* mentioned above proved to be an important factor shaping student motivation. The interviews, in particular, highlighted the relationship between the "designated identity" (Sfard & Prusak, 2005), a projected perception of one's self, and language learning as a path towards it. What emerged is a strong correlation between a participant's view of his/herself as a member of the L2 culture and high integrative content in their motivation for language learning. Students also perceived their language learning activities as a path towards both integration and attainment of the desired identity.

For example, Tomas who said he wanted to talk as if he "were like an American," produced a high score (83%) in his attitudes towards the L2 speakers and culture and the

highest overall score for the (Integrative) section of the survey (91%). He also showed 2-to-1 weight of integrative vs. instrumental motives. This is how he explained it:

Tomas: *I like English, the language, and I like to read most of the articles in the magazines, everything. And I like to meet people, I like to understand them, I like to learn, but good English... I'd like to talk like if I were like an American.*

Interviewer: *OK, that makes sense. But do you have reasons like you want to get a job?*

Tomas: *Yeah, but if I speak good English, of course, I will get a job.*

Interviewer: *So that would follow?*

Tomas: *Yes.*

Similarly, Lucia, who scored high (84%) on the integrative motives overall, showed a strong pull towards the new culture. She wanted to function actively in it, certainly not as an outsider: *"I want to be part of this culture. If you don't learn English, it's like I'm not here. It's not just about work, it's not just about school, I wanna be part of this culture, and without English it is not gonna happen."*

On the other hand, Chibith, concerned with retaining her Cambodian identity, scored only 60% in her integrative orientation. Her attitude was in no way negative and she appreciated the benefits language proficiency would bring her, however, she was keen on keeping the balance between her "Americanized" and Cambodian self. The fact that she was born in the U.S. was likely to be a factor in her identity struggle.

Chibith: *I'd like to be seen as Cambodian. [...] All these new generations coming up they don't understand, they don't know who they are. And that thing pisses me off, you know? All they know how to speak is English and they should, because... They forget themselves, and I don't want to be like them. So I'm trying to learn English, at the same time, remember my own culture and who I am.*

Interviewer: *Trying to keep a balance?*

Chibith: *Yeah. [...] I want to advance as far as I can and try to be Americanized and at the same time know who I am and what culture my parents came from.*

Fifth, language learning appeared inseparable from the sociocultural context in which it took place. Outside of class, these students commonly engaged in bilingual and even mono-lingual L2 practices. Though it was possible for most study participants as Spanish speakers residing in greater Los Angeles to function entirely in their native language, the cumulative picture which emerged from the surveys and interviews showed that most students commonly used both languages off-campus, while use of their native languages was limited primarily to their family networks.

The students' extensive work and family responsibilities also had an effect on their learning. Work and babysitter schedules, for instance, showed to affect enrollment and attendance.

The volition of immigration appeared to be a factor in language learning. Here are two opposite examples of the influence of volition.

Daniel: *All my family is here. My family, my Mom, my Dad and my sister. I was the only one over there, the rest of my family were here.*

Interviewer: *Are you glad that you came?*

Daniel: *Yeah. (laughs)*

Interviewer: *Do you like living in the U.S.?*

Daniel: *Yeah.*

Interviewer: *Does this affect your interest in studying English?*

Daniel: *Yeah.*

Interviewer: *How so?*

Daniel: *Well, because I use it everyday.*

Interviewer: *What were your reasons for coming to this country?*

Anabel: *My mother was right here.*

Interviewer: *Did you want to come?*

Anabel: *Not really, she bring me here.*

Interviewer: *When you came, did you like it?*

Anabel: *No, because I was older and I didn't speak English and everybody speak English. I was not able to go to school cause I was older, 16.*

Interviewer: *Do your feelings about living in the US affect your interest in studying English?*

Anabel: *Yes, I think yes. In the beginning no – it wasn't interesting to me to learn English. I had other things on my mind.*

Furthermore, those students who came willingly to this country appeared to continue to be more driven by desire to integrate rather than the instrumental rewards in their motivation for language study. The length of stay in the U.S., on the other hand, had no particular bearing on their participation in academic language learning.

