

ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION IN L2 LEARNING: AN EMPIRICAL ACCOUNT*

In this study* Castro Calvin seeks to determine both the type and degree of attitude and motivation of Spanish students in their final year of secondary education (or as he terms them 'Spanish pre-university students') when they are faced with the study of the syllabus subject, English. He attempts to analyse the source of these attitudes and motivations, taking into consideration the school context, i.e. the methodology needed and influence teachers have, and the external features, i.e. home background, parents and other social agents. However, he places a greater emphasis on the necessity to identify those agents which influence students' motivation and which are specifically related to the school environment. This is perfectly understandable since, as the author himself states, the study has two goals: firstly to produce results that can be useful for the educational authorities when devising new curricula and meaningful, practical and thought-provoking from a methodological point of view for teachers of English. The second goal being to produce results that can be utilized by those engaged in the production of teaching materials both encouraging and enabling them to be truly inventive in their search for new forms of motivation and stimuli.

The first five chapters give detailed information both of the study carried out and its theoretical context, making pertinent comments on the various nuances that exist between studies previously undertaken in this complex field of motivation. At the same time it highlights those aspects which distinguish the present study from those done before, including the theoretical standpoint taken and the consequent design of the research. After this, in Chapter 6, the results of the study are presented and discussed, a correlation always being made between the results and the theoretical, personally designed framework. Conclusions and suggestions follow in Chapter 7. Finally, the book ends with two Appendices, one with graphs of factorial planes, twelve in total, and the other one with the questions included in the set of questionnaires given to the students.

In the first chapter we find a description of the present position of studies published on the acquisition of a second language (L2) and which specifically relate to factors that impinge on the level of linguistic competence achieved, namely attitude and motivation. It is pointed out that as far back as the 1960s aptitude alone was recognized as being insufficient when accounting for the level of proficiency ultimately attained and it was necessary to resort to other variables such as those previously mentioned, viz. attitude and motivation. The pioneering work of Gardner, Lambert and associates is reviewed, and among the conclusions reached it is significant to note the clear recognition of the fact that all these factors have their own idiosyncra-

sies and need to be taken into account separately if the ultimate level of achievement is to be assessed. The author names two researchers, Műchnick and Wolfe (1981-1982, in Castro Calvín 1992), with whom he concurs when the socio-cultural surrounding of their study is considered, i.e. (i) a mono-lingual and mono-cultural environment that affords scant opportunities for making meaningful interactive use of the language outside the learning environment, and (ii) the miscellaneous type of orientation actually exhibited by the students.

Among other differences between the studies reviewed by Castro Calvín and this one, the following are probably the most significant:

(a) The students in this study lack the special ethnic characteristics and circumstances that the subjects in the studies carried out in America had in relation to the target language, that is the language of the other community. Since those subjects in Spain studied by Castro were not charged with the same tensions or polarization as regards to the speakers of the L2. This makes the author confirm one of his main hypotheses, that is, the studies of the authors above would have given quite different results had they been undertaken in a different ethnic and cultural environment. Hence, motivation is made up of a constellation of different elements according to the socio-cultural milieu in which it emerges.

(b) The context in which Castro Calvín operates is one of low use of the second language, whereas the other researchers moved in an opposing environment, i.e. one of high use of the second language.

(c) The conceptualization of motivation also differs, since Castro Calvín thinks that integrative motivation can be divided into degrees of intensity –low, medium, high–, thus differing from Gardner and Lambert who only refer to the highest degree, which can be equated with the wish to become completely integrated and identified with the L2 culture, and actually to form part of it. This made him elaborate his own theoretical framework for the assessment of the constituents of motivation. He acknowledges the existence of a motivation continuum with two extreme poles, integrative motivation at the one end and instrumental motivation at the other. However, due to the way he views this motivation construct, these two poles can either oppose one another or, on the contrary, interact and draw on each other, as exemplified by those cases portraying a mixed orientation. It all depends on the specific circumstances in which one is operating and the real significance of each of the four constituents of motivation, i.e. (1) the kind of objective or goal set, (2) the effort involved, (3) the desire to reach the set objective or goal, and (4) the amount of positive attitudes towards the activity undertaken.

