

# Language Learning, Drives, and Context: A Grounded Theory of Learning Behavior

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**Abstract**—This paper presents the Language Learning as a Means of Drive Engagement (LLMDE) theory, derived from a grounded theory analysis of interviews with Japanese university students. According to LLMDE theory, language learning can be understood as a means of engaging one or more of four self-fulfillment drives: the drive to expand one's horizons (perspective drive); the drive to make a success of oneself (status drive); the drive to engage in interaction with others (communication drive); and the drive to obtain intellectual and affective stimulation (entertainment drive). While many theories of learner psychology focus on conscious agency, LLMDE theory addresses the role of the unconscious. In addition, supplementary thematic analysis of the data revealed the role of context in mediating drive engagement. Unexpected memorable events, for example, play a key role in instigating and, indirectly, in regulating learning, as do institutional and cultural contexts. Given the apparent importance of such factors beyond the immediate control of the learner, and given the pervasive role of habit and drives, it is argued that the concept of motivation merits theoretical reappraisal. Rather than an underlying force determining language learning success or failure, it can be understood to emerge sporadically in consciousness to promote behavioral change, or to protect habitual behavior from disruption.

**Keywords**—Drives, grounded theory, motivation, significant events.

## I. INTRODUCTION

THIS research is positioned within the language learning motivation field. Until recently, conventional approaches to researching motivation sought to produce or verify a statistically derived model of motivation [1]-[8], produced on the understanding that by surveying of hundreds of participants and removing individual idiosyncrasies through standardized questionnaires, general principles true of the *average* learner could be identified. It is no criticism of the psychometric method to point out that a given construct may offer only partial explanation of any given individual's motivation, since one cannot extrapolate from a population to the individual. Nonetheless, this focus on general principles led researchers working with qualitative methodologies to turn their attention to individual language learners (or small groups of individuals) to obtain a more detailed understanding of language learning [9]-[14]. The research presented here is a part of this qualitative tradition in that it draws on the rich idiosyncrasies of the individual learning experience. But it differs somewhat from previous approaches in producing a general model which, it is argued, satisfactorily accounts for the learning behavior of this group of learners, while serving as a general, hypothetical model available to testing psychometrically.

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Grounded theory studies traditionally present a comparison with the literature until after the analysis section, but since this research originates in the motivation field and ends up some way away from it, a brief introduction to this rich and elusive concept is presented at the outset. The following dictionary definitions of motivation found in the Merriam Webster dictionary are representative of how the concept tends to be understood differently by theorists and the layperson:

1. The (conscious or unconscious) stimulus for action towards a desired goal, esp. as resulting from psychological or social factors; the factors giving purpose or direction to human or animal behavior.
2. Intellectual justification, rationale.

The first is representative of its use in psychology; the second is typical of how motivation is talked about and understood: If one asks a student about her motivation, for example, the response is less likely to be an objective analysis of the cognitive or environmental basis of her behavior than a post-hoc rationale for it.

Within the language learning literature motivation has been theorized according to the results of individual research projects project. Gardner and Tremblay [15] describe motivation as a latent variable comprised of the lower-level elements *motivational intensity*, *desire to learn a language*, and *attitudes to the language*, while Dörnyei and Ottó [3, p.65] define it as:

“...the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalized and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out.”

In other words, motivation is a force underlying behavior. But where does this force originate? Building on work on possible selves theories [16], [17]; Dörnyei [18] proposes that motivation was the link between cognition and behavior, a consequence of the psychological need to reduce discrepancy between the actual self and the imagined *ideal self* one would like to become. Ushioda [11], by contrast, views motivation at least in part as socially mediated. It is, she writes, “emergent from relations between real persons, with particular social identities, and the unfolding cultural context of activity” (p. 215). Finally, it is worth bearing in mind Dörnyei's [19] playful suggestion that “...there is no such thing as motivation. [It is]...an abstract, hypothetical concept...that we use to explain why people think and behave as they do” (p.1). This is in fact a fair point of departure for exploratory research, since it is free from the theoretical and methodological baggage that the

grounded theorist is encouraged, as far as is possible, to avoid [20]—similarities and convergences with the literature can, in any case, be established later. This line of thought can be understood as a counsel of perfection, difficult to follow in practice. Nonetheless, it is the case that this research was not conducted under the typical assumption that motivation is responsible for *why, how long, and how hard the learner engages in language learning* [21]; rather it was designed to investigate and any and all factors underlying learner behavior, and then subsequently to consider the role of conscious motivation typically associated with individual agency.

