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Thinking Allowed

Language learning motivation through a small lens: A research agenda

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In this paper I propose an agenda for researching language learning motivation 'through a small lens', to counteract our tendency in the second language (L2) motivation field to engage with language learning and teaching processes at a rather general level. I argue that by adopting a more sharply focused or contextualized angle of inquiry, we may be able to understand better how motivation connects with specific aspects of second language acquisition (SLA) or particular features of linguistic development. Keeping the empirical focus narrow may also lead to interesting and illuminating analyses of motivation in relation to particular classroom events or to evolving situated interactions among teachers and learners. I propose a number of possible research tasks that might be undertaken by experienced researchers, teacher-researchers or student-researchers wishing to investigate language learning motivation 'through a small lens'.

1. Introduction

In this paper I propose a research agenda for investigating language learning motivation through a more sharply focused lens than the empirical perspectives that have tended to prevail. To set the context for this agenda, I will begin by identifying three separate but broadly interrelated 'problems' in this field of research concerning (1) the limitations of motivation research in SLA, (2) the popularity of motivation as a student dissertation topic, and (3) the shortage of practitioner research on motivation.

1.1 The limitations of motivation research in SLA

In 2010 I published a paper (Ushioda 2010) in which I discussed the somewhat marginalized position of motivation research within the field of SLA. In general terms within this field, motivation is regarded as a prerequisite for successful language learning, as captured by Pit Corder's well-known statement dating back to the very early days of SLA research: 'given motivation, it is inevitable that a human being will learn a second language if he is exposed to the language data' (Corder 1967: 164). However, while motivation is widely recognized

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as a significant variable in successful language learning and a key factor that distinguishes first language acquisition from SLA processes, as Ellis (2008: 690) has remarked, 'the study of L2 motivation research continues to lie outside mainstream SLA'. This is despite the fact that, among individual difference characteristics in SLA, motivation research has steadily generated a very substantial body of theoretical and empirical literature for over 40 years (for recent state-of-the-art overviews, see Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011; Ushioda & Dörnyei 2012). As I discussed in my 2010 paper, a major reason why motivation research has remained somewhat isolated from the core linguistic traditions of the SLA field is because the analysis of motivation and its role in language learning has largely been at the level of global learning behaviours and L2 achievement outcomes, and motivation research has tended not to address more fine-grained processes of language acquisition or linguistic development. As a consequence, our research can shed relatively little light on how motivation may be relevant to internal processes of linguistic development or to the acquisition of specific features of the target language (with the possible exception of features of pronunciation – see, for example, Segalowitz, Gatbonton & Trofimovich 2009) – which constitute core concerns of mainstream SLA. In short, the value of investigating motivation may seem somewhat limited and tangential, of relevance only to those who, like myself and other motivation researchers, have a particular interest in this topic area.

1.2 The popularity of motivation as an M.A. dissertation topic

Moreover, among the academic community involved in graduate education in SLA, teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) or applied linguistics, I have sensed a general perception that the value of researching motivation as a student dissertation topic may seem particularly limited. The 2010 paper I cited earlier was based on a plenary talk I gave at the 19th EUROSLA Conference in Cork, Ireland (Ushioda 2009a). At this same conference, in the preamble to his plenary talk (Meara 2009), Paul Meara recounted how in the early days of his professional academic career, students often seemed to gravitate towards attitudes and motivation in SLA for their dissertation topic. As he commented, this topic usually led to rather boring and predictable studies, which prompted him to promote vocabulary acquisition instead as a more worthwhile area of investigation for his students. While I have clearly stuck to promoting motivation research with my students, I share Meara's critical assessment that, by and large, M.A.-level studies of L2 motivation can often be rather dull, at least from the dissertation supervisor's perspective. Yet at the same time, this dissertation topic seems to enjoy an enduring popularity among students following M.A. courses in our field.

Aside from any personal or professional interest they may have in issues of motivation, I think that what appeals to these novice researchers about the topic is that it almost automatically sets up the research design for them – i.e. develop (or adapt) a motivation questionnaire, collect and analyse the data, produce a descriptive summary of motivation patterns in one's sample, and possibly examine statistical relationships between motivational and other variables. This is the prototypical motivation study at M.A. level, with minor variations such as building in a comparative dimension (e.g. between English major and non-major students), or integrating some qualitative interviews with learners or teachers for

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purposes of data triangulation. Within the limited scope of an M.A. dissertation (in British universities usually taking 4–5 months and written up in around 15,000 words), this typical motivation study, if reasonably well executed and reported, is perfectly adequate. Moreover, from the student's point of view it has the recognizable stamp of what research should look like – i.e. invariably associated with gathering a respectable amount of data, which a questionnaire can achieve. Yet the fact remains that these survey-type studies of motivation at M.A. level can often be fairly bland and superficial, lack a tight focus or deep engagement with a research issue, and offer few interesting insights.

