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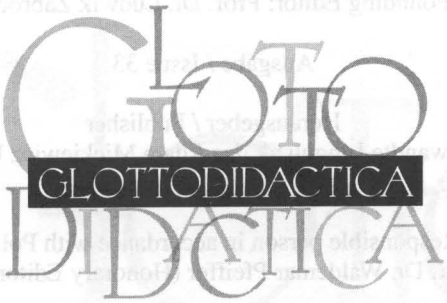

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I. ARTICLES

HANNA KOMOROWSKA
Uniwersytet Warszawski

Issues in the Language Policy of the European Union. Motivation as a Key Factor in Promoting Language Learning

ABSTRACT. As motivation has been identified by the EU High Level Group on Multilingualism as the key factor in promoting language education, the author, herself member of HLGM, discusses a variety of approaches to motivation and presents guidelines for the promotional activity at national, regional and school levels, concentrating on its aims and procedures, identifying age groups and motives to be targeted, as well as arguments and strategies to be used in the process of eliciting and sustaining learners' motivation to study foreign languages.

0. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Promoting multilingualism through language education is one of the most important goals of the European Union. On 20 September 2006 a High Level Group on Multilingualism was established comprising 11 experts from across Europe[1] and in January 2007 multilingualism was created a special

[1] The members of the High Level Group are: Barbara Cassin (French – Director of Research, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris), Abram De Swaan (Dutch – Professor of Sociology, University of Amsterdam), Rita Franceschini (Italian, Professor of Language Science and Linguistics, Rector of the Free University of Bozen – Bolzano), Branislav Hochel (Slovak – Professor of Translation Studies, Comenius University Bratislava), Hanna Komorowska (Polish – Professor of Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching, Warsaw University), Wolfgang Mackiewicz (German – Honorary Professor of English Philology, Freie Universität Berlin), Isabella Moore (British – Director of the National Centre for Languages, CILT), Barbara Moser-Mercer (Austrian – Professor of Conference Interpreting, University of Geneva), Josep Palomero (Spanish – Vice-President of the Academia Valenciana de la Llengua), Ineta Savickienė (Lithuanian – Head of Regional Studies, Vytautas Magnus University) and Jaana Sormunen (Finnish – Executive Producer for Modern Languages, YLE).

portfolio with the main aim to encourage language learning and promote linguistic diversity. This is indispensable for the implementation of the Lisbon strategy for the European economy (European Commission 2002) and in line with the *Detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe* discussed at the Stockholm summit (European Council 2002). If the European education and training systems are to function as a world quality reference by 2010, as agreed during the March 2002 Barcelona summit, at least two foreign languages should be taught from a very early age and life-long language education ought to be promoted (European Council 2002a).

Wide promotion of language education is especially important for new member countries with less widely used languages, hence know-how in this field is urgently needed. Decision-makers, however, decide to invest in language teaching only if high exit competences can be expected as a result. A lot has been written on successful language teaching and learning. Yet efficiency of teaching methods offered and of learning strategies employed, although extremely important, can only be expected if basic conditions have been fulfilled, i.e.

- there is a degree of awareness of the value of languages to be acquired/learned
- those who are responsible for teaching are motivated to teach and
- those who take up languages are motivated to learn.

Motivation is, therefore, a *sine qua non* condition for language education. For that reason, in the discussions of the High Level Group on Multilingualism, it has been identified as the key factor in promoting language education in the European Union.

Main issues in the analysis of the role of motivation in the promotion of language learning seem to be the following:

1. Which aspects of what we know about motivation are useful for language policy and decision-making?
2. What are the aims of the motivating procedures?
3. Who to motivate to learn languages or to promote language learning?
4. What arguments to use?
5. What motives to target in order to guarantee successful promotion of languages?
6. Who should be responsible for motivating prospective language learners?
7. What motivational strategies should be used to encourage taking up language learning?
8. How to sustain motivation throughout the learning process?

Here is an attempt to address the issues above.

1. WHICH ASPECTS OF WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT MOTIVATION ARE USEFUL FOR LANGUAGE POLICY AND DECISION MAKING?

