

# TESL

Teaching English as a Second Language

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## 2LL + CIM = TLP: AN EQUATION THAT CAN TOTAL SUCCESS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING

by Douglas M. Curran

Widely accepted among linguists and language teachers today is the fact that motiva-

tion is a key factor in the successful acquisition of a second language by the individual student. The simple equation of the Second Language Learner (2LL) plus Cultural Identity Motivation (CIM) can equal Target Language Proficiency (TLP) in many cases where the mastery of surface linguistic code does not suffice.

Some of the most often repeated sources of 2LL motivation lie in the areas of financial security and social adjustment. There is no question that these are vital and important goals to the 2LL and often add the extra fuel necessary to achieve requisite success in TLP, especially at more mature age levels. In this paper, however, I would like to explore briefly the power of *desire* rather than *obligation* to learn in the 2LL acquisition process. Mina Shaughnessy believes that in addition to motivation of a career goal, "the strongest motivations and learning energies are generated" this way.<sup>1</sup>

She quotes from Gardner and Lambert's research on attitudes and motivation in 2LL as they distinguish between instrumental and integrative motives for learning a language. The first, or instrumental, stems from the recognition of a practical use for the language, and the second, or integrative, from an active desire to identify with the cultural group that uses the language. One conclusion is stated as follows.

Learners who identify with the cultural group represented by a foreign

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or second language are likely to enjoy an advantage in attempts to master that language. Their motivation to learn the language appears to stem from and be sustained by the desire to identify.<sup>2</sup>

Even at the youngest age levels where TL Programs can be administered to a 2LL, it has been demonstrated that the educational system has real problems plugging in to the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) of the young student. John Macnamara observes the irony in the way many of today's children involved in the 2LL experience are developing better TLP outside the classroom than inside, as he shows that motivation is the essential difference between the classroom and the street as a place in which to learn a language.

Contrast, now, the child in the street with the child in the classroom. In the street he will not be allowed to join in the other children's play, not be allowed to use their toys, not even be treated by them as human beings unless he can make out what they say to him and make clear to them what he has to say. The reward for success and the punishment for failure is enormous.<sup>3</sup> No civilized teacher can compete.

This may be called *desire* in its earliest stages, a need to communicate for social survival and acceptance which eventually spawns the need for identity.

Conversely, it can be shown that there is a proportionate relationship between TLP and the lack of TL usage in conversation, for example. Morton Gordon makes reference to this with regard to English as the TL.

You must be willing to use English frequently, because you cannot learn to speak English by practicing your own language. Non-native speakers who come to the United States to learn English as a foreign language frequently spend much of their time talking to friends who come from their own country. On campus they congregate in small ethnic groups and speak their own language. Off campus they spend most of their time speaking their own languages with family and friends. . . The non-native

speaker who learns the most English when he comes to the United States is the one who is alone—he does not know anybody from his country and he cannot spend his time using his native language. He is freed to speak English, or end up never talking to anybody.<sup>4</sup>

It would seem that psychological readiness to learn a second language may be enhanced by the confidence that the act of mastering it is neither a disloyal or destructive one to one's own language, but in fact a claim upon a wider culture. This socio-cultural approach to language learning can be greatly influenced by the parents of the 2LL; Gardner talks about the *active* and *passive* roles that a parent can play in assisting a child with a TL. On the one hand, a parent may actively and consciously encourage the student to learn the language, monitoring performance and reinforcing success. On the other hand, however, and concurrently, the same parent may be subtly, passively, even unconsciously, undermining the child's progress because of a negative

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attitude possessed by the parent toward the TL community or culture. This might occur through the development of doubts in the mind of the child as to the real need for the language. Poor performance in exams may even be overlooked by the parent, thus giving the child a way to rationalize and conclude perhaps that since his parents have succeeded without it, why should he really have to learn it?

In contrast to this, the idea of the integrative motive is again mentioned here as characterized by attitudes discovered in observing interaction between American students learning French along the border of Montreal and London, Canada..