1.3 The shortage of teacher research on motivation

The third problem in relation to L2 motivation research that I would like to highlight concerns the general scarcity of published work reporting on classroom-based practitioner-led investigations in this area. Throughout the history of L2 motivation research to date, most empirical studies have been conducted by researchers who are external to the classroom settings, learners and teachers under focus. In the majority of such studies, moreover, classroom settings are often characterized in rather general terms only, such as cultural and educational context, type of institution and curriculum, or students' level of L2 proficiency. Far fewer studies of L2 motivation have been grounded in specific local contexts of practice, focusing on the needs and experiences of particular learners and teachers in particular classrooms. In short, actual classroom-based studies of L2 motivation remain in short supply, while even more scarce are those shaped by teachers' own pedagogically oriented research inquiry (for notable examples of teacher research on motivation, see Li 2006; Banegas 2013).

As I have discussed elsewhere (Ushioda 2013a), one reason for this lack of teacher-led research may be because gathering self-report data on motivation in one's own classroom could be perceived to be unreliable. After all, students may refrain from voicing their true feelings and opinions to their teacher (as opposed to an external researcher), whether out of respect for the teacher or for fear of evaluative consequences. Teachers may also feel unsure if the methods they use to investigate motivation in their classrooms (e.g. through repeated questionnaires) may in turn affect their students' motivation, thereby raising concerns about data validity or contamination.

This general lack of pedagogically oriented research on motivation grounded in specific contexts of practice means that we have limited understanding of how processes of motivation evolve through day-to-day interactions and events in the classroom, and of how teachers can work responsively and adaptively to shape these interactions and events in motivationally constructive ways.

2. Towards a sharper empirical focus and a research agenda

To summarize thus far, I have outlined three separate but broadly interrelated 'problems' in L2 motivation research. A common thread running through them is the desirability of a more sharply focused or contextualized angle of inquiry, which is the core theme that

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I wish to develop in the research agenda proposed here. By examining language learning motivation 'through a small lens', we may be able to understand more clearly how motivation connects with specific aspects of SLA or specific features of linguistic development. Keeping the research focus narrow may also lead to interesting and illuminating small-scale studies of motivation in relation to specific learning events and experiences, and to locally grounded evidence-based analyses of how teachers work with and enhance their students' motivation.

In the sections to follow, I will elaborate on some ideas for examining language learning motivation 'through a small lens', and propose some specific research tasks that might be undertaken by motivation researchers, student-researchers or teacher-researchers.

3. Motivation and language learning processes

As I have noted already, motivation research in SLA has tended to concern itself with language learning processes at a fairly general level of observable or measurable learner behaviours, such as amount of time spent on a task, or degree of persistence in or withdrawal from learning. What remains relatively underexplored is the micro-level of the interface between motivation and the internal psycholinguistic processes that characterize language learning.

3.1 Motivation, noticing and attention

One area where a sharply focused analytical lens may be illuminating is the theoretical interface between motivation and the cognitive processes of NOTICING and ATTENTION considered important in language learning. Dating back to the work of Schmidt & Frota (1986), research on noticing and attention in SLA has led to a body of experimental studies on visual input enhancement techniques for directing learners' attention to particular target features in a text, such as the use of underlining, capitalization or bold font, in order to prompt noticing and uptake (for a review, see Simard 2009). An interesting question is how far motivation may play a role in whether learners notice and pay attention to certain target features of the language or not, particularly in conditions where input enhancement is not provided. This potential connection between motivation and attention was originally highlighted by Crookes & Schmidt (1991), but the amount of theoretical analysis and research to date has been very limited. This is in contrast to the well-established programme of research that has investigated associations between other individual difference factors (such as aptitude or working memory) and processes of attention and awareness in SLA (e.g. Robinson 1997, 2002).

