



Can Positive Exposure to the Culture of the L2 Increase Motivation in A Korean University Classroom and Investment Outside of the Classroom?

Chris Kobylinski

Hanguk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul, South Korea

Abstract

This paper examines some views on Second Language learning motivation and focuses on the effects of introducing culture (American) in a positive way in a Korean university EFL classroom. The researcher added activities and lessons to the syllabus that highlighted cultural differences and similarities, exposed students to new elements of culture and showed various practical uses of English in today's society. It was hypothesized that this positive exposure would increase motivation and confidence. The students responded favorably to most activities and reported an increase in confidence and a slight increase in interest in using English outside of the classroom, specifically, for social media purposes.

Keywords: Motivation; ELT; EFL; Culture; L2 Culture.

1. Introduction

Many students these days are learning L2s, second languages, for practical purposes, and some have very little exposure to the L2 (second language) culture. In regard to English, as it spreads around the world and becomes seen as a Lingua franca, many students learn English for very pragmatic purposes with very little or no exposure to the culture and to native speakers. It can be assumed that the students learning English for pragmatic purposes have instrumental motivation yet may lack integrative motivation because they lack exposure to the culture. Many would argue that instrumental motivation may lead to some varying degrees of L2 success, but that integrative motivation is seen as a more powerful force. If this view is true, it would be advantageous for students to have integrative motivation, yet it might be difficult to foster in an EFL environment. While research has usually made distinctions between instrumental and integrative motivation, this paper seeks to examine if it is possible to increase overall motivation with positive exposure to the L2, in this case English and American Culture.

2. Research Question

Can positive exposure to the culture of the L2 increase motivation in a Korean classroom and investment outside of the classroom?

3. Literature Review

Before beginning to address the research question, some background must be given and some terms must be defined: What is motivation in terms of L2 language acquisition? What is instrumental and integrative motivation? Does motivation lead to better acquisition of the L2 and is integrative motivation more beneficial than instrumental motivation?

In regard to motivation and L2 acquisition, Lourdes Ortega says, "Motivation is usually understood to refer to the desire to initiate L2 learning and the effort employed to sustain it, (Ortega, 2009)." Bonny Norton Pierce refers to Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Gardner (1985) to define instrumental and integrative motivation. "Instrumental motivation references the desire that language learners have to learn a language for utilitarian purposes, such as employment, whereas integrative motivation references the desire to learn a language to integrate successfully with the target language community (Peirce, 1995)." When discussing the importance of motivation in relation to L2 success, Dornyei stated, "Motivation is one of the main determinants of second/foreign language (L2) achievement (Dornyei, 1994). Bernaus and Gardner supported this by showing that "students with higher level of motivation performed better on the English test than the students with lower motivation (Bernaus and Gardner, 2008)." Finally, Ortega cited that Gardner (2001) believed that integrative motivation was "the highest and most facilitative form of motivation (Ortega 171)." Given this background, this paper will assume that motivation is beneficial for L2 success and will explore the distinction, sometimes clear, sometimes blurred, between instrumental and integrative motivation and whether it is possible for a student who only has instrumental motivation to develop a more holistic form of motivation through positive exposure of the L2 culture.

3.1. Instrumental and Integrative Motivation

Much of the research regarding instrumental motivation and integrative motivation references R.C. Gardner. Gardner himself, often talks about instrumental and integrative orientations and makes it clear that they are not the same as motivation: "There is an important distinction between integrative motivation and an integrative orientation

(Gardner, 2001).” For Gardner, orientations that are discussed in his AMTB (Attitude/Motivation Test Battery) are important and can lead to motivation, but they are not the same as motivation.

Gardner clearly explored the differences between integrative and instrumental orientations and showed that integrative orientation was only part of motivation. With this as a base, he then created a model, the socio-educational model, to explain integrated motivation and its role in language achievement. Gardner showed in his model that integrative motivation was the product of integrativeness, or a genuine interest in the other language community, attitude towards the learning situation and motivation. This socio-educational model also showed that integrative motivation along with other support, language aptitude and other factors, lead to language achievement (Gardner, 2001).” Discussing this model further, Gardner “proposes that integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation are two correlated variables that support the individual’s motivation to learn a second language, but that motivation is responsible for achievement in the second language (Masgoret and Gardner, 2002).

