

# The Dual Nature of Motivation: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Drivers in Second Language Learning

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**Abstract.** Motivation is one of the key factors affecting the learning effect. Based on this, how to improve and stimulate learning motivation is of great practical significance. By correctly grasping the students' motivation, teachers can target the daily teaching work and make it more effective. In today's social environment, how to cultivate and stimulate students' learning motivation is what educators should try and explore. Teachers must convince learners that they are willing to do what they are supposed to do. This paper conducts a systematic review of the research on learning motivation in the field of education in recent years, focusing on the relevant definitions of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation analyzed. It also analyzes the importance of motivation in the learning process of second language acquisition and the degree of its influence. Finally, it concludes how to motivate scholars in the learning process. Motivate and cultivate scholars' learning motivation in order to improve learning achievement.

**Keywords:** Motivation; Intrinsic Motivation; Extrinsic Motivation; Second Language Learning.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, more and more people are learning a second language, and second language learning represented by English is the most prominent one. The study of learning motivation has long been a subject of great interest in the field of education. Motivational factors play an important role in second language acquisition, and positive motivational factors are closely related to successful second language acquisition. In the process of second language acquisition, learning motivation is an important affective variable, which is positively correlated with second language achievement and level. Learning motivation refers to the internal drive that promotes students' engagement in learning activities, and stimulating their learning motivation is both an objective and a means of education. Success in learning is strongly related to whether or not the learner is motivated to learn [1]. Within this context, In the process of second language acquisition, learning motivation has always been regarded as one of the important factors affecting the learning effect [2].

Due to the differences between Eastern and Western educational models, there have been relatively few studies on how to motivate Chinese second language learners in recent years. This paper mainly focuses on whether there are differences in the final learning outcomes obtained by different learners in the same learning environment under the same teaching conditions. At the same time, this paper studies and analyzes the importance of learning motivation in the process of second language acquisition, and summarizes the classification of different learning motivations and the influence of learning motivation on second language acquisition. This study aims to help students find more applicable learning methods for themselves and improve their learning efficiency. Meanwhile, this study helps to strengthen and improve educators' teaching concepts and teaching methods in the future. With the improvement of students' learning motivation, their learning efficiency will also be improved, and teachers will be able to impart knowledge more and faster. It would be a win-win outcome in both directions.

Therefore, further research on the influence of learning motivation on second language acquisition will help authors better understand the laws and mechanisms of second language acquisition. In addition, the research results will provide theoretical guidance for foreign language teaching and second language acquisition practice.

## **2. Intrinsic motivation**

### **2.1. The definition and characteristics of intrinsic motivation**

Ryan & Deci stated the importance of intrinsic motivation and defined it as the most powerful phenomenon that demonstrates the positive qualities inherent in human nature [3].

Intrinsic motivation is a powerful source of motivation that pushes individuals to engage in activities spontaneously and autonomously, without the need for external rewards or pressure. The existence of intrinsic motivation is crucial for creativity and personal development, and it is a key factor for an individual to show creativity in his or her field. Intrinsic motivation is the motivation to do something for the sake of doing it, purely to enjoy the task itself [4]. It is seen as the drive within the individual to engage in the activity of learning a skill or knowledge, rather than simply to obtain an external reward or avoid punishment. Intrinsic motivation stems from an individual's interest and satisfaction in an activity itself, so it is considered a natural and lasting learning force in the process of second language acquisition.

Decades of scientific research have shown that intrinsic motivation (IM) is a powerful "engine" of learning and positive development, and that learners with higher intrinsic motivation show greater interest and higher persistence during the learning process [5]. These characteristics make intrinsic motivation an important factor in improving learning effectiveness. Intrinsic motivation has the characteristics of self-drive, self-regulation and long-term learning interest.

Moreover, Internal motivation is caused by three drives. The first one is the curious drive, the desire to know. Second is the competitive drive, that is, the desire for success. The third one is the reciprocal drive, that is, people all need to live in harmony and cooperate in activities, thereby people must be combined to have a greater effect on individual behavior.

### **2.2. The importance of intrinsic motivation**

Ryan and Deci explore the difference between intrinsic motivation (an individual's internal motivation, such as curiosity) and extrinsic motivation (an external motivator, such as achievement) [3]. Children who are internally motivated tend to show greater perseverance and put more effort into tasks out of their own will. Motivation plays an important role in students' learning and development [6].