## II. METHODOLOGY

Grounded Theory was developed to release energies for theorizing frozen by an overemphasis on the verification of what Glaser and Strauss [20] referred to as the ‘great-man theories’ dominating departments of sociology in the mid-20th century. Grounded theory seeks to create a conceptual framework through the inductive analysis from data [20, p. 187]. Data collection is systematically focused and sequential, using sizable initial samples. Preliminary analysis informs further data collection, blurring the traditional distinction between data collection and analysis. Done well, the analytic categories produced are said to be ‘grounded’ in the data. The method favors fresh categories over preconceived ideas and extant theories. The idea that anyone can generate theory has been skeptically received [22], [23], on the grounds that many studies that claim to be grounded theories present a less-than-rigorous thematic analysis with little or no accompanying theory. The purpose and process of grounded theory is contrasted with a conventional approach in Fig. 1.

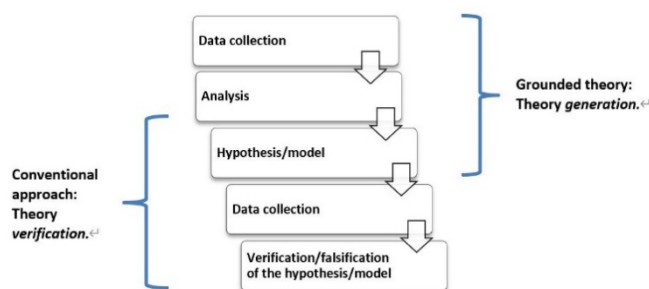


Fig. 1 Grounded theory vs. conventional approaches

Research of value, whether quantitative or qualitative, must be relevant to other situations and contexts. The generalizability of a qualitative analysis can be analogized to the conclusions drawn by a hypothetical mechanic who takes apart a car meticulously, puts it together again, all the while taking notes, and using these notes to write a detailed report on the workings of the car. In reading his report we can expect to learn something useful not only about the car in question, but about cars in general, because cars share common features. In a similar way, the theory presented here is based on the examination of learners who, while being unique individuals, are not *uniquely human*. The fact that the external validity of a qualitative study cannot be given a numerical quantifier does

not mean that validity is absent. Rather than statistical and procedural criteria, the research quality is judged by the originality of its contribution, its relevance and usefulness to potential readers’ own contexts, and the lucidity of its presentation [24]. In addition, and vitally, the presentation of the theory must be supported by ample evidence from the data. Space constraints do not permit such support in a published paper, and therefore the reader is referred to the original doctoral study for a fuller justification [25]. Grounded theory studies of admirable quality have been conducted with applied linguistics [26], [27], and on aspects of learner behavior directly relevant to motivation [28]-[31], but to the author’s knowledge his is the first attempt to produce a concrete theory of motivated behavior.

The purpose of the research was to examine how participants’ engagement in language learning could be explained. Upon completion of the analysis, the intent was to examine how concepts such as motivation, the significant event, and participant beliefs help to explain participants’ engagement in language learning considering the results.

## III. PROCEDURE

Participants were recruited opportunistically, as it was determined that all students at the university in question had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched [32]. Interviews were conducted with 10 students, five of whom completed three interviews over a period of two years. The data from these fifteen interviews was used for the analysis. Pseudonyms, gender, and ages of the participants were as follows: Koichi (M) 22; Daisuke (M) 24; Ryota (M) 19; Manami (F) 20; Nana (F) 22.

The aim of the first interview was to explore aspects of the participant’s language learning history including, but not limited to, memorable learning-related experiences, reasons/rationale for studying English, and views about language learning in Japan. A representative sample of topics covered, and questions asked, is given in Table I.

TABLE I  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Topic	Representative questions
Learning history	Tell me the story of your English learning, starting from the beginning.
Memorable language learning-related experiences	Tell me about your English classes in school
Reasons/rationales for studying English	What have been some important influences on your English learning?
Feelings towards and/or conception of English	Why do you study English?
	What is English for you?

The focus of subsequent interviews was guided by the ongoing analysis. The original intention was to study how the motivation of the participation changed over time of the research project. However, it became clear that the keys to understanding their motivations tended to lay in events that happened many years previous, typically during early adolescence, and that the interview time would be most effectively spent in investigating in greater detail how the

memories of these events had been incorporated by participants into a rationale for language study. After noting any relevant developments in the participants' learning occurring since the previous interview, the second and third interviews therefore used progressive focusing [33] to revisit areas that the analysis of the transcripts of prior interviews suggested were of particular importance.

