Towards understanding the relations between temporal orientations and L2 motivation

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Every individual has a unique perception of time known as temporal orientation (e.g., Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999; Mello & Worrell, 2015). Recent research suggests that some people are more oriented towards the past, while others are more focused on the present moment or future goals and expectations. A person’s perspective and attitude towards time can have a profound effect on their behaviour and motivation (Pavleková & Havlíčková, 2013). This is most likely also true in the case of SLA considering the complexity of L2 learner motivation (e.g. Dörnyei, 2011). Based on Dörnyei’s (2005) L2 Motivational Self System model of motivation, there are three main sources of motivation to learn a foreign language: ideal and ought-to L2 selves and L2 learning experience. Given the strongly future-oriented nature of the model which emphasises the role of future visions of the self, questions arise as to the potential role of temporal orientations in relation to learners’ ability to envisage language-related selves.

However, to the best of my knowledge, there has not been any research to date examining explicitly the temporal orientations of foreign language learners. Given the effect the temporal orientations may have on how learners respond to present and interpret past learning experiences, set language learning goals and are motivated, it is crucially important to bring this concept into understanding of language learner psychology, especially in regard to discussions of language learner motivation.

This paper aims at outlining preliminary results of a PhD study intended to explore the motivation model’s applicability in a Croatian context and examining the potential role played by learners’ personal temporal orientations. Employing mixed-method research design informed by complexity perspectives, it is hoped to be able to provide an integrated understanding of the potentially dynamic interrelations between aspects of the motivation model and adolescent language learners’ temporal orientations.

Keywords: "temporal orientations", "L2 motivation".