Some research evidence for a specific link between motivation and the target L2 features that are noticed is provided by Takahashi (2005), who investigated how motivation affects language learners' attention and awareness when processing PRAGMALINGUISTIC FEATURES in implicit (rather than enhanced) input conditions. The target features comprised request strategies in English, including complex bi-clausal request forms (e.g. *I was wondering if you could VP* . . .) and idiomatic expressions. Participants (Japanese English as a foreign language (EFL) university students) who were classified as strongly intrinsically motivated

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to learn English were found to be particularly attentive to these complex forms and idiomatic expressions, irrespective of their levels of proficiency. This finding suggests that intrinsic motivation in developing target language skills may help direct learners' attention to pragmalinguistic features perceived to be important for communication. Further replication studies would clearly be useful to examine the association between intrinsic motivation and pragmatic awareness in relation to different learner groups, levels of proficiency and target languages.

Research task 1
For different learner groups, levels of proficiency and/or target languages, replicate Takahashi's (2005) study to examine the role of intrinsic motivation in learners' noticing of pragmalinguistic features in implicit input conditions.

At the same time, one could speculate that the target language features which learners will be motivated to notice may partly depend on the nature of their personal motivation. In this connection, I am reminded of the well-known experimental study by Newsome (1986) that examined the influence of motivational perspective on text recall. In this study, subjects who read a story featuring a house from the assigned motivational perspective of potential burglars performed better in information recall and recognition tasks than subjects who were not assigned such a perspective. Thus, while for some learners the motivation to attend to pragmalinguistic features of L2 input may be particularly strong, for others the nature of their motivation may perhaps direct their attentional focus to other features of L2 input (e.g. see Ehrman 1996 for empirical findings pointing to a relationship between intrinsic motivation and grammatical sensitivity). By sharpening the empirical lens on particular target L2 features and examining associations with motivation, we may potentially gain understanding of how motivation impacts on language learners' attentional focus and resources and on their cognitive ENGAGEMENT WITH LANGUAGE (Svalberg 2009, 2012).

Research task 2
Adapt Takahashi's study to explore the role of motivation in learners' noticing of specific target language features in implicit input conditions.

Takahashi's study sought to address two research questions – (1) whether Japanese EFL learners notice bi-clausal request forms more than other pragmalinguistic features in request discourse in implicit input conditions, and (2) whether relationships exist between learners' noticing of target pragmalinguistic features and their motivation and proficiency. It is the second of these questions and its associated research design that I propose could be adapted to focus on other target features such as lexico-grammatical features, syntactic structures, or features of phonology and prosody. The aim would be to explore whether there are certain kinds of motivation that may orient L2 learners to pay attention to particular linguistic (or semantic) features in implicit input conditions. Such research would help shed light on how

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processes of motivation may contribute to the acquisition of specific features of the target language, and how differences in motivation may contribute to different patterns of linguistic and communicative competence among learners. Following Takahashi's research design, one would administer measures of motivation and L2 proficiency and develop appropriate L2 input materials for the targeted features, and then adapt her awareness retrospection questionnaire to gauge to what extent participants notice the features under focus. While Takahashi chose to adopt a motivation questionnaire originally developed by Schmidt, Boraie & Kassabgy in 1996, one might conceivably wish to update this instrument by incorporating currently prevailing concepts of future possible selves and identity goals (e.g. Dörnyei 2009a; Dörnyei & Ushioda 2009; Murray, Gao & Lamb 2011) to explore their potential associations with learners' attentional focus and resources. For example, one might speculate that learners who are strongly motivated by future self-images as fluent L2 speakers may be oriented to notice the range of discourse markers used by fluent communicators to manage the flow of speech.

3.2 Motivation and metacognition

Another area that would benefit from sharply focused analysis is the interface between motivation and METACOGNITION. As I have discussed elsewhere (Ushioda 2014a), while intrinsic and other internalized forms of motivation (such as personally valued goals or ideal self aspirations) are important in directing and sustaining engagement in L2 learning, a strong personal desire to learn may not be a sufficient form of motivation in itself when cognitive and linguistic demands increase. Learners need motivation not only to set goals, apply effort, practise skills or keep focused, but also to coordinate strategic thinking processes for SELF-REGULATING their learning and, in particular, for dealing with learning challenges and difficulties they face. In the literature on self-regulated learning, the relevant catchphrase here is 'will and skill' (McCombs & Marzano 1990), where 'will' refers to the willingness or motivation needed to exercise the metacognitive 'skill' of coordinating strategic thinking processes to regulate complex learning. As Bronson (2000: 55) has commented, self-regulation can happen only if the ability to control strategic thinking processes is underpinned by the motivation to do so.