Interviews were conducted in English and transcribed using conventional orthographic representation. The transcripts were subjected to a grounded-theory analysis. This involved *coding* the text through paraphrasing and commentary, the identification of salient *concepts*, and *constant comparison* (comparing, for example, the rationale or experience of participant A to that of participant B, participant A's testimony in interview 1 to that of interview 3, or testimony relating to the present time to that concerning learning in the past). As the categories of the LLMDE theory took shape, supporting examples from the data were collected until *theoretical saturation* was achieved. Theoretical saturation describes a situation in which subsequent comparison of aspects of the data merely add support to a given category rather than modifying it. A stage was eventually reached at which the categories were determined to constitute a working *theory*—a feasible explanation of language learning, “couched in a form that others going into the same field could use” [20] (p. 113).

#### IV. LLMDE THEORY

LLMDE theory states that learning a language is a way to engage four fundamental, unconscious drives. *Perspective drive* is the drive to broaden perspective by accruing knowledge and experience of the world—in layman's terms, to ‘broaden one's horizons.’ *Entertainment drive* is the drive to be intellectually or emotionally stimulated, or to have fun; *Status drive* is the drive to accrue recognition and respect as a responsible member of a community or society for one's abilities, experiences and achievements. It is the drive to make a success of oneself in the eyes of others [34]; *Communication drive* is the drive to engage in communicative human interaction. Language learning behavior can be viewed as one of numerous streams of behavior directed toward the engagement of one or more of these drives. The entertainment drive was found to be of significance primarily for childhood learning and is therefore omitted from the discussion of the results presented here.

Drives are traditionally understood to be unconscious psychological or physiological states of agitation that an organism is motivated, moved, to dissipate [35]. In the case of a simple physiological drive such as hunger, one satisfies, for a while, the drive by eating. In the case of more exclusively human drives, the situation is more complicated. For example, it may be the case that broadening one's perspective a little might serve only to intensify the saliency of the drive. In the following section each category of the model is introduced in turn, headed by a supportive sample from the data.

##### A. Perspective Drive

...English is...mmm...maybe if we can't acquire English

or speaking English maybe we can live {i.e. it is not the end of the world...}, but if you...want to have more and more range or sight, you should study another language...We can know a lot of things from other people...not other languages {per se}, but other people... (Manami, interview 3).<sup>2</sup>

Perspective drive is the drive to accrue knowledge and experiences of foreign people, contexts, and cultures. The way in which perspective drive draws participants to engage with difference resonates with Zotzmann's [36] description of how intercultural learning occurs through a similar engagement with difference:

“...at the boundaries between what one knows and has been taken for granted and the unknown: the experiences not yet lived, the perspectives not yet understood, as well as the discourses and other semiotic resources not yet encountered or appropriated...to rediscover the previously ‘known’ from a different and hitherto ‘unknown’ perspective” (pp.177-8).

All participants expressed the view that language ability is a tool that opens up a wider world of knowledge and experience to the learner.

##### B. Entertainment Drive

The concept of perspective drive proved to be too mature a category to account for the accounts participants gave of their language studies pre-adolescence—several of the participants found learning English fun long before developing any more mature ideas of using it to broaden their horizons. Testimony that ascribes English learning to curiosity or enjoyment can therefore be understood to show participants engaging a broader entertainment drive—the desire to seek self-fulfillment through novelty seeking, entertainment, and fun. The entertainment drive is not simply an antecedent of the perspective drive—it can be identified in testimony about present-day English activities. This category was, however, of least utility in explaining the contemporary language learning behavior of these young adult learners.

##### C. Status Drive

“Like my father, I actually enjoy talking with people from different countries.

[Why is that, do you think?]

This part is difficult I don't have the vocabulary to explain it...I don't think this is the best way...that I'm special...<yuunou>{able, capable}? Something like positive I feel superior than other people, you know, communicating in English...not everybody can do so naturally...when I do this I feel that I'm good at it that I'm different, I mean better than other people. I feel pride, the long-nosed thing—braggart. I think that's the reason...” (Daisuke, interview 3)

English ability is not only a way to learn about the world, but a yardstick against which to judge one's success, a validation of

<sup>2</sup>Braces indicate commentary or clarification of meaning; Chevrons indicate Japanese; and square brackets indicate utterances by the author/interviewer. Italics are used to show emphasis.

one's investment in the language, and an aspect of one's identity. Status drive is the drive to accrue, through learning a language, demonstrable ability, for this ability to be recognized by others, and to feel that one is worthy of respect, or deemed successful in the eyes of one's peers, parents or society. In other words, it is the motivation to make a success of oneself compared to others, and in the eyes of others. Like many symbolic resources, knowledges, or skills, language ability influences how one relates to, and is perceived and valued by others.

