



## Motivational currents in language learning: Frameworks for focused interventions

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**Motivational currents in language learning: Frameworks for focused interventions**, by Zoltán Dörnyei, Alastair Henry, and Christine Muir, New York, Routledge, 2016, 204 pp., £33 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-138-77732-3

Second language (L2) motivation research has undergone a more than 50-year journey and is now in a new era with the conceptualisation of Directed Motivational Current (DMC, plural form DMCs). A DMC is a phenomenon in which a person, who has a clear vision/personal goal, acquires and maintains intense long-term motivation to keep them working in a special field, such as L2 learning. Learners are likely to experience DMC when their sub-goals, which are directed towards the final goals, remain relevant and accessible in their minds. Once a DMC is launched, positive progress feedback provides learners with energy to attain their goals. Theoretically, as the authors explain, an individual DMC can also be extended to apply to a group DMC.

The concept of DMCs is based on psychological theories such as flow theory, time perspective, contingent path theory and so on, but differs from classical theories by uniting motivation and its subsequent behaviours over a long-term period. It was initially introduced by Zoltán Dörnyei in the 2012 TESOL Conference (xvii) and in the following years, a growing body of research literature has contributed to this new motivational construct, now brought together in *Motivational Currents in Language Learning: Frameworks for Focused Intervention*. This book consists of nine chapters. The first seven chapters focus on theoretical underpinning and the unique structure of individual DMCs, while the last two chapters report on research on its practical values in group DMCs in language classrooms.

The book opens with the origin, main structure and definition of DMC theory, followed by three language-learning stories as illustration. The second chapter presents three major psychological theories – time perspective, contingent path theory, and the study of velocity in goal pursuit – and their contributions to DMC theory. ‘Directed’ is the key word in DMCs, and Chapter Three is focused on the ‘directed’ aspect of DMCs with the emphasis on three goal-related constructs; vision, self-concordant goal and proximal subgoal. The authors explain that visions in DMCs are the images containing various scenarios and the emotional climate in which these images are depicted. A self-concordant goal is closely linked to the learner’s long-term passions and interests, key beliefs and values. A proximal subgoal is based on the learner’s learning capacities and other learning conditions. The three interdependent goal-related components work together to support the learner’s continuing motivation.

The next two chapters depict the launch and pathway of a DMC. The authors describe how the primary conditions of a DMC launching consist of a clear series of goals, a sense of ownership and control, perceived balance of challenges and skills, an openness to the DMC experiences, and general motivational conditions in the classroom. A triggering stimulus, such as initial failure in L2 learning, is necessary to launch a DMC because it can reinforce the construction of clear goals that encourage learners to invest more in L2 learning. Once DMCs are launched, the learners may run through routines where motivational behaviours can be initiated, executed, and then become auto-processed without any ‘volitional control’ from the learners (83). Three components – subgoals, progress checks and affirmative feedback – play roles in maintaining the flow of the DMC. Learners’ perception of progress generate a sense of achievement and a sense of satisfaction, which increases motivation for further flow. Similarly, affirmative feedback generates further motivational power. These building blocks become key elements of the DMC structure and contribute to an effective and efficient DMC experience.

The sixth chapter discusses the positive emotional loading that can accompany learners’ DMC experience. The authors elaborate on the sources of joy and well-being which are associated with

eudaimonia, a sense of contentment acquired through actualising one's potential and pursuing personal excellence. Chapter Seven portrays features in the closing stage when the DMC begins to wane and gradually closes. The authors not only introduce the emotional features, such as negative emotion and tiredness at the end of a DMC, but also highlight the importance of sufficient support with regard to helping learners set new goals and build new vision for a new round of DMC.

Chapters Eight and Nine are designed to specify how the key principles of individual DMCs can be applied to study group DMCs. Chapter Eight first discusses the practical values of DMCs in language classrooms before making a distinction between individual DMCs and group DMCs. Chapter Nine demonstrates how project-based programmes can be utilised to stimulate group DMCs by offering various scaffolding frameworks. Finally seven frameworks are illustrated in detail to facilitate DMCs in L2 classroom.

When commenting on the book, I would like to place my attention on the theory itself and the writing style of the book. DMC theory was born in the 'social dynamic turn' (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011), and makes a breakthrough in the field of language learning motivation, and takes a complex dynamic system perspective to unify the intense surge of learning and subsequent behaviours. The authors argue that this long-term, sustained motivation drives L2 learners to aim for a clear personal goal, empowers them override various distracting influences, and supports them in achieving something remarkable.

The last point is that this book is reader-friendly. DMC is a newly-constructed theory that is highly complex, but the authors employ plenty of well-chosen examples to illustrate their concepts and points. For instance, in the beginning, they provide the readers with three lively stories of learners' DMCs in their English learning; DMCs theory and examples in the book are well matched, and the authors clearly explain the application of DMCs either to individual or group English learning. In line with the subtitle, *Frameworks for Focused Intervention*, the authors provide some basic strategic models, such as 'All Eyes on the Final Product', 'Step by Step', 'The BIG Issue', 'That's Me!', 'Detective Work' and 'Story Sequels'.

All in all, this book is a valuable resource to motivation researchers, teacher educators as well as language teachers due to its theoretical and practical significance in generating and maintaining motivational momentum.

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