Getting interested: Developing a sustainable source of motivation to learn a new language at school

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Getting Interested: Developing a sustainable source of motivation to learn a new language at school

Abstract:

      This review positions current conceptions of interest and its development as a critical and (importantly) sustainable source of motivation for learning a new language across formal education. We begin with the gap in our understanding of motivation to learn a new language generated by the longstanding dominance of applied linguistics identity/socio-cultural theoretical frameworks in school learning environments. The Four-Phase Model (Hidi & Renninger, 2006), and an extension with specific relevance for the highly structured nature of formal education, is reviewed and implications for second and foreign language learning classrooms are drawn. This review concludes with future directions for interested language learning researchers and essential first steps for instructors seeking to support the initiation and continued development of students' interest in their language-learning classrooms.

1

Motivation has and continues to be a central issue for language educators and researchers alike. While research examining students' reasons for learning a language have steadily expanded, as applied language acquisition researchers have historically and recently noted (Boo, Dörnyei, & Ryan, 2015; Gardner, 1989; Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995), some critical sources of motivation have yet to be substantively explored in language learning classrooms—the partial impetus of the current special issue. Perhaps the most glaring gap in our understanding of why students (fail to) persist in learning a language is a source of motivation every teacher and student would recognise, but might not fully understand: Interest[1] and its potential development.

Understanding the role of interest within language learning, both as a lifelong experience and during formal education, is crucial. Interest and its development is implicit within learning anything (language included) to a meaningful depth (see Parkinson and Dinsmore, this issue). Current interest theory makes this implicit role *explicit*, by framing interest as a developmental theory focused on person-content connections, and tying knowledge development, re/engagement, and motivation-to-learn together inextricably (Renninger & Hidi, 2015).

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[1] As will be apparent from the forthcoming review (see below), "interest" here is not constrained to its common use by many laypersons and researchers (SLA and education included) alike: i.e., interchangeable with emotional states such as enjoyable, fun or feeling generally "motivated". It does not refer to having "an interest" (i.e., like a hobby). It instead refers to a developmental process, across which an individual can potentially (given appropriate opportunity and support) experience as moving from a temporary, context/temporally dependent state of interest, to a deepened, enduring state of interest. It also refers to a construct, which does include affective components such as enjoyment and fun (particularly at the beginning), but can also grow to include value and cognitive (knowledge related) components (Renninger & Hidi, 2011; Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Perhaps most importantly, interest here refers to a relationship with a specific topic, object or domain, and a desire (potentially enduring, depending on afore noted stage of development) to reengage with said specific topic, object or domain (Renninger & Hidi, 2015).

This review will address how theoretical advances in our understanding and developmental modelling of interest can enhance language learning experiences, inside and outside the classroom. Both established educational and the burgeoning language learning classroom specific literature will be reviewed. This review will thereby provide direction for supporting the development of students' interest in learning a language at school and beyond. For interested researchers, future directions building on a budding programme of investigation and opening up new areas of research into foreign and second language learning classrooms will also be discussed.

1   Broadening our perspectives on motivations to learn a new language at school

Foreign and Second Language Learning is in many ways a unique and often isolated island of education. For important individual differences like motivation to learn a new language, second/foreign language educators and researchers have drawn principally on theories arising from the domain of applied linguistics (e.g., cultural and identity related theories of language learning motivation; Gardner, 1988; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Ushioda, 2011; Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009) and to a lesser degree (and more recently) from educational psychology (Oga-Baldwin & Fryer, 2018; Lou & Noels, 2017; Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2007; Noels, Pelletier, Clement, & Vallerand, 2000). The sources of motivation applied linguistics researchers classically discuss lend themselves primarily to explaining persistence in the "natural process" of learning a language across an individual's lifespan. Such theories are an important part of the fabric of students' motivation to learn in classrooms as well. However, those language acquisition orientated theories are just one piece of the complex puzzle that teachers and researchers need to

assemble if they are to support students in the challenging process of becoming increasingly competent in a new language at school.