Broadly speaking, the integration of will and skill has attracted some research interest in the L2 motivation field over the years. However, much of this research has been concerned with measuring predictive relationships between motivation and strategy use (e.g. MacIntyre & Noels 1996; Schmidt & Watanabe 2001). Relatively little attention has been directed towards examining how the motivation to control strategic thinking develops, and how teachers can scaffold and support this process in their interactions with learners. Clearly, this would call for research in a VYGOTSKIAN SOCIOCULTURAL FRAMEWORK (Vygotsky 1978), where the analytical focus is on the development or MICROGENESIS of individual thinking (and, by extension, of motivation to control this thinking) in relation to a specific problem or obstacle in one's learning. According to sociocultural theory, this process of developing and internalizing strategic control of thinking is socially mediated, shaped through the problem-focused interactions between teacher and learner or between learners working collaboratively

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on a task. While much research has focused on how such dialogic interactions may scaffold individual LEARNING, very little attention has focused on how individual MOTIVATION to regulate strategic thinking is scaffolded and internalized through talk.

Research task 3
Investigate how teachers motivate learners to think through problems and difficulties in their learning.

One way of approaching this task would be to record teacher–learner interactions around cognitive or linguistic difficulties, such as when a learner is struggling to understand a text or when the teacher is giving feedback on some writing. The recorded data might then be analysed for structural and discoursal features (e.g. question types, turn-taking patterns, length of turns) to examine how motivation to think strategically is scaffolded by the teacher. Analysis of the recordings might then be triangulated with stimulated recall interviews (a) with learners to explore their perspectives on these interactions in terms of motivation and metacognitive insights; and (b) with the teacher to clarify the pedagogical thinking shaping these interactions.

Clearly, this is an area where teachers are ideally positioned to undertake their own investigations as teacher-researchers exploring how best to motivate their learners to develop and apply problem-focused metacognitive skills. A variation of Research task 3 might thus involve classroom experimentation by the teacher, perhaps in the form of ACTION RESEARCH (e.g. Burns 2010), to plan and structure the pedagogical dialogue with learners in various ways and then to evaluate this process. Teachers might experiment by trying, for example, different questioning techniques or different forms of verbal encouragement, including 'relinquishing strategies' (Diaz, Neal & Amaya-Williams 1990: 151) through which they gradually relinquish control of the dialogue to the learners and motivate them to talk and think through the problem for themselves (for detailed discussion, see Ushioda 2014b). Of interest here may be whether the pedagogical dialogue needs to be tailored in different ways for different learners, depending on the quality of their motivation and their current metacognitive abilities.

Research task 4
Experiment with different verbal approaches to encouraging learners to think through problems and difficulties in their learning.

Similar to Research task 3, the above task would involve analysis of recorded teacher–learner interactions and the gathering of learner perspectives, but would also incorporate systematic planning, implementation and evaluative processes by the teacher.

Of course, it is not only the teacher who may play an instrumental role in scaffolding learners' motivation to think strategically. As a socially mediated process (Ushioda 2003), motivation may well evolve (in positive or negative ways) through interactions among learners themselves as they work together on a task. While there is a substantial body of research

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focusing on how language learners co-construct KNOWLEDGE in collaborative tasks, very little research has focused on how they co-construct MOTIVATION (though see Dörnyei & Tseng 2009; also Kormos & Dörnyei 2004), particularly in relation to applying metacognitive effort during complex and challenging language tasks.

Research task 5
Investigate how learners co-construct their motivation to think through problems and difficulties in collaborative language tasks

Learners will bring various individual motivations and attitudes to collaborative task engagement. These motivations and attitudes may relate to the nature of the task itself, the general level of their motivation for L2 learning, as well as social relations and friendship patterns with group members. These underlying individual processes of motivation might be elicited before the task through individual interviews or questionnaires. Using a video-recording and detailed transcript of learner–learner interactions, we may then examine how motivation evolves individually and collectively during task engagement by analysing how processes of motivation are expressed (verbally and non-verbally) and constructed as learners work together, and how such processes of motivation shape (and are shaped by) their efforts to co-regulate their strategic thinking. Subsequently, stimulated recall interviews with individual learners may yield insights into their perceptions of how motivation to think strategically and apply metacognitive effort was felt to evolve during task engagement. Of particular interest here will be the perceptions of learners who experience positive (or negative) changes in their motivation to think through task-related problems and challenges during their interactions with peers. By integrating analysis of learner perceptions with analysis of the recorded interactions, we may arrive at a useful understanding of how far learners can jointly develop the motivational resources to think through problems in their learning (instead of losing interest or giving up easily) when working collaboratively on challenging language tasks.