Intrinsic motivation is a powerful force that promotes learning and development without the need for external rewards or pressure. In other words, individuals continue to perform these behaviors later in the process because they feel self-worth and meaning in the activity [7, 8]. First, intrinsic learning motivation can promote the creativity of scholars and the enthusiasm for deep learning. Because intrinsically motivated behavior is often associated with an individual's interest and curiosity, it can promote creativity and deep learning. Secondly, the intrinsic motivation of learning can enhance the happiness of learners. Intrinsically motivated behaviors are associated with higher happiness and satisfaction because individuals engage in these activities because they enjoy the activity itself, rather than extrinsic rewards. In addition, it promotes mental health and self-determination. Intrinsic motivation is more likely to occur when an individual's basic psychological needs (such as autonomy, competence, and a sense of connectedness) are met, which contributes to the persistence and quality of behavior while having a positive impact on mental health. Finally, intrinsic motivation to learn can stimulate learners' sense of challenge and perseverance. Intrinsic motivation can stimulate the courage and persistence of individuals in the face of challenges, and this self-driven ability enables individuals to maintain sustained efforts in the face of difficulties.

In contrast, extrinsic motivation, while likely to motivate behavior at first, long-term reliance on extrinsic rewards can lead to a lack of intrinsic interest and satisfaction. Therefore, cultivating and developing intrinsic motivation is critical to improving the quality of life, promoting personal growth, and achieving long-term goals.

Intrinsic motivation is defined as the intrinsic tendency to seek novelty and challenge, to expand and exercise one's abilities, and to explore and learn [9]. At the same time, intrinsic motivation is an important factor to promote second language acquisition, which not only directly affects the learning outcome, but also enables learners to apply various language learning strategies more effectively. Intrinsic motivation does not work independently, it interacts with learners' self-efficacy, language anxiety and other factors, and jointly affects learning outcomes.

### **3. Extrinsic motivation**

#### **3.1. The Definition and Characteristics of Extrinsic Motivation**

Extrinsic motivation refers to an individual's motivation to learn that is driven by external factors in the learning process. Extrinsic motivation (EM) refers to the performance of behavior that is fundamentally dependent on the achievement of outcomes separate from the behavior itself [10]. In contrast to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation stems from an individual's pursuit of stimuli external to the learning activity, such as a desire for grades, rewards, performance, or avoidance of punishment. For example, some students may study in order to receive a reward from a teacher or to avoid punishment rather than being interested in the content of the study itself; in a work environment, an employee may work hard because he or she wants to keep a paycheck or in order to receive a promotion. Extrinsic motivation is influenced by a variety of factors, including, but not limited to, the nature of the task, the individual's perception of the value of the task, and the source of the extrinsic motivation. In the context of second language acquisition, extrinsic motivation is reflected in learners learning a second language out of extrinsic demands such as completing a test, completing homework, earning a certificate, enhancing a resume, earning credits, or fulfilling parental or teacher expectations.

Extrinsic motivation is short-lived, and such motivated behaviors are usually short-lived because these strategies do not promote the individual's own interests or values and goals [11]. If the reason for the behavior is linked only to obtaining a reward or avoiding punishment, the behavior will only occur under the conditions of the reward or punishment, and once the external conditions are gone, the motivated behavior will "bounce back" to its original level. There are even examples in real life that giving a reward and then taking it away makes the final level of behavior lower than it would have been without the reward. Second, extrinsic motivation is quick-acting, that is, as long as the extrinsic stimuli and inducements provided are favorable to the individual and are desired and needed, they will stimulate convergent action. Finally, extrinsic motivation is more passive and prone to a more utilitarian purpose.

#### **3.2. The Importance of Extrinsic Motivation**

First and foremost, extrinsic motivation can inspire people to be more motivated to complete tasks or achieve goals. Many people would argue that intrinsic motivation is the best source of motivation for a person. However, in reality, there are times when intrinsic motivation is often limited by environmental, social and cultural factors that do not fully support a person in pursuing his or her goals. The guiding role of external motivation, on the other hand, can, to a certain extent, allow people to get better support and incentives in task or goal accomplishment, and then pursue their goals more actively, thus achieving better results.