At the same time, communication needs with valued others, particularly friends and colleagues, only moderately influenced participation in advanced ESL education. The encouragement from those others was a weak factor for learning, and parental influence was particularly insignificant.

Conclusions

This study focused on the motivational processes within adult immigrant English learners engaged in advanced academic ESL study. The results suggest that adult immigrants choose to engage in advanced academic language learning programs in order to, first and foremost, join the L2 culture and community. Many English language learners function in a bilingual social context, admire the dominant language culture, and are aware that their achievement of projected identity and professional goals in this society depends on high-level proficiency in their second language. Student motivation for language learning can often be traced to a particular disjuncture between the student's L2 proficiency and the needs arising from the student's social identity or context. Past immigration history also appears to affect student motivation for language learning.

Overall, advanced ESL student learning is driven by internal motives, often connected to specific life goals outside of the education realm. Education, including

language education, however, serves as a necessary transitional step on the way to achieving those self-established goals.

Instrumental reasons, including communication needs within the existing and projected bilingual and L2 monolingual communities of practice, are quite important to this group of students. Yet, the integrative motives for language learning among these adults appear to be equal to, if not outweigh, the instrumental ones.

Given the general lack of research in applied linguistics about adult ESL student motivation, I view this study as an exploratory endeavor intended to begin the process of understanding of the phenomenon. On one hand, the study's limited sample makes it hard to extrapolate the results to the entire ESL adult population. On the other hand, the multi-method model of research used in the study made the findings more comprehensive, and helped solidify them through triangulation. As a matter of fact, using only one specific method, for example, a survey, or focusing on one specific behavior, for example, classroom participation, would have failed to reveal the true nature of motivation of these students. Thus, despite a limited sample, I believe I established a few basic findings which suggest certain trends in the motivation for language learning within the target population.

Ideas for Future Research

Future studies could expand the knowledge about adult ESL student motivation in several significant ways. First, a comparison of motivational processes among the successful, that is participating, students with those who left the studies could highlight the reasons for amotivation. Second, the use of a larger sample for a quantitative study

(something already done in L2 motivation studies among other groups of language learners) would help maximize the validity of the study results, and possibly reveal additional reasons for participation. Lastly, the study of practical implications of engaging student motivation in learning, including the assessment of the relevance of course content to the student goals, would seem beneficial to the TESOL practitioners.

References

- Au, S. Y. (1988). A critical appraisal of Gardner's social psychological theory of second-language learning. *Language Learning*, 38, 75-100.
- Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist*, 37, 747-755.
- Bernat, E. (2004). Investigating Vietnamese ESL learners' beliefs about language learning. *English Australia Journal*, 21(2), 40-54.
- Brilliant, J. J., Lvovich, N., & Markson, S. J. (1995). The effect of the affect: Psychosocial factors in adult ESL student language performance. *College ESL*, 5(1), 52-61.
- Brown, H. (1991). TESOL at twenty-five: What are the issues? *TESOL Quarterly*, 25, 245-260.
- Canagarajah, A. (2006). TESOL at Forty: What are the issues? *TESOL Quarterly*, 40, 9-34.
- Crookes, G., & Schmidt, R. (1991). Motivation: Reopening the research agenda. *Language Learning*, 41, 469-512.
- DeCharms, R. (1984). Motivation enhancement in educational settings. In R. E. Ames &

- C. Ames (Eds.), *Research on motivation in education, v.1* (pp. 275-310).
New York: Academic Press.
- Dornyei, Z., & Clement, R. (2001). Motivational characteristics of learning different target languages: results of a nationwide survey. In Z. Dornyei & R. Schmidt (Eds.), *Motivation and second language acquisition* (pp. 399-432). Honolulu, HI: Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center, University of Hawaii at Manoa.
- Dornyei, Z., & Schmidt, R. (Eds.). (2001). *Motivation and second language acquisition*. Honolulu, HI: Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center, University of Hawaii at Manoa.
- Eckert, P. (2000). *Linguistic variation as social practice*. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.
- Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1959). Motivational variables in second language acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology, 13*, 266-272.
- Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Gardner, R.C., & Smythe, P.C. (1975). Motivation and second language acquisition. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 31*, 218-230.
- Gardner, R. C. (2001). Integrative motivation and second language acquisition. In Z. Dornyei & R. Schmidt (Eds.), *Motivation and second language acquisition* (pp. 1-20). Honolulu, HI: Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center, University of Hawaii at Manoa.
- Jacques, S. R. (2001). Preferences for instructional activities and motivation:

- A comparison of student and teacher perspectives. In Z. Dornyei & R. Schmidt (Eds.), *Motivation and second language acquisition* (pp.185-212). Honolulu, HI: Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center, University of Hawaii at Manoa.
- Jarvis, P. (1987). *Adult learning in the social context*. New York: Croom Helm.
- Julkunen, K. (2001). Situation- and task-specific motivation in foreign language learning. In Z. Dornyei & R. Schmidt (Eds.), *Motivation and second language acquisition* (pp. 29-42). Honolulu, HI: Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center, University of Hawaii at Manoa.
- Keller, J. M. (1983). Motivational design of instruction. In C. M. Reigeluth (Ed.), *Instructional design theories and models* (pp. 386-433). Hilldale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Kidd, J. R. (1973). *How adults learn*. New York: Association Press.
- Knowles, M. (1990). *The adult learner: A neglected species* (4th ed.). Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company.
- Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as a source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Krajnc, A. (1989). Andragogy. In C. J. Titmus (Ed.), *Lifelong education for adults: An international handbook* (pp. 19-21). Oxford, New York: Pergamon.
- Lasater, B., & Elliott, B. (2004). *Profiles of the adult education target population*. Prepared for Division of Adult Education and Literacy, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education. Research Triangle Park, NC: Center for Research in Education, RTI International.
- Lindeman, E. (1926). *The meaning of adult education*. New York: New Republic.

- Menard-Warwick, J. (2005). Intergenerational trajectories and sociopolitical context: Latina immigrants in adult ESL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39, 165-185.
- Mezirow, J. (1981). A critical theory of adult learning and education. *Adult Education*, 32(1), 3-27.
- Noels, K. A., Adrian-Taylor, S., & Johns, K. (1999). *Motivation for language learning and communication style of significant others: An examination of learners in three contexts*. Paper presented at the Meeting of the National Communication Association, Chicago, IL.
- Paper, L. C. (1990). An ESL motivations assessment for a community-based ESL programme. *TESL Canada Journal/Revue TESL du Canada*, 7(2), 31-44.
- Peirce, B. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29, 9-32.
- Research agenda for adult ESL*. (1998). Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse on ESL Literacy Education (NCLE), for The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL).
- Sfard, A., & Prusak, A. (2005). Telling identities: In search of an analytic tool for investigating learning as a culturally shaped activity. *Educational Researcher*, 34 (4), 14-22.
- Syed, Z. (2001). Notions of self in foreign language learning: A qualitative analysis. In Z. Dornyei & R. Schmidt (Eds.), *Motivation and second language acquisition* (pp. 127-148). Honolulu, HI: Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center, University of Hawaii at Manoa.

- Taylor, D., Meynard, R., & Rheault, E. (1977). Threat to ethnic identity and second-language learning. In H. Giles (Ed.), *Language, ethnicity, and intergroup relations* (pp. 98-118). London: Academic Press.
- TESOL Research Agenda*. (2004). Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Retrieved October 1, 2006 from www.tesol.org.
- Ushioda, E. (2001). Language learning at university: Exploring the role of motivational thinking. In Z. Dornyei & R. Schmidt (Eds.), *Motivation and second language acquisition* (pp. 93-126). Honolulu, HI: Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center, University of Hawaii at Manoa.
- Volet, S., & Jarvela, S. (Eds.). (2001). *Motivation in learning contexts: Theoretical advances and methodological implications*. New York: Pergamon.
- Weiner, B. (1984). Principles for a theory of student motivation and their application within an attributional framework. In R. E. Ames & C. Ames (Eds.), *Research on motivation in education*, v.1 (pp. 15-38). New York: Academic Press.