The current special issue presents several critical individual difference theories, many of which rest on robust theoretical and empirical foundations stretching back to fundamental theories propelling and regulating human behaviour and, crucially, their persistence in that behaviour (e.g., risk, interest, perceived control, and the need for competence; Atkinson, 1957; James, 1983/1892; Rotter, 1966; White, 1959). Much of this theoretical and empirical direction can and should be applied to the language classroom, as it has, and continues to be applied to every other domain of learning within formal education. Rather than poking holes in the walls between how we understand language learning classrooms and students' experiences in their other subjects, these walls need to come down. We might find that not only are experiences in these different school subjects related (Fryer & Oga-Baldwin, 2019), but that they are in fact deeply inter-connected. Examples of this inter-connection have been noted in self-efficacy transfer between native and foreign language junior high school studies (Fryer & Oga-Baldwin., 2017), and the substantial person-centred commonality of motivations to learn these same languages (Oga-Baldwin & Fryer, unpublished manuscript).

Interest is an excellent example of an essential individual difference for every domain of learning, but of particular relevance to domains that demand long-term, even lifelong persistence like language learning. The present review aims to make a clear case for the role of interest within language learning at school. The first area reviewed is how students' interest is currently conceptualised, theorised as developing and how it might best be supported in classrooms generally and then language learning classrooms

specifically. This will be followed by a review of a supplementary model for theorising about interest development specifically in formal classroom learning environments. This article will conclude with a discussion of the emerging interest research that has been carried out in foreign language classrooms and directions for future investigations in this new (to language learning) field of research.

2 Framing interest and its development

This review focuses on the development of students' interest in a specific domain of study; explicit attention is given to learning a new language, how this process can be impeded and might be supported. The first step is to transition from a laypersons' perspective on interest, towards interest and its development as it is increasingly understood within psychology and related fields.

There is a fundamental and longstanding division between two types of interest (Hidi, 1990): Interest that is triggered and experienced just in the moment of engagement, and interest that is carried from experience to experience as an enduring desire to re/engage (Renninger & Wozniak, 1985). This initial dichotomy, classically referred to as situational and individual interest, is a bedrock for understanding interest as a source and outcome of engagement. It is also an essential gap that must be understood if instructors want to ensure their teaching bridges "interesting" experiences to more enduring, sustainable sources of motivation. The alternative, one that many hardworking teachers find themselves indentured to, is students' dependence on teacher stimulus to re/engage. Unintentionally, many teachers end up acting as motivational anchors instead of as bridges to more sustainable sources of motivation (i.e., individual interest).

From a dichotomy, models of interest development slowly progressed to the now commonly cited Four Phase Model of Interest (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). This model provides a detailed description of interest's developmental stages, the role of the environment and the person-content connection that stands at the centre of this dynamic process. Furthermore, it describes the beliefs and emotions that are integral to the development of interest as a collative construct and, eventually, as a sustainable source of motivation to learn (e.g., a new language). The Four Phase Model expanded on the dichotomy of situational and individual interest, describing how an individual's interest might develop across experiences through four stages (for comprehensive discussions of the model see: Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Renninger & Hidi, 2011; Renninger & Hidi, 2015):

1. Triggered situational interest: Primarily arising from the environment, related to
    strong affective experiences, can lead to maintained situational interest.

2. Maintained situational interest: No longer exclusively supported by the
   environment
    and can be sustained through tasks students see as meaningful. Interest at this
   stage
    can yield persistence and focused attention. Through growing stored knowledge
   and
    value for the content/domain it can segue to individual interest.

3. Emerging individual interest: The headwater for a source of motivation that can be
    carried from task to task. Generally related to positive feelings. Emerging interest
   can

be self-generated, but can also require external support. Students with Emerging

interest might still need encouragement to persist through some tasks.

4. Well-developed individual interest: defined succinctly as a "relatively enduring

predisposition to reengage with particular content such as objects, events or ideas

over   time" (Hidi, 2006, pp.70). Individual interest is also related to positive feelings,

along   with an increased (relative to emerging) stored value for and knowledge about the

content area. Students with an individual interest can self-generate interest and

might   not need external support; these students are often persistent in the face of

challenge   and across long complex tasks.

Across this model of interest progression, interest develops from a short-term, chiefly

affective experiences, gaining increasing elements of value for, and deepening knowledge

of, the topic. A brief example of this development during foreign language learning

within formal education might begin during elementary school with activities that are fun

(e.g., games, music, story books, videos, etc). As students' basic competence is laid down

as a foundation through these early experiences with the new language, curricula might

include increasing references to the role of the second/foreign language within students

current and future lives. At the same time, the difficulty of the curricula and expectations

for students' independent study expands. Across these experiences, feedback from peers,

parents, instructors and objective tests feed into students' beliefs about their growing

ability to successfully use the new language (i.e., self-efficacy beliefs).