Secondly, external motivation can bring better results and feedback to learners. When a person realizes the importance and application value of a certain knowledge area, he is more active in learning and practicing the related knowledge, thus gaining more achievements and recognition.

Finally, external motivation can increase people's personal awareness. In social communication and interaction, external motivation is often the source of motivation for people's performance and progress. Everyone wants to be recognized and praised by others, and external motivation can make these desires come true.

In short, while external motivation is sometimes seen as a competitor to internal motivation, it can actually be a good motivator in certain situations.

#### **4. Relationship between Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation**

Extrinsic motivation includes different theories describing psychological behavior and different approaches to motivation [12]. Intrinsic motivation, although more persistent and stable compared to extrinsic motivation, however, objectively speaking, an individual's innate interest is limited after all, and most of the attitudes, values, and behaviors are acquired and cultivated later in life, a process of internalization. The same goes for motivation. For those behaviors that lack internal interest, it is usually necessary to use external stimuli to give a reinforcement, and then gradually cultivate the individual's interest in the activity itself and the control of the behavior, and ultimately manipulate the behavior through the internal force, to complete the internalization process of motivation. Here, external forces can be said to be the prerequisite for this process. The effect of extrinsic motivation on intrinsic motivation can be positive and sometimes negative [13]. In some cases, the effect of extrinsic motivation is to diminish the learner's interest in the task. Rewards for extrinsic motivation can also have a negative effect on the learning process and the quality of performance.

#### **5. Suggestion**

Motivation is an internal initiating mechanism that directly pushes students to carry out learning activities and directs them toward learning goals [14]. In the learning process, students' learning is often accompanied by a certain degree of compulsion and passivity. How to make students' learning passive to active, from "want me to learn" to "I want to learn" has always been an important topic of educational research [15]. The stimulation and cultivation of learning motivation are also the focus of educators' teaching.

First, educators can provide students with the right to make their own choices. In other words, allowing individuals to independently choose the activities they participate in enhances their intrinsic motivation. Second, intrinsic motivation is enhanced through challenges and successes that increase an individual's sense of competence, which means that scholars' sense of competence is emphasized. Thirdly, through interaction and cooperation with others, individuals' sense of belonging and fulfillment is enhanced. Intrinsic motivation is stimulated in the students while links are established between scholars. In addition, making the purpose and meaning of learning clear to students stimulates their curiosity and wonder. Fifth, educators should reduce controlling language and behavior. By avoiding the use of controlling language and behaviors, the intrinsic motivation of individual scholars is protected. Lastly and most importantly, teachers should evaluate students' learning activities correctly in order to consolidate and develop students' motivation for effective learning. Hunlock's research shows that students who are praised, encouraged, criticized and blamed in the learning process rise faster than those who are not evaluated at all. This shows that evaluation of learning activities can strengthen students' motivation to learn and promote learning. Hurlock's study also showed that students' performance increased faster when they were praised than when they were criticized. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to using more praise and encouragement and less criticism and punishment when giving students evaluations.

#### **6. Conclusion**

According to Ryan and Deci, motivation is actually a continuum from externally controlled to self-determined. At one extreme of the continuum are behaviors that are completely externally controlled (e.g., behaviors undertaken to avoid punishment) and at the other extreme are behaviors that are internally motivated (e.g., activities that bring pleasure). Behaviors in the middle part of the continuum initially need to be motivated by external triggers, although during the course of the behavior the individual gradually experiences the pleasure of self-determination and self-regulation (self-regulated), which results in a sense of self-satisfaction. Overall, intrinsic and extrinsic

motivation are interrelated and interact with each other. Their proper regulation and balance are important for individual behavior, education, and motivation.

The dynamic interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation plays a crucial role in second language acquisition. Intrinsic motivation better predicts long-term acquisition effects, while extrinsic motivation may be more effective in coping with short-term learning goals. In educational scenarios, teachers should fully recognize the importance of stimulating students' intrinsic motivation and promote it through specific teaching strategies and curriculum design, such as the provision of meaningful learning content and activities that satisfy learners' self-actualization needs. At the same time, extrinsic motivation is introduced moderately when necessary to accommodate the needs of different learning stages, and attempts are made to prompt learners to internalize their motivation through appropriate instructional strategies. The ultimate goal is to realize a sustainable development path from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation to provide more solid motivational support for second language acquisition.

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