3.3 Motivation and specific classroom events

While task-related difficulties and challenges represent one set of classroom events where motivation may be implicated, one can readily imagine many other kinds of events during a language lesson that may affect and be affected by individual and social processes of motivation. Such events might include, for example, the introduction of a new learning activity or teaching resource, an unexpected interruption or oral contribution from a student, a heated exchange in a learner group, some off-task behaviour, or silence in response to a teacher question. In general terms, such events might be characterized as significant or CRITICAL EPISODES during a lesson, though defining what makes an episode 'critical' is of course not straightforward. Critical incident analysis has been an important tool of qualitative inquiry in teacher development (e.g. Tripp 1993) as well as in many other fields of practice across the social sciences such as nursing, social work, marketing, organizational learning, and intercultural communication (for an overview, see Butterfield et al. 2005).

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In relation to researching language learning motivation 'through a small lens', I believe that a focus on interesting or critical incidents (however defined) during a lesson may well generate valuable insights into processes of motivation in the classroom. In particular, focusing on a single incident in a lesson provides a tightly bound contextual framework for analysing how motivation evolves organically among 'persons-in-context' (Ushioda 2009b). Put simply, this would entail trying to understand why the persons involved behave in particular ways during the event under focus, and how their motivations contribute to shaping the way the event unfolds. While the critical incident constitutes the immediate context of analysis, the analysis itself is likely to have wider contextual perspectives, extending back to the shared history of previous interactions among the persons involved as well as forward to successive interactions and events during the lesson. It is thus conceivable that the analysis, though anchored in one specific classroom event, may yield interesting insights into how processes of motivation evolve cumulatively among teacher and learners in a particular classroom.

Research task 6
Investigate the motivations of teacher and learner participants during 'critical events' in a lesson.

As with the previous three research tasks, a multidimensional approach to the investigation is likely to be important, so that the perspectives of all those involved in experiencing or observing the classroom event under focus can be explored (for discussion of multidimensional approaches to researching motivation in context, see also Ushioda 2012). This might entail, for example, triangulating the researcher-observer's analysis of the event with retrospective analyses by the teacher and by the learners, including those directly involved in the event as well as some of those on the periphery. Of course, as I have already indicated, a key issue to decide is how to define and identify classroom events for analysis. The literature on critical incident analysis suggests that there are no straightforward criteria for determining what makes an incident 'critical' or significant, and that in many cases the criticality or significance of an event does not become apparent until much later (Butterfield et al. 2005). In the context of understanding motivation in the classroom, nevertheless, I think that one relatively simple approach may be to consider an event as potentially interesting or significant if it causes us to wonder why a particular learner (or group of learners) is behaving in a particular way. Clearly, the researcher-observer's perspective in this regard will be different from that of the teacher, since the latter will have richer experience-based knowledge of the learners in the classroom, and can more easily recognize behaviours that are typical or less typical of particular individuals. Accordingly, identifying classroom events as significant and worthy of analysis may best be a co-constructed enterprise between researcher and teacher, unless of course the teacher is also the researcher.

In this connection, I would like to suggest that focusing on critical events to explore learner motivation is especially well-suited to teacher research, since the research inquiry is locally grounded in one's own practice and experience and yet it is shaped by pedagogical principles (i.e. a desire to understand how motivation works in relation to a certain group of learners) which clearly have wider reach and value beyond the particular teacher and classroom under

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focus. Because the concern is to understand one's learners and how their motivation shapes and is shaped by specific events during a lesson, this form of research inquiry most likely falls within the framework of EXPLORATORY PRACTICE (EP) rather than action research (since the latter tends to be more explicitly intervention-focused). Understanding the classroom with a view to enhancing the quality of life for all its participants is a key feature of EP (see Allwright 2003).