There are various frameworks to help explain motivational aspects in the language learning process. Large scale research started in the 1970s with the often quoted work of Gardner and Lambert (1972) in Canada and gained momentum in the 1990s with the work of Dörnyei (1994), Oxford and Shearin (1994), Brown (1994), William and Burden (1997) and many others.

The basic framework offered by Gardner and Lambert, based on the analysis of goals, presents motivation as integrative when learners learn a language in order to relate to or even become part of the target language culture, or as instrumental when they learn for pragmatic reasons. This is in line with the more recent goal setting theory which states that motivation is related to an objective to be achieved and that mastery goals related to skill are superior to performance goals related to evaluation (Dörnyei 2001).

Goal achievement depends on the source of reward, hence another framework which presents motivation as extrinsic when the learning process is imposed on the learner and when the reward comes from the outside, or as intrinsic when the reward comes from the learning experience itself and learning is actively undertaken by the learner.

Research conducted within the paradigm of the expectancy-value theory demonstrates that the two main components of motivation to achieve a given goal are, firstly, the degree to which the learner values this goal and, secondly, the learner's expectations as to his/her ability to achieve it (Day and Bramford 1998).

Motivation is, therefore, seen as based on learners' values as well as the resulting attitudes and beliefs. It also depends on their expectations vis-à-vis outcomes, i.e. their own perspective on the feasibility of what they want to achieve. Learners' assessment of feasibility is related to a) their achievement motivation based on personal assessments of the ratio between the need of success and the fear of failure, b) their attributions, i.e. the way they explain their past success or failure in terms of internal or external locus of control, c) the way they view their self-efficacy, i.e. feeling of ability to carry out the task, or – opposite – d) learned helplessness often resulting from past failures. But although motivation is considered an intrinsic part of human nature, supportive learning environment and supportive interpersonal interaction is indispensable (Ushioda 2003).

Initial motivation – even if it is relatively strong – does not, however, guarantee sustainability as goals are achieved through effort in time. Probability of learners' readiness to continue learning often depends not only on intrinsic or extrinsic motives, but also on the subjective feeling of success. As Skehan puts it in his Resultative Hypothesis "success in learning brings

about motivation, therefore it can be seen as a cause of motivation rather than its consequence" (Skehan 1989). Part of this feeling comes from self worth as people look for tasks that enhance their feeling of value (Dörnyei 2001).

Building up motivation for language learning is a vast area of activity related to needs and may, therefore, be based either on satisfying the existing needs to learn languages, or on creating needs in order to promote foreign languages or strengthen languages of ethnic minorities.

Motivation, irrespective of the perspective on its source, has two important functions in language education. Firstly, it provides an impulse to take up language learning. Secondly, it mediates between instruction and achievement (Snow 2003: 42). We should, therefore, take into consideration not only the role of motivation in initiating language learning, but also its role in sustaining this process.

2. WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF THE MOTIVATING PROCEDURES?

Motivating processes ought to be carried out in ways that would help learners get to know and respect cultures intertwined with the languages, but that would at the same time avoid leading to a situation whereby a culture of a given language becomes dominant or where speakers of another language and members of another culture are evaluated through that language and its culture (Byram, Gribkova, Starkey 2002).

International communication, for obvious reasons, tends to favour effective *linguae francae* rather than less widely used languages, yet international understanding and cooperation as well as economic growth depend on successful communication in various languages (Komorowska 2006a). This means that activities should be aimed at eliciting motivation to learn languages and not motivation to learn a language. The starting point here is the formula of a mother tongue plus 2, meaning that all the citizens of the European Union should learn at least two languages apart from their own. This goal presupposes both the early start in the learning of the first foreign language and the lowering down of the age for the second foreign language. Such an approach eliminates fears of identity loss often associated with the power of global languages (Komorowska 2006b). The mother tongue is then used in the function of building and maintaining core identity, while other languages help expand horizons.

