

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.

Arthur Ashe

- **Students who don't feel motivated or empowered don't learn as effectively.**
- **One common reason for students feeling demotivated is that they are not making progress.**
- **To address this the idea of progress can be redefined, and different forms of assessment can be used.**
- **Another reason for the motivation is that students don't see the point in learning languages, or they feel bored. You should talk to students about the value of learning languages and ensure that your teaching style is engaging.**
- **Educational role models can motivate and empower students.**
- **Sometimes things which seem very minor, like valuing students contributions in class, can have a huge impact.**

Introduction

- 1. When you learned English, or another second language, were you motivated? Are you motivated to teach? Why/ why not?**
- 2. What do you think motivates your students to learn? How do you know this?**
- 3. If you teach demotivated students, what do you say to them, and how do you try to motivate them?**

MOTIVATION

Motivation is the extent to which you make choices about goals to pursue and the effort you will devote to that pursuit.

Traditional view of motivation accounts for human behaviour through a behavioristic paradigm that stresses the importance of rewards and reinforcement.

Cognitive psychological viewpoints explain motivation through deeper, less observable phenomena.

Behavioristic definition

Behaviourist psychologist like Skinner or Watson would stress the role of rewards (and perhaps punishments) in motivating behaviour. In Skinner's operant conditioning model, for example, human beings, like other living organisms, will pursue a goal because they perceive a reward for doing so. This reward serves to *reinforce* behaviour, to cause it to persist. Brown refers to this tradition as 'M&M Theory of behaviour', derived from now seldom practised administration of M&M candies to children for manifesting desired behaviour.

A behaviourist would define motivation as '*the anticipation of reinforcement*'. There is no question that the tremendous proportion of what we do is motivated by an anticipated reward. From eating to exercises, to studying and even to altruistic acts of ministering to others, there is something in it for me. The emotional overtones of the more intangible rewards must not be ignored. M&M's, hugs and laughter, are all at times, pay offs worth striving for. Reinforcement theory is a powerful concept for the classroom. Learners like the proverbial horse running after the carrot pursue goals in order to receive externally administered rewards, praise, gold stars, grades, certificates, diplomas, scholarships, careers, financial independence, and ultimately happiness.



Cognitive definitions

Number of cognitive psychological viewpoints offer quite a different perspective on motivation. While rewards are very much a part of the whole picture, the difference lies in the sources of motivation and in the power of self-reward. Three different theories illustrated this side of motivation.

A. Drive theory.

Those who see human *drives* as fundamental to human behavior claim that motivation stems from basic innate drives.

David Ausubel (1968) elaborated on 6 different drives: exploration, manipulation, activity, stimulation, knowledge, ego enhancement.

All of these drives act not so much as reinforcers, as in behavioristic theory, but as innate predispositions compelling us, as it were, to probe the unknown, to control our environment, to be physically active, to be receptive to mental, emotional, or physical stimulation, to yearn for answers to questions and to build our own self-esteem. It takes little imagination to see how motivation in the classroom is the fulfilment of these underlying drives.