#### *D. Communication Drive*

"...so I thought—maybe I was really stupid at the time—I thought like maybe just going there I could speak English but you know it wasn't true I [had] to work really hard. I bought this reference book from the Japanese bookstore in Canada and then I studied at least six hours a day every single day, wanted to communicate. My biggest motivation was to communicate, yeah, at that time

[You *had* to communicate]

*I wanted, I really wanted to...*" (Natsuko, interview 1)

Engaging in interaction with others appears to be an end in and of itself for both female participants. A need for closeness, and to connect with people on an emotional level, appears to be an important aspect of communication drive.

#### V. INSTITUTIONS, CULTURE, AND SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

The desire for parsimony drove the grounded theory portion of the analysis. Faced with a rich data set, the analysis sought to address a broad issue—how language learning behavior can be explained—in as parsimonious a way as possible. While the LLMDE model provides a satisfactory general explanation of participant behavior, it is clear from the data that language learning is about more than just unconscious drives. Participants naturally understand and rationalize their behavior in terms of thoughts, understandings, decision-making, and circumstances. Theorists, too, use cognitive concepts such as attributions, goals, and self-discrepancy to explain human behavior, focusing on how mental structures, information-processing mechanisms and cognitive representations are implicated in action [22]. The principle of emergence is now commonly understood to explain higher-level order in the physical and social sciences. Put simply, the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Higher order structures emerge from lower order structures and in turn exert influence on those same lower order structures. Thus, even if we view consciousness as emergent from more fundamental processes such as drives, it can still play a vital mediating or controlling behavior.

In order to make the most of the significant portions of data not covered by the LLMDE theory, and in order to situate my results better within the field, a supplementary thematic analysis of the data investigated non-drive related influences on learning. Three salient categories—culture, institutions, and significant events—were identified, and their relationship with unconscious drives was theorized.

The relationship between LLMDE theory and institutions is relatively simple, and a brief overview will suffice. In short,

lessons in school are not fun, therefore providing few opportunities to engage the entertainment drive. Teachers approach language as a grammatical system rather than as something connected to life, culture and history, therefore there is little opportunity to engage the perspective drive. There is little time for genuine communicative practice, and consequently no engagement of the communication drive. Finally, status drive engagement is possible in the limited sense of performing better than one's peers in tests and, with age, associated with career prospects. For the five participants, compulsory English lessons did not provide an environment conducive to the engagement in language learning as a means of self-fulfillment—and the same might be broadly true for an EFL context such as Japan in general.

#### *A. Perspective Drive and Culture: Expanding One's Horizons as a Japanese*

"...in Japan in summertime if you wear a sweater, "What the fuck is he wearing—it's too hot." But in America, nobody cares about it, like, Japan is composed by one race, like, in Japan we are all Japanese, and our ancestors are also Japanese but in America the culture is a very mixed up from Australia, Japan, Africa, China so their way of thinking is very open and they don't care about, like, tiny things...

[How about when you speak to Chinese people or Taiwanese people compared with how you speak to English speakers, is it...how is it different?]

Like Australia is...heterogeneous county, Chinese Hong Kong is homogenous, so I don't know, but I have kind of the same feeling as them, so I don't think I have a barrier that prevent us.

[So it's easier?]

To make friends.

[Oh, interesting, interesting. Do you feel more comfortable speaking English or Chinese?]"

In terms of my convenience or fluency I feel more comfortable speaking mandarin (Ryosuke, interview 3).

The engagement of self-fulfillment drives in the Japanese context is not only a function of the allure of the unknown but also of one's position to the familiar. Japan is understood by participants to possess a diametrically opposed culture to Western, English-speaking cultures. On one side of this cultural divide are the quiet, humble, cooperative Japanese; on the other, the outspoken, confident, individualistic foreigners.

This perceived disparity offers a particularly strong motivational basis to learn a language as a way of engaging the perspective drive. By contrast, learning Korean or Chinese involves less bridging of cultural distance. Learning Korean or Chinese may often be more connected to the engagement of the communication drive than English for many Japanese speakers.