Gardner’s distinction between integrativeness and integrative motivation is very important, because it shows that integrativeness along with other factors creates integrative motivation. For Gardner, “integrativeness refers to an openness to identify, at least in part, with another language community” and “the integratively motivated student is one who is motivated to learn the second language, has an openness to identification with the other language community, and has favorable attitudes toward the learning situation (Masgoret and Gardner, 2002).” By showing integrativeness as just one aspect of integrative motivation, Gardner widens the scope of integrative motivation and allows it to include other factors that might not typically be considered, such as attitudes of the parents, attitudes towards the learning environment and even instrumental factors. Gardner’s view on integrative motivation, while important was altered and challenged by later researchers on quite a few grounds. Gardner described what shaped integrative motivation and how it related to L2 success, but it did little to explain how to motivate students and how to explain how the students see themselves in the language learning environment.

3.2. The Ideal-Self and How to Motivate Students

Building on Gardner’s work, Dornyei (1994) categorized the components of foreign language learning motivation into three levels: the language level, the learner level and the learning situation level and later along with Csizer and Dornyei (2005) developed a new model for explaining L2 motivation.

Along with categorizing the components of foreign language learning motivation, Dornyei (1994) also addressed the “question of how to motivate students.” Dornyei also raises the concern that Gardner is often looked at in terms of only integrative and instrumental motivation and begins to offer more components of L2 motivation. In regard to the research question, Dornyei’s four strategies on how to motivate L2 students on a language level seem to offer support that positive exposure to the L2 culture will increase motivation. The four strategies are “include a sociocultural component in the L2 syllabus by sharing positive L2-related experiences in class”, “develop learners’ cross-cultural awareness systematically”, “promote student contact with L2 speakers” and develop learners’ instrumental motivation by discussing the role L2 plays in the world Dornyei (1994).” These four strategies aim to increase L2 learners’ motivation by offering positive exposure to the L2 culture, yet their motivation isn’t clearly defined as integrative. Therefore, it isn’t necessary to view instrumental and integrative motivation in terms of competing forces; motivation can be looked at in a broader and more holistic way.

Csizer and Dornyei (2005) advocate “interpreting *Integrativeness* in a broader sense than has been done before (p. 29),” and reference the ideal and ought self of previous research. In this paper, the authors do not attempt to attack Gardner’s ideas, but attempt to expand upon his notion and push for a renaming of some of his ideas.

We believe that, based on these considerations, the term *integrativeness* does not do justice to the broader interpretation of the concept described here; rather, we suggest that it be relabeled as the *Ideal L2 Self*. As noted earlier, this conception does not conflict with Gardner’s original notion of integrativeness related to an identification process, yet it provides a broader frame of reference. (Csizer and Dornyei, 2005)

In this paper, the actual labeling of the concept isn’t as important as the concept itself. Whether it is termed integrativeness or Ideal L2 self, positive exposure to the L2 culture can raise L2 learner motivation.

3.3. Alternative Views on Motivation

While Csizer and Dornyei advocate replacing integrativeness with the Ideal L2 self, Belmechri and Hummerl argue that the term positive motive should replace integrative motivation (Belmechri and Hummerl, 1998). “Motivation in its broadest sense could be replaced by what we would call positive motive instead of integrative motive (Belmechri and Hummerl, 1998).” They argue that integrative motivation limits the amount of orientations that are considered and that using positive motive takes into account an indefinite number of orientations (Belmechri and Hummerl, 1998).” Also, drawing a parallel to Gardner’s socio-educational model, they state that “these orientations, along with the *interest in the language and attitudes toward the L2 group members*, would constitute what we would label *positiveness* (Belmechri and Hummerl, 1998).” By viewing motivation in these terms, the L2 learner can be influenced by a wider range of orientations in a variety of different contexts.

Bonny Norton Peirce offers another alternative version of motivation and labels it as investment. Peirce attempts to connect motivation to cultural capital and states “that if learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources (Peirce, 1995).” While some might argue that this investment is a form of instrumental motivation, Peirce objects to this link.