In addition, an important EP principle is that there should be complete congruence between pedagogical and research tools. This means that the methods we use to understand motivation in the classroom should serve pedagogical as well as research purposes, and that these methods should be coherent with our normal classroom practice instead of seeming like an intrusion or imposition on teaching–learning processes. For example, the teacher might invite learners to talk or write about their motivation, raise their awareness of factors or events that negatively affect their motivation (or the teacher's motivation), or share insights with other learners in relation to experiences of motivation or demotivation. Learners might even be involved in the process of identifying 'critical' events in a particular lesson where issues of motivation have surfaced, and work with the teacher and their peers to understand what happened and why. Indeed, this kind of direct involvement of language learners in the collective enterprise of EP has recently become central to EP thinking (see Allwright & Hanks 2009). Such an integrated approach to teaching, learning and researching would seem to go some way towards alleviating the concerns (discussed earlier) about data reliability and validity when teachers research learner motivation in their own classrooms.

Research task 7
Working with your learners, identify and analyse critical events in a lesson where issues of motivation have surfaced.

If this particular research task is carried out over a number of critical events, lessons or classroom groups, it is conceivable that it will yield interesting insights into motivation-related patterns of classroom events that are generic across contexts of practice for a particular teacher, as well as insights into highly context-specific processes of motivation. Either way, it is likely that both teacher and learners will develop useful understanding of how their motivation shapes and is shaped by particular classroom events, and how, in light of this understanding, their motivation might be better regulated or enhanced. The more we can develop and disseminate richly grounded locally based understandings of this kind, the more insight we can gain into the workings of motivation in the complex social environment of the language classroom.

4. Concluding remarks

In this paper I have proposed an agenda for researching language learning motivation 'through a small lens' to counteract our tendency in the L2 motivation field to concern

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ourselves with language learning and teaching at a rather general level only. Dating back to the pioneering work of Gardner & Lambert (1972), much L2 motivation research has been concerned with investigating what goals or reasons people have for learning languages, how far they persist in learning, and how successful they are (as reflected in end-of-course grades or general L2 proficiency measures). As I have argued, this tendency to adopt a fairly broad perspective on L2 learning has meant that our research has had relatively little to say about how motivation interacts with the specific cognitive, metacognitive and psycholinguistic processes of language learning, or with the acquisition of particular features of the target language. Such interactions are of significant theoretical interest, particularly in the current context of COMPLEX DYNAMICS SYSTEMS approaches to SLA in general (e.g. de Bot, Lowrie & Verspoor 2007) and to L2 motivation in particular (Dörnyei, MacIntyre & Henry 2015). These approaches highlight evolving interactions among multiple elements within a system. As Dörnyei (2009b) has described, we might conceptualize the language learner as a complex system comprising a dynamic constellation of cognitive, affective, motivational and behavioural characteristics which are in constant interaction with one another. Yet we currently have limited understanding of how motivation may interact with one or more of these other learner-internal characteristics. Until we can develop and refine our theoretical insights at this micro-level of learner-internal processes, motivation research may well continue to remain outside the core concerns of SLA.

Moreover, in relation to the pedagogically oriented concerns of this particular journal forum, motivation research may well continue to offer only fairly general insights and principles for the field of language teaching. Despite the shift from social-psychological approaches towards what Dörnyei (2001) has described as more classroom-focused 'cognitive-situated' analyses of L2 motivation through the 1990s, our focus has tended to remain on general principles (such as types of learner motivation or motivational strategies), and much less on motivational phenomena in particular classrooms in relation to particular teachers and learners. Yet, as I have written elsewhere (Ushioda 2013a: 236), 'it is at this very localised level of students' learning experience that the real potential for engaging (or disengaging) their motivation may lie'. In my view, L2 motivation research is an area that would benefit greatly from a richer and sharper focus on the local and particular rather than the general. At the same time, these locally situated understandings of how motivation works in particular social learning environments can clearly have much wider resonance and contribute to informing theory and practice at a broader level.

Importantly, the research tasks I have proposed for investigating motivation 'through a small lens' offer a range of possibilities in terms of focus, design and scope, and offer a range of possibilities in terms of who might conduct these tasks – whether experienced researchers, teacher-researchers (perhaps in collaboration with their learners), or student-researchers. In this connection, a concern raised by two commentators on an earlier version of this paper is that even good quality small-scale classroom research undertaken by teachers or by student-researchers is unlikely to get published and reach a wider audience. While I share their concern (which of course applies not just to research on motivation), I think that this journal's RESEARCH AGENDA strand is designed precisely to signal where future research contributions

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are needed and where, by implication, the possibilities for publishing and disseminating one's research are likely to grow.

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