#### *B. Communication Drive and Culture: Interaction as Liberation*

{my English teacher} said "Japanese like harmony but in this class harmony is not needed". And we have to prepare the 'hot' discussion questions...so 'yes' and 'no'

{teams} are divided, and we have to say directly and we attacked, but I'm enjoyable

[Oh you enjoyed that]

Yes, because I can attack and I can say directly. I'm free

[Yes]

So I enjoy and I can say big voice and yes...use a lot of debate skill. In Japanese if we did this debate we can discuss and say our opinion—not attack. So just: “I agree with this topic because...” and stop. But in this class: “You said this statement and this is not correct” and attack at that point. Japanese do not do it in this way... (Manami, interview 3).

In this extract, Manami assigns at least some of the blame for the difficulties she encounters interacting in the Japanese context to the nature of Japanese language and communication style, contrasting this unfavorably with that of an English class at university. This brings to mind testimony presented by McMahill [37, p.617] on an immigrant Japanese ESL learner:

“When speaking Japanese, it takes a lot of courage to express my convictions or insist upon my beliefs, but in English I can do so with a sense of being equal to the person I am talking to.”

Different cultures have different communication styles, and one of these may be more conducive to aspects of a given learner's personality and proclivities than others. The communication drive—the desire to experience communicative human interaction—will therefore be engaged differently according to the language being spoken. Elsewhere, Manami draws attention to the comparative lack of formalized linguistic politeness forms in English. These norms, notoriously difficult for learners of Japanese to master, cause the Japanese problems too. One can be judged uneducated or coarse if one misuses them when dealing with one's superiors. She also observes that interaction in Japanese requires *reading between the lines*. This is characteristic of a culture that Hall [38] refers to as high context, i.e., one in which there is a relatively strong reliance on the context, as opposed to the explicit content of communication.

It appears that speaking English is one way in which to deviate, take a break, or escape from social norms and communication rules. In Manami's case this appears to be true even in the artificial environment of the English classroom.

### *C. Perspective/Status Drives and Significant Events: How One's Experiences Influence Learning Behavior*

...we sat down, and there was this guy looks homeless. Really dirty or something and I was like “What is he?” but here comes this blonde beautiful woman and they started speaking English...and I was like “wow”, really shocked ...after they started speaking English my first impression totally disappeared and I was thinking “wow he must be really smart” ...I was really shocked and I realized if I could speak English that well people are gonna be really impressed with me. If I dig it more {i.e. ‘if I think about it more...’} I realized no one was impressed with me...I was good at math but everyone is good at math—there's nothing I was really good at, just average or lower, so my

parents never complimented me...so I was just maybe thinking “I wish I could speak English that well” (Nana, interview 1)

This incident in a restaurant occurred when Nana was in high school, revealing to her the idea that English could be a means of acquiring prestige. This is a vivid episode that sits at the center of a rags-to-riches narrative that shapes Nana's account of learning English. She compares the <yakiniku> incident to a contestant's appearance on Britain's Got Talent, a reality TV show, which she watched live while in the UK.

A similar feeling I found was in the UK in the high school there was a common room we were watching a TV show there was this ugly woman—not ugly but old woman—and the audience were disappointed “Oh no, a bad one comes again”, including me and my friends were thinking like that and here she comes and started singing a beautiful song...And that similar shocking...When I was watching Susan Boyle I remembered the homeless guy. It was that shocking for me...appearance is not...doesn't matter to learn language, I thought (Nana, interview 2).

This event served not only to reveal the potential utility of language learning, but as a symbolic reminder of how her perseverance and hard work have paid off, and what would be at stake if she gave up at this point.

All of the participants ascribe to a particular story or memory the beginnings of an interest in language learning. Ryosuke attributes his motivation to a humiliating encounter with a foreigner seeking directions in a train station as a junior high school student. Daisuke recalls comparing himself favorably to his peers during a university orientation weekend, realizing he could be a straight-A, star student with a little effort.

Significant events are understood to have two principal effects on engagement in learning: i) a revelatory effect, whereby they cause a dramatic change in learner beliefs with consequent effect for learning engagement; ii) a symbolic effect, acting to remind the learner of the justifications for language learning, or of the consequences for success or failure. A learner's recollection of past experiences may have more to tell us about behavior than the real-time examination of what would conventionally be viewed as motivated behavior.