For language instructors seeking to support interest development in their classes,

their role begins with first understanding the phase of students' current interest in

learning the new language. If students have little or no interest, then the first step is

triggering interest through affectively charged (e.g., novel, surprising, fun) and (appropriately) challenging tasks. Once students' interest is sufficiently triggered (or if the students already had some degree of triggered interest) instructors need to shift their support to increasing students' value and knowledge (actual and perceived). Instructors at this stage need to ensure they are providing clear rationale for tasks, getting students personally involved, explaining the value of the content being taught, and ensuring that both student's knowledge and confidence in that knowledge (i.e., self-efficacy) steadily increases. While describing interest development in classrooms as a clear and linear developmental process is straightforward, the reality can be far more complex (Krapp, 2002). To begin with, students come to class with a wide range of interest in learning a new language. It is very difficult therefore to meet the developmental needs of each student's interest stage. Furthermore, varied competence in the target language can also complicate interest support. Both factors can mean that a task might be interesting to some students while boring others. Acknowledging this reality and taking it into consideration when devising curricula is critical. Some suggestions for addressing this issue are discussed in the practical implications section of the discussion.

With the Four-Phase Model for interest development outlined, a comprehensive definition for interest, which can stretch to include each phase and its critical components together is necessary. We draw on Markey and Loewenstein (2014) who describe interest as a psychological state that involves engagement in order to learn more about a subject generally. This definition ties the behaviour, motivation and object of learning together, inextricably connecting interest and its development to the process and outcomes of learning.

Language instructors and researchers might not all immediately identify with the Four Phase Model and/or the definition provided. They might ask whether interest is substantively different than other sources of motivation within the educational psychology or even the language learning literature (For a recent discussion of this kind of issue see Marsh et al., 2018; McEown & Oga-Baldwin, this issue). In addition to the unique collative, developmental, and content-specific definition put forth by the accumulation of research assembled under the Four Phase Model, recent and ongoing neuroscientific research has demonstrated that there is a physiological basis for interest (Panksepp, 1998): i.e., the brain is demonstrably different when a learner is interested compared to when s/he is not (Kang et al., 2009; Kang et al., 2006).

There are two very different environments and related purposes for learning a new language in school—i.e., as a second language (often surrounded by the new language day-to-day) or a foreign language (often receiving very little day-to-day contact with the language). For example, many immigrant students in the USA must learn English as a second language. They study in order to survive and thrive in their new country. The reasons for continuing to improve their new language skills are weaved into their lives inside and outside school. These second language students are also surrounded by the opportunities and necessities for using their growing second language skills. These second language students' parents may not be fluent in English, but they will be learning themselves and are therefore more likely to recognise the critical importance of their children becoming fluent. Many of these parents will then communicate this fundamental value for the language to their children.

In contrast, many children who are introduced to English as a foreign language during elementary school are initially encouraged to have fun with the language. In Japan, for example, it is seen it as a departure from the rigours of core subjects like Japanese and Mathematics—for which grades are assigned. Transitioning to later years/grades English becomes a graded subject where the rigorous study of vocabulary, intonation, and grammar begin. The two most important exams a Japanese child faces are qualifying exams for high school and university (Oga-Baldwin & Fryer, 2018). For both exams, English is one of five critical subjects. For many Japanese students, who might never use English in their day-to-day lives, these exams and their semester grades are the primary and sometimes sole reason for learning this foreign language (English). Parents of Japanese children commonly cannot use English competently and might also fail to see the utility of English beyond the crucial gatekeeping entrance exams described.

To effectively examine these two language learning context through the lens of interest development, three essential components of interest need to be contrasted: A) Affective experiences during learning (i.e., emotion), B) competence development as a result of learning (actual and perceived) and C) value for learning. For both A and B, second language environments offer more opportunity to engage with the language outside of class and therefore more opportunity for both positive and negative experiences. For example, frustration with not being understood properly and fear of making mistakes, but also pride in successful communication and the joy of engaging with both people and media in the new language. Similarly, increased engagement offers more opportunities for one's competence beliefs to increase and decrease depending on engagement outcomes.