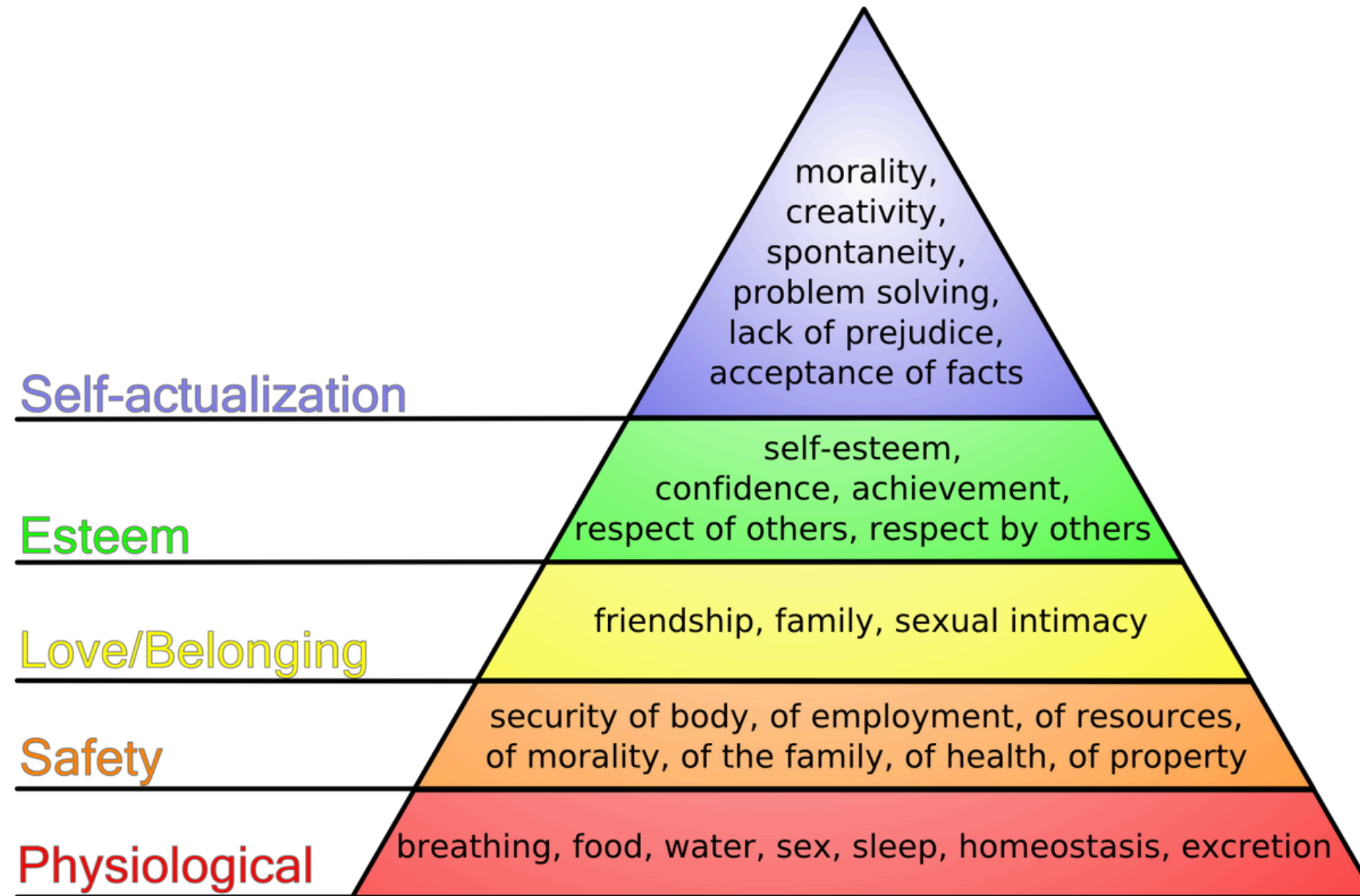
B. Hierarchy of needs theory

One of the most widely cited theories of motivation comes from Abraham Maslow (1970) who, in the spirit of drive theory, elaborated further to describe a system of needs within each human being that propel us to higher and higher attainment.

Maslow's hierarchy is best viewed metaphorically as a pyramid of needs, progressing from the satisfaction of purely physical needs, up through safety and communal needs, to needs of esteem, and finally to self-actualization, a state of reaching your fullest potential.

Of key importance here is that a person is not adequately energized to pursue some of the higher needs until the lower foundations of the pyramid have been satisfied. Therefore, a person who's hungry or cold, who has gotten little sleep, etc., has little motivation to see beyond those present physical discomforts to pursue anything higher. Likewise, needs for safety (comfort, routine, protection) and for a feeling of belonging (in a group of classmates or friends) must be met in order for a person to devote full energy to the higher needs of academic attainment, achievement of recognition for successes, and to the ultimate peak of 'being all that you can be'.

Maslow's theory tells us that what might be inappropriately viewed as rather ordinary classroom routines may in fact be important precursors to motivation for higher attainment. For an activity in the classroom to be considered motivating, then, it need not be outstandingly striking, innovative, or inspirational. Even familiar classroom procedures (taking roll, checking homework, small talk at the beginning of class etc.), if they fulfil lower-order needs, can pave the way to meet in higher-order needs.



C. Self-control theory.

Certain cognitive psychologists (for instance, Hunt 1971) focus on the importance of people deciding for themselves what to think or feel or do. We define ourselves by making our own decisions rather than by simply reacting to others. Motivation is highest when one can make ones own choices, whether they are in short term or long term contacts.

In the classroom, when learners have opportunities to make their own choices about what to pursue and what not to pursue, as in a cooperative learning context, they are fulfilling this need for autonomy. When learners get things shoved down their throats, motivation can wane according to this branch of theory, because those learners have to yield to others' wishes and commands.

PRAISE
RECOGNITION
AWARDS
REWARDS
PROMOTION
REMUNERATION

reprimands

rejection

penalties

fines

losing a competition

PRIDE
FULFILLMENT
SATISFACTION
ENJOYMENT
PLEASURE
CHALLENGE
FASCINATION

FEAR

DISSATISFACTION

HOSTILITY

ENVY

CONTEMPT

AGRESSION

GUILT

Extrinsic motivation.

Extrinsic motivation arises from motivators that lie outside of ourselves. That means that the effects that drive us and not part of us.

REWARD

EMOTIONAL REWARD

**PSYCHOLOGICAL
REWARD**

FEELING GOOD

NOT MATERIAL

EACH IS VALUABLE IN ITS OWN CONTEXT.

**WHERE PEOPLE ARE RESISTENT EXTRINSIC
MOTIVATION CAN GIVE THEM THE PUSH THEY NEED
TO GET THE JOB DONE.**

You can also use extrinsic motivation as reward that sends signals of approval. This acts as positive feedback that reinforces desirable behaviour.

However, the best extrinsic motivation also triggers an internal motivation system. Things like praise and recognition they are extrinsic motivators because they come from outside us. But the real value of them is the way that they make us feel.

Of course, the great thing about praise and recognition for us as teachers is these are a reward mechanism that we will never run out of.

Resources

Sowton, C. (2021). Teaching in Challenging Circumstances. Cambridge University Press

The Practice of English Language Teaching. (2021). Pearson. Електронна книга

Brown, H. D. (2011). Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy. Langara College.