It seems that motivating learners toward plurilinguism ought to concentrate on second and third foreign languages. This is so not only because the situation of multilingualism where individuals speak their mother tongues does not contribute to communication or to the exchange of opinions, but also because more and more often it is English which takes the place of the

first foreign language. With widely spoken languages being opted for – especially in countries with less widely spoken languages – motivation to learn a third foreign language is needed. A broad offer of languages for all is at the same time needed to encourage various combinations of FLs when a second foreign language enters the curriculum. Plurilinguism is possible due to partial and transversal competences (CEFR 2001). Therefore, perfect or native-like competence in newly acquired languages does not have to be the aim of motivating activities, although it is recommended for institutions training teachers, interpreters and/or translators.

3. WHO TO MOTIVATE TO LEARN LANGUAGES OR TO PROMOTE LANGUAGE LEARNING?

Targets of motivating activities can be analysed in terms of

- age groups – e.g. children, teenagers, adults
- groups distinguished according to education and/or profession – e.g. groups in general or vocational education, adult professionals, the unemployed, the retired
- groups according to the type of their influence on the motivation of others – e.g. parents, teachers, culture animators, social workers.

Considering the mother tongue formula plus 2 has already been accepted within most of the European school systems, it seems very important in the educational policy of particular member countries to invest in life-long education and target groups of adults, the more that groups in formal education have already been in the centre of attention for some time.

It also seems worthwhile to target those who can motivate others to learn languages, i.e. decision-makers, parents, teachers and employers This, however, calls for well adjusted sets of arguments.

4. WHAT ARGUMENTS TO USE IN THE PROCESS OF MOTIVATING AND AWARENESS RAISING?

Awareness raising needs to be focused on benefits springing from language learning for both communities and individuals.

The value of language learning for the whole community is worth pointing out in the fields of

- contribution to peace processes due to mutual understanding
- contribution to general education which in turn has been demonstrated to correlate with future living standards, good health and well-being and
- economic growth due to international contacts and to the avoidance of losses resulting from lack of language skills.

The first two groups of arguments are relatively well known, unlike the economic ones which are especially useful in the promotional campaign among employers as, according to the ELAN study (*Effects on the European Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise*) conducted by CILT, the total losses to the EU economy through lack of language skills in the SME sector are in the region of €100 billion per year (Moore, Hagen 2006).

The value of language learning for individuals needs to be made clear with regard to

- the cognitive value of second and foreign language learning for all learners in their overall development
- the role of the early start in personality development and in facilitating future learning
- developmental support that language learning offers in the education of S.E.N. (Special Educational Needs) students.
- the role of languages in ensuring employability, and its contribution to professional career via life long education.

Parents and teachers should also develop awareness of developmental benefits springing from language education as language learning supports attention, perception, memory, concentration, concept formation, critical thinking and problem-solving as well as the skill to cooperate and work in teams. Awareness of developmental support springing from language education will put an end to the image of foreign language learning as an extra burden for children and will result in the encouragement to learn languages not only for all the young learners, but also for children, so far often deprived of this educational opportunity on the grounds of saving their effort and reducing potential problems, e.g. dyslexic or ADHD learners.

Parents and teachers need to be made aware of the intercultural value of language learning in general and of early language learning in particular, as learners acquire useful information about other communities and cultures, become more open to others and more eager to cooperate, but at the same time become aware of their own culture and its values.

What should be specifically stressed in the awareness raising process oriented towards individuals and institutions is the long-term effect of language education. This is extremely important as parents tend to expect immediate results, while schools and teachers often feel the pressure to demonstrate tangible and measurable results in short periods of time.

5. WHAT MOTIVES TO TARGET?

In the education of young learners intrinsic motives are the only ones at play as learners of this age group are not yet aware of all the benefits of language learning. Young learners – unlike learners of other age groups – can

only get motivated by the person of the teacher and the pleasure of learning such as friendly atmosphere, attractiveness of classroom activities and learning materials (Pinter 2006).

Learning in the school age is – in a well organized educational system – determined by the curriculum that provides the teaching of two languages apart from the mother tongue. Learning is then based on extrinsic motives of requirement and obligation related to the core curriculum and on instrumental motives related to school leaving examinations. The same holds true for tertiary education. However important the role of institutional requirements and especially of the mother tongue plus 2 formula might be, it does not mean that we should forever stay satisfied with the external motivation type at all the stages of learning in post-primary educational institutions. Intrinsic motives ought to be targeted as motives of a higher order, guaranteeing a more autonomous and long distance learning process. Sometimes intrinsic motives are the only ones at play, e.g. when the educational system at both secondary and tertiary levels does not provide language teaching, does not provide enough of it or does not provide the teaching early enough – in all those cases success depends on internal sources.