“It is important to note that the notion of investment I am advocating is not equivalent to instrumental motivation (Peirce, 1995).” She also depicts motivation as being fixed and investment being more dynamic and

related to the learner and the learner's changing life (Peirce, 1995)." This notion of stagnant versus dynamic is very interesting in terms of the research question. If the question is viewed in terms of investment, the positive exposure to the L2 culture can offer a higher return on the investment by offering more integrative motivation. Furthermore, although Peirce talks about investment in an ESL setting, it may transfer to an EFL setting if the learners get enough practice with the L2 and exposure to the L2 culture.

3.4. Pros and Cons of Introducing Culture into the EFL Classroom

As English becomes regarded more and more as a Lingua Franca, many teachers argue that target language Culture shouldn't be included in the classroom. Some feel that English should only be taught for communicative purposes, and others claim that teachers shouldn't impose their own culture in the classroom. Jabeen and Sayed (2011) even found that students had a "strongly negative attitude towards the teaching of the target language culture."

In contrast, some research has shown that students enjoy classes that include the target language culture. Belli (2018) found that almost 73% of students believed that culture should be included in the EFL classroom. Likewise, Akyuz *et al.* (2017) claimed that students wanted cultural elements to be included in the EFL classroom and were interested in taking additional courses with cultural components. In addition to students wanting a cultural element to be included in classes, which can be closely associated with student motivation; some studies have found that including the target language culture in a class can be beneficial for certain language skills. Hidayait *et al.* (2017) found that including the target language culture in certain classes influenced the skills of reading and speaking.

Including culture in an EFL classroom remains a sensitive and debated topic, but there is enough evidence to show that students to have a desire to be exposed to culture in the classroom. Teachers should be sensitive about language and cultural imperialism, but might want to rethink leaving culture outside of the classroom. Including culture in the curriculum might not only improve student motivation, but might ultimately improve their language skills.

3.5. Motivation for the L2 English Learner in Korea

If the research question is to be applied to L2 English learners in Korea, it is important to explore some research that has been done on L2 English learners in Korea. Two studies, one by Tae-Young Kim and another by Young-Gyo Cho investigate motivation in Korean EFL students. Both studies offer some insight into the motivation of Korean EFL learners.

Tae-Young Kim's article studied EFL motivation in Korean students from Grade 3 through grade 12 and claims that "Dornyei's L2 motivational self-system is a better predictor for explaining Korean students' L2 learning motivation than Gardner's socio-educational model (Kim, 2011)." In this paper, Kim argues that "integrativeness has become less relevant with the development of youth culture and international, multinational business and exchange (Kim, 2011)." He also contends that "it seems untenable to hold that L2 learners' desire to be assimilated into the community of L2 speakers still works in outer or expanding circle countries given the changing nature of English language use (Kim, 2011)." Given the research question, these views seem a little extreme, because the research question does not equate integrative motivation to assimilation into a community of L2 speakers, but rather promotes the positive influence that exposure to the L2 culture could have on language motivation. The classroom environment itself can play a significant role in exposure and promotion of the L2 culture and facilitate student engagement with it. Kim himself addresses the importance of the educational environment of the ideal L2 self.

Although an L2 learner may initially create a positive vision of their future self or ideal L2 self, if the learners' educational environment does not support the steady growth of this initially positive vision, the ideal L2 self will be gradually removed from the learners' aspirations and will not be maintained (Kim, 2011).

One could argue that without positive exposure to the L2 culture in the educational environment, students gradually become distant from the idea of connecting to the L2 on a cultural level. Going back to the point that Peirce made about the importance of practice with the target language (Peirce, 1995), one could argue that without practice in the target language, students lose some instrumental motivation. They may only see English as a means of meeting a pragmatic goal and not as a form of communication. Also, Kim does concede that there are elements of integrativeness in the EFL students: "the present study indicated that Gardner's instrumentality and integrativeness affected Korean students' creation of their L2 selves (Kim, 2011)."

Cho's article offers some great insight into Korean EFL students' motivation and gives quantitative and qualitative data as evidence. She explores the relationship between motivation and social context and offers "an operational definition of context as 'sociocultural space'." (Cho, 2012) The paper also addresses the importance of integrative motivation. "The current data show that instrumental motives are very important in that they serve as a point of departure for most learners and at the same time provide them with concrete reasons for studying the language (Cho, 2012)." Cho also shares one of the students' feelings about the L2 in the paper: "I think learning a language means, at least to me, learning something new including its culture and thus broadening my view towards the world: that's my ideal view of learning a language (Student C, 2010 in Cho (2012))." This student's statement gives validity to the research question and shows that some students expect and want positive exposure to the L2 culture. Cho also challenges the current state of the Korean L2 classroom and its overemphasis on exams and memorization and calls for an approach that "inspires intrinsic interest" in learning the language (Cho, 2012).