Second and foreign language environments qualitatively differ when it comes to students' perceptions of value for the target language. Both school environments may communicate the importance of the new language. However, second language environments often make it valuable in practice as the target language is used as the language of instruction within other subjects. Second language extra-curricular environments support students' value for learning the target language by making it of practical use (i.e., day-to-day) outside the classroom. While parents in both contexts are likely to communicate the value of the target language, the nature of the value conveyed is likely to be quite different. Parents in both contexts are likely to reinforce the academic value of the target language: i.e., getting good grades and entrance to future education. Other reasons for learning the target language might be more apparent to parents in second language than in foreign language contexts. For example, supporting the student in developing relationships with other students, engaging in extra-curricular activities and generally enhancing the students' wellbeing. Self-determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017) proposed a continuum of value from lacking regulation to external to internal regulation. Deci and Ryan hypothesised, and evidence from language learning specifically and education broadly has demonstrated (Fryer, 2015; Fryer, Ozono, Carter, Nakao, & Anderson, 2013; Vansteenkiste, Soenens, Verstuyf, & Lens, 2009) that externally-regulated value (e.g., for academic achievement), relative to internally-regulated value (e.g., personal goals), is less supportive of interest development and other critical learning outcomes. Further discussion of this issue will be undertaken within the practical applications of the current review.

The potential impact of the second (e.g., USA) and foreign (e.g., Japan) language schooling environments strikes to the heart of interest development and needs to be addressed at the curriculum and classroom level. The Four-Phase Model indicates that for interest to develop, students' must (after early stages of interest are triggered) be supported in finding personally relevant reasons for reengaging, while continuing to improve their language consistently and consciously (i.e., the need for students to perceive steady improvement).

On first reaction to the two contexts reviewed, it might be assumed that second language learners might need no support given the clear, personally relevant reasons that many students have for learning the new language. It is perhaps true that in comparison to foreign language students, that initial transition from situational to individual interest might be easier. However, for students to sustain the interest necessary to grow their language skills beyond the basic demands of day-to-day life and schooling, many students will need consistent support. While many immigrant parents might see English as a path to higher education and strong careers, other immigrant parents might simply see it as tools for survival and fail to push children to develop longer term goals— especially as such goals might be outside the experience of some parents. It is important that teachers fill this gap of supporting longer term goals. It is also important that teachers encourage students to develop a personal connection (see Reninger and Hidi, 2015) to this second language through experiences such as pleasure reading, movies and extra-curricular activities.

Teachers of a foreign language at school (i.e., in any country where the target language is not a nationally recognised first or second language) have a difficult, but

critical role in helping students reach and maintain a well-developed interest in learning a new language. Unlike second-language contexts, the immediate value of the new language needs to be introduced (and reinforced) to many students, school environments need to be adjusted to make this immediate need real: learning in English during other subjects and extracurricular activities that students need to use English for. Beyond the classroom and immediate value for English as a foreign language, teachers need to get parents involved, emphasising the kind of daily engagement with English that is necessary for students to both steadily improve and make a robust personal connection. The most obvious way to engage parents is in the manner they already utilise for first language studies in some countries: e.g., listening to (and signing off on) students' nightly read-aloud assignments in Japan.

3 Modelling interest in formal educational environments

The Four-Phase Model is a powerful theoretical backdrop for understanding and thereby supporting interest development in a broad array of contexts and domains. When an individual can initiate (and regulate) the re/engagement necessary for interest to develop, the Four-Phase Model has substantial explanatory power. However, in heavily structured teaching-learning environments, where the content (both what and how much) and students' engagement is determined by the curriculum and managed by the instructor, the Four Phase Model can benefit from being supplemented by a practice-oriented model, sensitive to the structural realities of formal education.

One practice-oriented model is the task-course-domain model of interest (Fryer, Ainley, Thompson, 2016). While holding the developmental process described by the Four Phase Model as a constant, this model aims to describe the causal connections

between the plethora of activities students might engage in during a course, the course itself and the subject/domain of study. For this model students' interest in specific tasks during a specific course is in focus. In a language course, students might engage in paired or group discussion, listening-writing activities, writing and peer feedback activities, etc. This model seeks to understand how students' interest in these various activities/tasks are related to one another and which ones predict their interest in the course, and thereby the domain of study (Fryer, et al., 2016). In the context of any course, but particularly for language courses, students should come away with an interest that will carry them forward to the next course and beyond their school context.