In adult language learning – just like in primary, secondary and tertiary educational systems – instrumental motives form the bare minimum or the basic layer of motives. These are connected with needs related to mobility and employment. Yet instrumental motives often overlap with integrative ones when e.g. senior citizens want to communicate with their grandchildren brought up in other countries or when the second and third generation of immigrants want to get to know their roots and the language of their family origin. Pleasure drawn from personal development through learning languages and cultures tends to overlap with the usefulness of skills to attractively organize leisure – e.g. through sports or tourism.

6. WHO SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MOTIVATING ACTIVITY?

Agents of change can be identified according to the type of motivation in question.

Extrinsic motivation of individual learners can be elicited by

- governments and self-governments through their language policy, e.g. regulations and legal acts related to the place of languages in the school curriculum or to the degree of language skills in job descriptions
- educational institutions of all levels through curriculum design and evaluation procedures
- employers through internal regulations, qualification procedures and in-service training requirements.

Intrinsic motivation of individual learners can be elicited by offering attractive forms of out-of-school or extracurricular learning by

- the media
- institutions and organizations organizing out-of-school activities
- social organizations helping organize leisure time
- schools engaged in the organization of extracurricular activities
- teachers offering attractive tasks and activities at language lessons
- publishers producing attractive teaching and learning materials.

7. WHAT MOTIVATING STRATEGIES SHOULD BE USED?

Motivational activity must differ in strategies depending on the type of goal targeted (see section 2 above) as well as on the goal of the motivating activity which can be aimed either at eliciting motivation or at sustaining it.

7.1. Motivational Strategies in the Process of Eliciting Motivation

Motivating schools to provide a broad offer of languages, to guarantee an early start and to lower the starting age for the second foreign language can be initiated by

- promoting information about benefits springing from early language learning among parents as well as decision-makers at various levels, but at the same time
- emphasizing that benefits depend on the provision of qualified teachers with high proficiency in the foreign language and rich pedagogical skills, sufficient curriculum time, small class size and appropriate resources both done through a variety of channels including the media, information brochures, talks and other popularising activities.

Motivating learners to strive for plurilinguism can take place

- at the school level – by proactive attitudes toward partial competences and modularity in language learning, i.e. developing selected skills which are actually needed rather than insisting on balance of all the basic language skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing) for all learners
- at the national and international level – by proactive attitudes toward modularity and partial competences in language examination formats, test specifications and international comparisons, e.g. in The European Indicator of Language Competence.

Motivating strategies to take up new languages or to continue learning in out-of-school and life-long education can be based on

- offering language learning as a window onto the world in contexts of psychological, social or geographic exclusion (courses for communities

in distant regions, secluded villages, for single people, for the elderly, as well as courses in hospitals, prisons etc) run by teachers, volunteers and language assistants, as well as within the frames of distance education or media courses
- providing information on successful learners, e.g. through learner biographies
- providing guidance as to how to learn and where to start.

The role of the media is significant here. The following activities seem to be effective
- making languages visible and generating interest in them through sports and music events (e.g. football events, music festivals)
- attracting learners' attention through language choice (e.g. radio broadcasts with more than one audio track) and timing (e.g. early morning programs for adults)
- motivating learners through exposure to languages based on the so-called "unfocused learning"
- presenting languages and cultures, i.e. combining promotion and factual information
- promoting educational and linguistic values combining language exposure with the support of functional literacy, e.g. by means of subtitling or the introduction of multilingual TV channels and digital TV which would provide choice of audio track and/or subtitling
- offering "edutainment" combining education and entertainment in the process of motivating listeners and viewers through
  – reality and quiz shows such as the Finnish "A House in Italy"
  – sitcoms such as the Channel 4 "Extra"
  – documentary programs on life and habits in a given country
- offering language courses or language learning programs with authentic language, authentic situations and authentic cultural material
- providing Internet support in the form of
  – websites with published editorial materials
  – webquest activities
  – activity books
  – support material on-line
  – educational portals.