Students who emphasized that learning the second language would permit them to interact

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## 2LL + CIM = TLP

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with the French-speaking community, tended to have a positive attitude toward the French, or a favorable orientation toward outgroups in general. Furthermore, they were more motivated to learn French in that they worked harder. Such students were more successful in acquiring French. Because the major characteristics of this configuration appeared to describe an interest in acquiring French for purposes of integrating with the French-speaking community, we referred to this configuration as an integrative motive<sup>5</sup>

This concept then implies that success in 2L acquisition depends upon a desire to be like valued members of the "other" language community. Integratively-oriented students tended to come from homes where the parents were also possessed of an integrative orientation and where the parents had definite pro-TL attitudes. In the above example, it is possible that, because of their own favorable attitudes toward the French-Canadian community, the parents of the integratively-oriented students were willing to ascribe a number of French friends to their children, while parents of strictly instrumentally-oriented students with their comparatively unfavorable attitudes would not admit that their children associated with many French-Canadian children. In any case, the relationship between parent's attitudes and student orientations suggests that to some extent the students TLP will be dependent upon attitudes toward the other linguistic group engendered in the home.

Another study by Tucker and Lambert mentions the gradual decline in required foreign language courses in school, showing that those who elect to take such courses are now motivated by a desire to learn about other peoples and their way of life, with an accompanying desire to be able to interact with these people. They also focus on the influence of the teacher, suggesting that one "who is insensitive to local varieties of important world languages may show her

personal bias by denigrating the local variety actually used by certain of her pupils."<sup>6</sup> Their findings also suggest that

Teachers should start at very early age levels to present sympathetic culture contrasts that lead to recognition of the basic similarities of mankind. Furthermore, a FL teacher will likely be more successful in her work if she can capitalize on the feelings of today's young people who no longer feel that their own society (be it France, the U.S., or Russia or China) is the best of all possible worlds and who are instead searching for a better world, openly receptive to foreign peoples and their ideas.<sup>7</sup>

One final study is worth mentioning here. E. F. O'Doherty, in considering the social factors that affect SL policies states:

It follows that the closer the identification with the culture of the second language, the easier will be the learning process. The second language must be given functional significance in the child's world before it can truly function as a language. Without this, it may remain at the level of a mere coding and decoding instrument. In order to give it functional significance, a 'reward' mechanism directly related to language must be built in. Entertainment, reading, television programs, and the other forms of play activity must be viable in the child's world if a language is to function for the child as a language.<sup>8</sup>

Here he shows that the child learns a second language largely through the process of identification. And identification is enhanced by a favorable attitude toward the group whose language one is learning.

A personal observation seems warranted at this point. Although CIM is heavily stressed

herein as a positive factor in acquiring a 2L, it stands to reason that complete cultural change by 2LL to the TL culture is not the goal nor should it be encouraged. Cultural conflict may be the natural and unavoidable outgrowth of bilingualism, or, as I mentioned earlier, bilingualism may in reality be the path to laying claim to a wider world culture.

I sincerely believe that this little equation,  $2LL + CIM = TLP$ , or some modification thereof, can have positive results for the 2L teacher. And as the teacher prepares materials and methods to teach the TL, I think that success can be enhanced by a pervasive attitude of cultural sensitivity on the part of the teacher which will allow the greatest identification with the TL culture with the least threat to the culture of the 2LL.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Mina P. Shaughnessy, *Errors and Expectations*, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup>R.C. Gardner and W. E. Lambert, "Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning," in *Errors and Expectations*, p. 130.

<sup>3</sup>John Macnamara, "The Cognitive Strategies of Language Learning" in John W. Oller, Jr. and Jack C. Richards, eds. *Focus on the Learner, Pragmatic Perspectives for the Language Teacher*, p. 59.

<sup>4</sup>Morton J. Gordon, *Speech Improvement*, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>R. C. Gardner, "Attitudes and Motivation: Their Role in Second Language Acquisition," in *Focus on the Learner*, p. 237.

<sup>6</sup>G. R. Tucker and W. E. Lambert, "Sociocultural Aspects of Language Study," in *Focus on the Learner*, p. 248.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>E. F. O'Doherty, "Social Factors and Second Language Policies," in *Focus on the Learner*, p. 256.