Initial research (Fryer et al., 2016) with the Task-Course-Domain Model (in language learning classrooms) indicated that, after controlling for prior achievement and prior interest in learning a new language, students' interest in classroom activities predicted future interest in the domain only through their interest in the course (full mediation).

An experimental (counter-balanced design) study (Fryer, Ainley, Thompson, Gibson & Zelinda, 2017) using the Task-Course-Domain Model examined two speaking tasks, one with a human partner and one with an AI partner (chatbot). Findings indicated that despite the students' interest in the two partners being statistically consistent in quantity at the outset, and behaviourally exhibiting similar levels of engagement, that only students' interest in the human discussion (statistically) significantly predicted their interest in the course ($\beta = .46$, $p < .05$). Recent structural modelling of students' interest experiences during university Math, Biochemistry and Organic Chemistry courses (Fryer, Zeng, Wong, Ho, & Chiu, 2018.), have confirmed that the contribution of students'

interest in different course activities to their future interest in the course can contrast strongly. In this research, it was often the tasks that instructors had added to their lectures with the aim of enhancing student engagement that failed to significantly stimulate students' interest in the course—and thereby their interest in the broader domain.

This programme of research (Fryer, et al., 2016; Fryer, et al., 2017; Fryer, et al., 2018; Fryer & Ainley, 2019; Fryer, Nakao & Thompson, 2019) into the inter-connections between students' interest in tasks, the course and the broader domain has resulted in two practical implications for instructors seeking to support students' motivation to learn a language across and beyond their course.

1) Classroom experiences contribute to students' interest in the domain through students' interest in the course. This implies that instructors need to make getting students interested in their course a central curricular and instructional objective.

2) It is the nature of the task, not the quantity of interest (self-reported or observed) that matters.

The previously discussed study (Fryer, et al., 2017) implies that activities which seem to stimulate students' interest, or activities that students say they like (e.g., games, movies, AI language practice partners) might be making a very small or non-significant contribution to their long-term (personal) domain interest. It is worth testing the long-term contribution of tasks (through experimental or longitudinal studies), particularly those explicitly included in curriculums to enhance engagement (see Oga-Baldwin, this issue), to be sure they are having the desired long-term effect on student's interest and thereby their learning outcomes and long-term persistence.

4   Interest in the language learning classroom

4.1   Theoretical connections

Interest's relationship (Bandura & Schunk, 1981) and potential reciprocal connection (Ainley, Buckley, & Chan, 2009; Hidi, Ainley, Berndorff, & Del Favero, 2006) with self-efficacy have long been discussed. Recent evidence from classroom based foreign language learning has indicated that there is a strong reciprocal relationship between these critical individual differences (Fryer & Ainley, 2019). Furthermore, after accounting for prior achievement and self-concept for language learning (not a statistically significant predictor), that interest and self-efficacy were consistent, statistically significant predictors of standardised language learning outcomes (Fryer & Ainley, 2019). This evidence pointed to the crucial inter-dependent growth of students' confidence in their abilities to learn (self-efficacy perceptions) and their interest in learning a new language at school. Instructors need to ensure that curricula and feedback support both.

While prior large-scale research in the areas of mathematics (Marsh, Trautwein, Lüdtke, Köller, & Baumert, 2005) and language learning (Fryer, 2015) have pointed to academic self-concept as a significant, even substantial predictor of future interest at school, recent evidence from language classrooms (Fryer & Ainley., 2019) suggest that if self-efficacy (and prior achievement) is accounted for, that academic self-concept might not be a direct contributor of either future interest or achievement. Language learning research examining students' interest in classroom language learning tasks (vocabulary learning activities) has suggested that self-concept is an important variable to control for due to potential moderating effects. The same research indicated that self-efficacy, which

has a long tradition of being connected directly to task level learning experiences, has a substantial and complex role within students' interest in classroom tasks (Fryer et al., 2016). The findings of this research suggest, somewhat counterintuitively, that low self-efficacy can enhance students' interest in tasks during their early engagement, if it is engaging (e.g., has novel or peer learning elements). The same students were faced with the same task (with new content—in this context, new vocabulary) on two more occasions later in the same academic year. Across these later tasks, it was students with the higher initial self-efficacy that found the later tasks interesting. These results were only observed after controlling for prior self-concept suggesting its moderating role. These findings point to the complex paired role of these two ability beliefs, one looking back on prior learning performance (self-concept) and one looking forward to expected learning performance (self-efficacy)—for a thorough theoretical review of these constructs see Marsh, Martin, Yeung, and Craven (2016).