4. Literature Review Conclusion

Gardner said it best, “Motivation is a complex concept (Dornyei and Schmidt, 2001).” Motivation is indeed a complex concept, but the research has presented some simple facts about motivation. It is an essential part of learning an L2 and it is comprised of many factors. It is influenced by our learning environment and is a positive that can lead to greater motivation. Depending on the terminology used, the research seems to indicate that positive exposure to the L2 culture will lead to positiveness, increased integrativeness, greater levels of integrative motivation and thus overall motivation and maybe even more investment by the L2 learner. Yet, the research also indicated that there is a problem with trying to show that integrative motivation can supplant instrumental motivation. It would appear that both can coexist and it isn’t necessarily right to say that one is more valuable than the other. Also, there may be objections to the term integrative. Even Gardner conceded that “because of the excess meanings that have become associated with the “integrative” concept, I now sometimes refer to it as Openness, or Openness to Cultural Identification (Garnder, 2006).”

In the context of the Korean classroom, motivation and exposure to the culture of the L2 is something that is desired, but not always available. While some might argue that culture shouldn’t be included, enough research has shown that it does have a place in the EFL classroom if integrated properly and with some sensitivity. In light of this research, it was believed that students would perceive an increase in motivation inside the classroom and see the value of investment outside the classroom after positive exposure to the L2 culture. Additionally, the positive exposure to the L2 culture would increase the L2 students’ willingness to communicate within the class and also foster a desire to use the L2 outside the classroom.

5. Subjects

The subjects of this study were Korean university students from five Practical English classes, standard credit-bearing classes for first year students. Each class size ranged from 20 students to 30 students. The level of the students ranged from fluent to lower intermediate. Most students had a good grasp of English and of academic language in their native language. The ages of the students ranged from 18 to 20.

6. Materials and Methods

The research consisted of a pre-course survey, the actual course, and a post-course survey. The course, Practical English 1, is a four-skill course designed to prepare students for the academic and business worlds. The course is taught using *Academic Listening Encounters: American Studies*. In addition to the book, the students were exposed to additional materials and activities in hopes of increasing their exposure to the culture of the L2. Many of the activities were based on Dornyei’s four strategies for motivating students on a language level.

Some activities included using Venn diagrams to compare and contrast cultures, an interview and question session with a native speaker via video chat, the creation of a new Korean bill based on symbolism seen in American money, using SNSs (social networking services) as a communication tool inside and outside of the classroom, a group project based on summarizing and answering critical thinking questions about an American country music song, a project based on adapting a Korean TV show or a product for the American market, and exposure to sources for studying English outside of the classroom. The activities were related to topics in the book and were meant to increase the student’s positive exposure to the L2 culture.

7. Procedure

Before the start of the course, the students were given a pre-course survey with both quantitative and qualitative analysis of elicited feedback. The quantitative data came from yes or no questions and questions based on a Likert scale, the qualitative data came from open-ended follow-up questions.

During the course, the students participated in many activities that allowed them to view and engage with different aspects of American culture. Before each activity, students were told what they would be doing and why they would be doing it, so they could see the practicality of the activity. Although most of the activities were about American culture, the students were asked to compare what they saw or heard to another culture, in an attempt to raise cross-cultural awareness.

At the end of the course, students were given a post-course survey based on the pre-course survey with some additional questions about the activities that they did during the course. Additionally, four students per class were randomly chosen and interviewed to obtain additional qualitative data.

8. Data Collection

The survey was given to all the students, but not all the surveys were used. The surveys of students who did not give informed consent or who dropped the class, and the surveys that were grossly incomplete or completely blank weren’t evaluated. In all 118 surveys were analyzed for the data. Four students per class were randomly chosen and interviewed in order to get more in-depth qualitative answers.