It is often stressed that a tendency can be noted for the media to more and more often take over the motivational role, while the actual teaching and learning is delegated to non-TV and non-radio situations and contexts such as home, class and increasingly – the Internet.

All the motivational activities outlined above can only be successful if the school system does not permanently demotivate learners, which has

often been the case so far, discouraging them from taking up language learning later in the course of life-long education.

The role of previous learning experiences is of great significance, as motivation is correlated with personality and cognition shaped in the process of education. Motivated learners are usually those with a more positive self-concept and with perceptions of the world as a safe place (Schallert and Martin 2003). Those who went through a learner-friendly school education are more likely to perceive learning as a pleasant and enriching process. Positive experience in foreign language learning is important, but also positive experience in the learning of the mother tongue, as it takes ample time at every level of education and plays an important role in developing social, cooperative and communication skills. Learners with this kind of experience gained in their early school days will later easily perceive the value of languages in their personal and professional development and will be much more likely to take up and to continue language learning at a later stage or in the course of life-long education.

7.2. Motivational Strategies in the Process of Sustaining Motivation

So far we have spoken about initiating motivation. Yet motivational processes are dynamic and, therefore, change their intensity and even their direction in time. Sustaining motivation has to do with motivation brought into the learning process and with what the teaching process has to offer. Here again awareness of benefits springing from language learning is crucial, as it can help the learners continue their work in spite of difficulty or boredom.

Learners can be helped through difficulty by didactic measures, i.e. the way of teaching and the type of tasks. Motivation can also be sustained by involving learners in decision-making and in particular decisions related to learning goals, learning materials, learning strategies and self-assessment. Offering constructive feedback helps to reflect on one's own learning and plan one's future learning.

Approaches considered successful in sustaining motivation of school learners in the educational systems of EU member countries are:

- Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) as it shows the value of languages in the overall educational process and helps integrate the work of the whole school
- Content Based Teaching (CBT) as it adds to the attraction of languages presenting new, valuable information through the medium of another language

- Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) as cross-curricular approaches counteract disintegration of the teaching content and help problem-solving as well as critical thinking
- Peer-learning, especially in bilingual or multilingual contexts
- Inclusion of families, e.g. parents and grandparents to support language education of the children through family-school cooperation and home learning.

There are also valuable organizational ways of sustaining learners' motivation which include both large scale programs such as

- E-twinning
- Town twinning
- European Language Label,

which support language education especially in distant regions and small places with more difficult access to culture, and where languages help overcome the feeling of social exclusion, and small scale school or interschool projects such as

- language festivals
- days of languages or
- pedagogical exchanges,

which add to the attraction of language learning and forge links between educational institutions and the local community.

Two main factors can be pointed out in the process of motivating learners to learn languages.

The first key factor in both eliciting and sustaining motivation in all the age groups is the introduction to learner autonomy. Ability to pick issues of interest, set one's own goals, learn independently and achieve desired aims in group work, while exchanging information and sharing effort with others, is an educational experience which will function as the best springboard to self-learning and the best trigger for language learning in the future.

The second key factor is the quality of the teaching offered. A lot depends here on teacher education; the way teachers are trained in the course of their pre-service education and the way their development is supported through in-service teacher education. As it is not feasible to include everything in basic teacher training courses, modularity in obtaining and expanding teaching qualifications should be promoted.

It should not be forgotten, however, that motivational processes are dynamic. That is why motivational strategies should change with the change of needs and motives. But appetite comes with eating – learners with limited interests, e.g. in the language for specific purposes develop motivation to communicate on more general matters, learners engaging in intercompre-

hensibility develop motivation to communicate. Developing this appetite rather than overburdening students with too ambitious goals, for which they are not yet ready, seems to be a safer way forward.

*

For the promotion of languages and language learning through all the channels mentioned above, i.e. school systems, out of school life-long education and the media, a strong political will is needed, as not every government is eager to actively engage in promoting language education and linguistic diversity. That is why detailed international EU level recommendations seem indispensable.

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