The quality of students' motivation for learning has seen a substantial amount of research during the past five decades (Deci, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Lepper, Sethi, Dialdin, & Drake, 1997; Rigby, Deci, Patrick, & Ryan, 1992; Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006). Correlational and experimental evidence has demonstrated the pivotal role of why students engage with materials (Vansteenkiste, et al., 2009). This evidence extends to the language learning classroom where internally regulated goals (i.e., goals for which the individual is not reliant on external rewards) have a demonstrated positive role for students' future interest in learning a new language, while externally regulated goals (e.g., grades, credits, and graduation) have a demonstrated negative role (Fryer, 2015). These findings point directly to the importance of supporting internally regulated

goals for learning a new language at school. This support can be effectively undertaken through goal-framing both during instruction and within language learning materials (For an example see Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Soenens, & Matos, 2005; For more on goals in the language learning classroom see Lee & Bong, this issue).

4.2   Practical applications

Instructors of foreign and native languages, much like instructors of other areas of content, need to move beyond "engaging" or "activating" students. Evidence suggests that much like motivation, quantity might be important, but alone is not sufficient. The quality of the task is crucial to the development of sustained motivation to reengage: i.e., interest in learning the target language and the eventual development and sustenance of personal interest. A straightforward example is presented in Fryer and colleagues' (2017) experimental test, where the students' interest in student-student vs. student-AI partnered conversations were both modelled as predicting future interest in the language course (accounting for prior interest in the course) resulting in the finding that ultimately students might be initially interested in something novel, such as an AI, but in the long run find human interaction more satisfying. The complete lack of meaningful connection from interest in the student-AI task, despite only marginally less interest in the AI partnered task, indicates that the quality of the task matters. The difficulty with this finding is that the quality of students' interest is difficult for instructors to judge. The only thing instructors can see is quantity of engagement, which is why there is so much buzz around "active" or "engaged" learning these days: i.e., it is visually apparent to instructors. To address this issue instructors can draw on well-established theory (e.g., the Four-Phase Model and the work it draws on; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Renninger & Hidi,

2011, 2015) to support decisions about which tasks are likely to support the development of sustainable motivation to learn. For example, using tasks that are likely to stimulate a positive emotional response (e.g., surprise, enjoyment, pride) from students whose interest has yet to emerge. As students' interest develops teachers might then include more discussion of the practical and personal value of the target language and learning a language more generally. Consistent feedback will also support students in transitioning across the four stages by ensuring they perceive their growing language competence.

Instructors might also consider the outcome of a follow-up study (Fryer et al., 2019) to the aforementioned paper (Fryer et al., 2017), which followed the same students into the next semester and asked them about the relative merits and demerits of interacting with a human vs. an AI conversation partner. Superimposing coded results to these questions with students' achievement and task interest, findings suggested that students' reasons (i.e., convenience, learn more, situational interest, communication ease, and social benefits) for engaging with the AI were factors within the amount of interest students experienced during the conversations with two partners.

Once students' interest has been triggered, perhaps the most direct and consistent means instructors have at their disposal to support its development (besides helping them to improve their language skills) is framing tasks in support of adaptive (personally relevant or internally regulated) goals. Both theory and plenty of empirical research support both the importance and practical utility of taking the time to help students value learning experiences for internally regulated reasons. This might be as simple as talking about what specific language learning activities will help students actually do outside the classroom, how it builds on previous activities in the classroom, builds towards future

skills beyond the boundaries of school, and how it will help students meet personal goals during and well beyond school life (For an extensive review of this kind of framing and its benefits see Vansteenkiste, Matos, Lens & Soenens, 2007).