Castro Calvín states clearly that although it has been agreed by linguists that intrinsic motivation is of primary importance since it comes from the inner self of the student, underlining the fact that interest in learning the L2 does not spring basically from reasons which are external to the classroom, changes in this motivation may occur. Generally speaking, motivation in the classroom is usually an extrinsic norm, hence temporary and liable to change. However, it is possible to begin with this kind of motivation since it may be converted into an intrinsic motivation with the help of the teacher's ability and the skilful use of his professional expertise (Finocchiaro 1981; Rivers 1987). Moreover, as the aim is to achieve an accurate portrayal of pre-university students, Castro Calvín proceeds to make a detailed analysis of the four constituents above. Thus, he includes in his study the appropriate variables, namely (1) the type of motivation to study, (2) the intensity of the motivation, (3) the strength

of the desire to learn this target language, and (4) the attitude of the students towards L2 acquisition.

Castro Calvín follows Gardner and Lambert's (1959; 1972) socio-educational model of L2 acquisition as a frame of reference for his study of attitude, motivation, and the different active variables of which both are composed. This is the reason why he evaluates the social significance of attitude, considering specifically how society evaluates the attitude under study and its direction –positive, negative, neutral. He summarizes Gardner and Lambert's model and underlines its emphasis on the relationship between subjective factors and the learning of a L2. He also stresses the underlying idea that classroom L2 learning necessarily demands, if some success is sought after, namely that the students should have positive attitudes towards the L2 community. At the same time he emphasizes that this model shows the existence of two clearly different categories within the results achieved. That is, (a) linguistic results measured in terms of the degree of linguistic competence manifested in language use, and (b) non-linguistic results, i.e. those which relate to attitude, motivation, etc. He openly acknowledges that his choice of this model is based on its offering a theoretical framework against which he can place the variables he investigates in his own research. Thus, he focuses in particular on the subjective field of language acquisition so that he can reveal, within a predominantly formal environment, the extent to which individual differences, namely motivation, and results, specifically the non-linguistic ones, are linked. To the model are added the analysis of other questions, such as cultural beliefs, which are considered to be relevant to the compiling of a real profile of pre-university students. One more point which should be noted in relation to the difference between the model chosen by Castro Calvín and that followed by Gardner and Lambert's is the conceptualization of the way in which motivation functions. Furthermore, while Gardner and Lambert view it as static or mono-directional, he sees it as bi-directional and dynamic, since he considers that any given motive for learning the L2 can have an instrumental-directional index, an integrative one, or even both of them at the same time. In his own theoretical framework the motive or motives for learning the language are categorized not only in terms of where on the motivation continuum they are placed but, more importantly, on calculating where their aim lies. In short, in a dynamic interpretation of this/these motive(s).

It is evident that Castro Calvín's is firmly based when he investigates motivation, since his research aims are within the subjective aspect of language learning. Tackling this aspect of the complex process of learning, motivation is undoubtedly a highly significant standpoint from which to address it. Since elements of self-responsibility are found in any learning process, greater weight has been given to personal will and decision. It is thought that the learner has inevitably to concentrate on the learning items or materials he is offered so that ultimately learning occurs, i.e. an assimilation of the learning objectives is achieved (Willing 1988). Thus, the direct stimulus-response relationship is abandoned and a person-centred psychology is taken up (Rogers 1983; Maslow 1987). A consequence of this new stance towards language pedagogy is the commitment to fostering learner development through incorporating the learner into the management of the learning process and negotiating with him the issues to be tackled and the ways in which to tackle them (Stevick 1990). In this way both the learner's active participation in the creation of the L2 knowledge he is endeavouring to attain (Richards 1978; Faerch and Kasper 1983; Kasper 1986) and the multi-fac-

eted nature of language (Oller and Richards 1973; Giles *et al.* 1980; Richards 1985; Spolsky 1989) are acknowledged.

When considering the general objectives Castro Calvín set for his own study, it becomes apparent that he has more than achieved them. In the first place, he has examined the relevance that certain variables may have with respect to the attitude and motivation of the students surveyed, having carried out an exhaustive analysis of the role played by parents, society, methodology, teaching materials, etc., within the specific context he has investigated, namely C.O.U. students. At the same time he has not forgotten the great importance of the role that attitude and motivation play in the learning of a L2 when this occurs in an area where the foreign language is little used. He has also taken into account the effectiveness or not of the current educational system as a source of motivation/demotivation and he has analysed the influence the system has on the attitudes of the subjects in relation to the learning of English.