9. Data Analysis and Findings

The survey was given to 126 students and 120 gave informed consent. Two surveys were grossly incomplete and weren't analyzed. The survey was given in English, but a translated version was also provided in the students' L1 (Korean), to ensure that all students understood what was being asked. After the data was analyzed, the students responded that the activities had increased their confidence and investment.

In the pre-class survey, the most popular answer for why they were studying English was to get a good grade, at 57.63%. For the follow-up question that asked why, many responded that grades were important. In the post-class survey, the most popular answer was to be able to communicate in English, 52.54%, an increase from 23.72% in the pre-course survey. For the follow-up question, many students said that they thought being able to communicate would be important for travelling and communicating in classes and at work.

In terms of confidence, 27.11% of students said that they would feel confident speaking English to a native speaker in the pre-course survey and 58.47% said they would feel confident in the post-course survey. The qualitative data the interviews supported these numbers. One student commented that speaking to a native English speaker in America via video chat gave her a lot of confidence.

The qualitative data collected about the activities provided insight into the effectiveness of these activities. The two activities that students commented about the most were the activity that involved adapting a Korean TV show or product for the American market, and the activity that included listening to and answering critical thinking questions about an American country music song.

Students enjoyed the idea of adapting a TV show or product for a non-Korean audience and said that they activity was very relevant and interesting given the success of K-Pop and K-dramas in the international market. One student commented, "K-dramas are really popular nowadays, I wondered if the dramas would be better or worse if they were remade. In Korea, we sometimes remake Hollywood movies, but usually we just enjoy the movies even though they aren't adapted for particular markets." This activity really encouraged students to think about their own culture and how it might be perceived from the perspective of other cultures, and lead to many interesting discussions about the parallels and differences between cultures. Not surprisingly, it received the highest score on the survey.

The activity that received the lowest score also lead to many interesting discussions. The American country music activity lead to surprising discussions about race in American and the quality of music in America. In an interview, one student commented, "I can't believe country music is popular in America, it is worse than K-pop." This activity could be seen as an example of how including culture in a class doesn't have to be seen as promoting the target language culture. The students weren't asked to try to appreciate the music, rather just examine something new. This lead to many interesting discussions and exposure to an abundance of idiomatic language in a natural way.

Lastly, 11.86% said that they used English sometimes when they used SNS in the pre-course survey compared to 53.39% of the students in the post-course survey. During the interviews, many students commented that their increase use of English on SNS wasn't only due to the class, but also because they were able to meet many non-Korean speakers at university and had for the first time in their life a need to use English to communicate. Although the course itself might not have increased their use of English on SNS, most of the those interviewed claimed that the exposure to using English on SNSs in class did increase their confidence and likelihood of using English outside of class. SNS is something that is both practical and communicative and hopefully something that can increase student investment outside of the classroom. Rather than ignoring SNS, teachers should try to help students use SNS for academic and language learning experiences.

10. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

There are some limitations with this research about showing a correlation between the students' opinions and an actual increase in motivation and confidence. Additionally, this study lacked a control group, so increases in perceived confidence, motivation, and investment may have come from other sources and not just the activities designed to increase positive exposure to the culture of the L2. While there were many limitations with this study, overall the data was positive and supported the hypothesis that increasing positive exposure to the culture of the L2 can be a good thing. This is important, because many L2 English courses in Korea lack a cultural component and some teachers are afraid to introduce culture into the classroom. Activities that utilize authentic sources and make cross-cultural comparisons can be used to explore the modern world without promoting one culture.

11. Conclusion

As it becomes more common to use English as a Lingua franca, more and more students are learning English for practical purposes. While this isn't a bad thing, it can result in a focus on the language as a tool, and not as a means to communicate and connect with others. In the case of South Korean students, many learn English for the purpose of doing well on an exam, but often lack basic conversation skills after years of studying.

While exposing students to the culture of the L2 in a positive way isn't a new or revolutionary idea, valid questions have been raised about the degree of focus on the L2 culture, which teachers should keep in mind when introducing cross-cultural activities in the classroom. Learning about culture can help to increase motivation and investment and it can also allow students to examine their own culture in a different way. Teachers should be aware not to force culture on students, but rather to expose them to different elements of the L2 culture, so they can learn both about language and life. If students see the L2 culture as a way to help improve their ability and to see the

practicality of using a language, it may encourage them to interact with English outside of the classroom, and they may be more motivated to learn the language.

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