## VI. THEORETICAL CONTEXTS

Unsurprisingly, there are several similarities between the LLMDE model and existing theories of motivation that have enjoyed statistical support in various learning settings. Like their counterparts the world over, these language learners exhibit the following attributes:

- Their interest goes beyond language learning itself, extending to the people and culture they associate with languages [4], [5].
- They draw satisfaction from progress and worry about the consequences of failure [39].
- Language learning forms an aspect of their identity or envisioned futures [18].
- They have been socialized into a particular set of cultural, social and institutional practices that influence their attitude towards language learning [10], [11].

The existing theory that has the most in common with the LLMDE construct is one using the terminology of needs rather than drives: Maslow's [40] hierarchy of needs. According to Maslow, human behavior is driven by five hierarchically organized needs: Physiological needs, safety needs, love needs, esteem, and self-actualization.

The LLMDE theory's drives for perspective, status, and communication correspond to Maslow's self-actualization, esteem, and love needs, respectively. Perspective drive corresponds to limited aspects of its Maslowian counterpart, self-actualization. Since the LLMDE model was derived from data on language learning rather than human experience more generally, this is to be expected. Maslow's wider concept presumably has 'parts where language learning cannot reach', and given even the most comprehensive data set, perspective drive might remain more narrowly defined than self-actualization.

Perhaps the closest corollary between the two models is the LLMDE theory's status drive and Maslow's need for esteem. Maslow's [41, pp.381-2] depiction of the need for esteem resonates strongly with my own observations on status drive:

...first, the desire for strength, for achievement, for

adequacy, for confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom...Secondly, we have what we may call the desire for reputation or prestige (defining it as respect or esteem from other people), recognition, attention, importance or appreciation.

Maslow [39, p.32] writes that someone who is being driven by love needs will: "hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely, for a place in his group, and he will strive with great intensity to achieve this goal..." This corresponds to the need for human interaction labelled communication drive.

Maslow contends that for any level of need to be attended to, the level immediately below it must first be satisfied. Only after physiological and safety needs are satisfied, for example, will one begin to address one's need for love. The LLMDE model categories are effectively slimmed-down counterparts of Maslow's. The LLMDE drives, by contrast, are not ordered hierarchically. The data show that participants simultaneously engage multiple drives.

Table II gives a summary of the relationship between LLMDE theory and other, more recent prominent theories of motivation and language learning.

TABLE II  
COMPARISON OF LLMDE THEORY AND EXISTING THEORIES

Quantity	Conversion from Gaussian and CGS EMU to SI <sup>a</sup>
The Socio-educational model of language learning (Gardner and Lambert) [4], [5]	Gardner's concept of integrativeness bears some theoretical similarity to the perspective drive, although the nuance of integration and gaining perspective obviously differ.
L2 motivational self-system (Dörnyei) [18]	The L2 motivational self-system may be of utility in adding theoretical detail to the role played by revelations, a category that is under-theorized in the LLMDE model.
Social identity, investment, and language learning (Norton Peirce) [10]; Person-in-context relational view of language learning (Ushioda) [11]	Norton's concept of social capital adds theoretical detail to the status drive element of the LLMDE model. Ushioda's Person-in-context relational view offers a framework within which to theorize the mediating effect of significant events, culture, and experience.

## VII. CONCLUSION

LLMDE theory is inductively derived, not based on deductive inference from existing theory. It is modest in scope but well-grounded. The results of the primary analysis explain language-learning behavior in terms of the LLMDE model. The secondary analysis examined the roles played by institutions, culture, and significant events.

One of the assumptions underlying L2 motivation research is that it represents a special case necessitating domain-specific concepts. The results of the present research suggest that language learning can be explained in terms of general, rather than language domain-specific theories of motivation/drives. In a sense, this undermines the need for the existence of the field of language learning motivation research. To state this is not to argue that the behavior, experiences, and beliefs of the language learner are not as potentially fruitful targets for the motivation researcher as any.

Given the importance ascribed by the LLMDE theory to drives in determining learning behavior, motivation takes on a reduced role, that motivation is not quite as important as the academic literature and popular culture may have led us to believe. Or, alternatively, that the concept is too amorphous, and should be used more carefully to refer to the process whereby conscious control over behavior is exercised to maintain behavior despite factors that would otherwise divert

the learner, or to change behavior in the face of influences on behavior that would otherwise tend to support an existing trajectory. Schumann [42] writes that there is unlikely ever to be a definitive answer to the relationship between motivation and L2 learning, but that "the field might just get tired of the issue, and its importance in applied linguistics could diminish" (p. xviii).

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