At this point it is important to recognize and praise the researcher's own rigorous attitude when appraising his research results since he adopts measures of a technical and statistical nature, which guarantee the validity of the results and serve to add to the reliability of the methods used, thus enabling his findings to be both applicable to and relevant in other similar contexts. These measures also accord with established norms over how to conduct appropriate research (Hatch and Fahardy 1982, 1-11), since what Castro Calvín has in fact undertaken is a form of descriptive research following the format or conventionalized procedure of deductive research in the form of surveys. That is, the independent variables under investigation, namely attitudes and motivation of C.O.U. students, have not been subjected to any kind of arbitrary control by the researcher. The questionnaires used to collect the data needed for the study –i.e. the surveys given to four main groups: students, parents, teachers, and the different social agents of the community where students live– constitute primary sources for this research, and are the means used to gather new data for his own investigation. At the same time secondary sources –i.e. the scales and items employed by other researchers– have also been employed, thus indicating how this research has been supported by and compared to previous analyses of pre-existing data. Moreover, in order to collect the required information in the survey Castro Calvín chose a mixed technique that included both qualitative and quantitative aspects. The field research for this survey was undertaken in seventeen principal sampling areas after an initial pilot survey had been conducted in another area. The survey distributed to the students is structured in five sets of factors –the total number of questions and answers being 206 and 920 respectively–, the fact that the set of questionnaires involves a total number of variables of 34, allows room both for certain variables analysed by other researchers and permits the inclusion of other variables that he also considers important. However, perhaps the most important aspect of the survey that should be both emphasized and welcomed is the fact that the field research was carried out by the researcher himself in order to ensure that the data collected would fulfil the criteria required to yield objective and reliable results. Having achieved this objectivity and reliability there is no doubt that this study must be viewed as an important, objective and stimulating example of empirical research in the area of L2 acquisition (Cook 1986).

In addition, within the field of L2 acquisition research most of the work done has centred on establishing the degree of similarity that exists among learners and the 'universal' processes they all share. Unfortunately, little has been done in the

field of alternative research geared to the study of learner differences. However, Skehan (1989) does point out that major areas do in fact exist in which learners clearly differ. These areas include those of language aptitude, motivation, cognitive style and individual control over learning. The research carried out by Castro Calvín seems to set itself within this alternative research paradigm in L2 acquisition. Considering his research design and the way in which it has been carried out by the researcher himself, it is clear that it resembles the 'Good Language Learner' model which was put forward by Naiman, Frohlich, Todesco, and Stern (1978) in an attempt to represent the classes of variables that have an effect on the learning of a L2. For example, independent or causative variables, that is the teaching, the learner, and the context, and dependent or caused variables that include learning and outcome. If all these different potential influences on language learning are firmly borne in mind, then it is logical to conclude that issues such as those addressed by Castro Calvín can be tackled with a better understanding of the complexity of the field being researched. Moreover, he has contributed to the above alternative research paradigm because when answering the questions in the questionnaire, students reveal significant aspects of the learning process. These include their opinion in relation to testing; their most immediate and basic needs; where the fundamental objectives of the English course should be oriented; their attitudes to the English exercises done during the academic year; their opinion of the English exam of 'Selectividad' –i.e. the University entry exam; the kind of reaction teachers express once having marked the exams; their grades; the methods used to assess their performance in English; English homework; the English textbook used in C.O.U.; the methodology adopted for C.O.U. students; the syllabus and the English course chosen; the extra-curricular activities related to English; the audio-visual resources they consider worth mentioning; the frequency with which their C.O.U. teacher uses English in the class; the formation of English groups and their opinion of their English teacher!

A review of the basic strategies adopted by Castro Calvín for the measurement of attitudes, i.e. the self-report scale, and the techniques of attitude measurement, i.e. the multiple choice scale, with the added Likert and Osgood scales, clearly show that they are the result of a very conscientious decision aimed at obtaining realistic and valuable findings in the diverse area of attitude assessment. In the same vein, the overt purpose of the researcher to consider not only individual differences of the language learner which could have an effect on his final mastery of the L2 –i.e. subjective variables such as attitudes and motivation– but also those characteristics of the learning environment which are clearly reflected in L2 acquisition –i.e. the classroom context and the larger socio-cultural context–, indicates how comprehensive Castro Calvín's own paradigm has been in his attempt to account for the complex sphere of the subjective aspect of language learning.

Finally, it is really encouraging to be able to point to the rigour with which Castro Calvín has conducted his study and the care he has shown in assessing his results. This highly professional study of motivation and attitudes needed for the acquisition of a L2 deserves much praise. At the same time the publishers of this edition, in this case the University of Alicante, should also be commended since, with presumably limited means, they have been able to produce this study in a practical and attractive form. Although slightly marred by several misprints and one blank page (p. 127) this work should be greeted with approval and interest.

Notes

- * Castro Calvin, José (1992) *A Profile of the Motivation of the Spanish Pre-University Students in the Learning of English*. Alicante: Departamento de Filología Inglesa. Universidad de Alicante. 129 pp.

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