A final comment on suggestions for instruction that arise from researching students' interest in language learning classrooms is the pivotal and complex role of task difficulty. Obviously, classroom language instructors are constantly gauging and adjusting task difficulty, seeking that "Goldilocks" level of language reading, writing, listening and speaking challenge. It is imperative for instructors to understand that task difficulty plays a substantial role in supporting or weakening student interest, in addition to its implications for language skills development. Fryer and colleagues (2016) demonstrated that challenging tasks can interest students with low self-efficacy, but over time, the benefits of the challenge might not support students' interest or might even lower students' interest—task difficulty clearly needs to strategically vary. Students, even of lower self-efficacy, need to be challenged, but they also need opportunities to engage with tasks in which they can experience mastery. These mastery experiences are critical for building students' self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986, 1993), which we know contributes to interest at the domain level of language learning (Fryer & Ainley, 2019). For alternative, related research on the role of ability beliefs within language learning, theories of intelligence (Dweck, 2006) and expectancy-value (Eccles et al., 1993) are two areas with clear relevance, each addressed by contributions to this special issue (Loh, this issue; Lou & Noels, this issue)

5 Future directions for researching interest in the language classroom

Interest[2] is a quickly growing area within psychology and education, but scant research has been undertaken in the specific context of language learning; what little has been done, has focused on foreign language classrooms and tertiary students. This body of research has drawn on well-established theory and empirical research from across a broad array of learning contexts. Therefore, the application of these findings to learning a language in other school contexts (foreign/second, primary/secondary) is a reasonable proposition, but needs to be tested. The application of both the Four-Phase Model of interest development (Renninger & Hidi, 2011; Hidi & Renninger, 2006) and/or the practical model reviewed herein (i.e., Task-Course-Domain) to foreign and second language learning during primary-secondary school is a natural next step.

As a first step, therefore, examining the development of younger learners' interest in learning a new language, in both foreign and second language classrooms, is an excellent place to start. These two language environments support very different instrumental reasons for learning a language—as has already been discussed. If the language learning is primarily for extrinsic purposes (i.e., as found in many foreign language contexts: e.g., grades, academic progress, and a job) relative to intrinsic purposes (i.e., some second language learning contexts: e.g., make friends, watch TV, read for pleasure, and engage with the community) it is likely to result in very different trajectories of interest development over time. Therefore, both contexts are in dire need of longitudinal studies. Research design for these proposed studies needs to examine how these differences impact

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[2] i.e., as a collative (can be a integration of emotional, value and cognitive components), psychological, developmental construct (see Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Renninger & Hidi, 2011; Renninger & Hidi, 2015)

21

students' interest in learning the new language and provide direction for teachers and parents in both contexts.

A second area in need of research in second and foreign language classrooms is how interest might best be supported at different developmental stages (see Renninger & Hidi, 2015) of interest and enhancing our understanding of the linkages between language competence (perceived and actual) and interest (Fryer & Ainley, 2019; Fryer et al., 2016). Continued research seeking to differentiate between tasks that engage students behaviourally (see Oga-Baldwin, this issue), but fail to have any impact on interest development (Fryer et al, 2017) and learning outcomes is also essential. Finally, further research across the full psychological taxonomy of emotions and their connections to language learning (See Shao, Pekrun, Nicholson, this issue) will also support situating interest and its development within classrooms at all levels of learning.

Within education generally, including the classroom language learning research undertaken to this point, there is considerable evidence to suggest that interest and its development is deeply embedded within a network of motivations and beliefs about learning. It is reasonable to expect that interest (and its development) is implicated in many of the applied linguistics centred motivation theories commonly utilised by many SLA researchers. There is therefore an opportunity to connect this work to the broader network of research (i.e., education and psychology) working to understand the how and why of students' motivations to learn something as complex and crucial as a new language within the borders of formal education.

6 Conclusions

We know little to nothing about how interest in learning a new language develops (or fails to) across the years of formal education. Yet, classroom second/foreign language learning is in many ways the ideal contexts for expanding our understanding of how interest develops under the highly structured and extrinsically charged conditions of school. Language learning is critically developmental, demands endless, even lifelong persistence for competence to be achieved and then even more to be maintained. Further interest research in this area is therefore destined to improve instruction and the learning of new languages at school and also contribute to our broader understanding of interest development across formal education.

In conclusion, the development of interest for any domain of study needs consistent and well-structured support, even after students develop some degree of personal interest. Language is no exception and given the clear, lifelong learning implications of learning a new language, language instructors need to make the development of personal interest in learning a new language a paired central educational objective, along with language competence. Given that fluency and interest are interdependent, this should be a natural, implicit part of curricula and instruction already. The aim of the discussion to this point was to provide evidence sufficient for educators and researchers to consider making this pairing explicit. So, put simply: Language instructors need to see interest and competence as inseparable paired target outcomes for their classes. Language research within formal education (elementary to tertiary) needs to address both of these outcomes. The alternative is to continue to just focus on half of what good language learning classrooms should be doing.

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