# Contents

# A Time Perspective of Motivational Fluctuation over Task Performance of Persian Language Learners (Intermediate Level)

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**Abstract**

Motivation for learning a new language does not have an all-or-none impact. It is gradually formed and fluctuated over time and on each timescale has varying levels of influence on a person's endeavor to learn a language. At the present time, scholars claim that throughout the Second Language Development (SLD) different timescales interact with each other and this interaction is nonlinear, complex and dynamic in nature (de Bot 2015). The present study attempted to investigate the motivational dynamics of a group of Persian learners in longer timescales composed of a number of tasks performed on shorter timescales. Ten participants were interviewed at the onset, while performing tasks and at the end of the course to better picture the interplay of different motivational themes over time. The findings confirmed temporal variation in participants' motivation. Although some individual specific variation was observed, the average group motivation was increasingly tending toward an overall stable state. Moreover, the data revealed the fact that motivational themes were not equally effective over the course and during task performance. It was shown, for example, that factors influencing learners' initial motivation were less influential during the task completion. Finally, L2 motivation was found to contain an interrelationship of a number of dynamic and complex factors which varied over different timescales and had different motivational intensity in each specific stage. Finally, some implications were driven from the findings of the study.

**Keywords:** Motivation; Timescales; Second Language Development; Dynamic; Complex.

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## 1. Introduction

The process of second language (L2) learning is facilitated by a number of factors. Motivation is undoubtedly one of these highly facilitating factors. In the field of L2 motivation, different models (e.g. socio-psychological, process model, L2 motivational self-system, etc.) have been proposed to capture the nature of an individual's motivation for learning an L2 (Dörnyei, 2009; Dörnyei and Ottó, 1998; Gardner and Lambert, 1959).

Past researches on L2 motivation have investigated the role of different factors such as L2 imagery (Dörnyei and Chan, 2013), L2 possible selves (Thompson and Lee, 2016), L2 self-concept (Mercer, 2011), and L2 task motivation (Kormos and Dörnyei, 2004). However, less attention has been paid to the dynamic combination of these factors alongside the role of time and tasks in language learners' motivation. Since taking a dynamic approach to L2 motivation means a direct and explicit addressing of the concept of timescales (de Bot, 2015), understanding the fluid of L2 motivation on different tasks and timescales and knowing the reasons for such fluidity will provide innovative perspectives on the construct under study.

Applicability of chaos theory and dynamic system theory to L2 learning has been recently emphasized by a number of L2 scholars (Dörnyei, 2014; Mercer, 2011). In this perspective, L2 motivation is perceived to be fluid and variable, rather than fixed and inert (Dörnyei, Henry, and MacIntyre, 2015). Moreover, the concept of timescale has been newly introduced to the field of SLD (de Bot 2015). It is argued that the languagesystem is composed of a number of sub-systems which develop on all timescales (e.g. decades, years, months, weeks, days, and even moments) during the human

lifetime (de Bot, 2012). It is further suggested that motivation is dynamicallyinvolved in task completion (Dörnyei, 2009) and fluctuation in task motivation is the result of dynamic interrelationship of a variety of temporal and contextual demands of the task (Poupore, 2013).

In the literature, few studies were found to take the notion of interaction among timescales into consideration, particularly along with motivational fluctuation on a temporal basis in performing tasks. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to bridge the gap in this respect and examine all these variables in combination with each other. It was, in fact, an attempt to investigate L2 learners' overall motivation and task motivation over a time period of one semester, to see fluctuation in and interaction between different time and task-bound motivational themes. This way, L2 motivation on short term and long term timescales (de Bot, 2015) were compared and contrasted and the possible interactions and interrelationship were revealed. Apart from this general purpose, it specifically tried to investigate the participants' potential reasons and perceived causes for such a variation in their motivational intensity.

## 1. Literature Review

### 2.1. *A Complex Dynamic System Approach to L2 Motivation*

Recent emphasis on the applicability of chaos theory and dynamic system theory to language learning (Dörnyei, 2014) has made different researchers, including those working on motivation, to reconsider their issues of interest from this new perspective. In this view, L2 motivation is supposed to

experience successive cycles of stability and variability in the process of L2 learning (Dörnyei, 2014; Dörnyei, Henry, and MacIntyre, 2015). This recurring pattern of steadiness and variation is fundamental to chaos complexity and dynamic system theories (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008). The overall conception is that no construct is fixed forever and motivation is no exception. Rather than being a constant construct, it is fluid and fluctuating (Larsen-Freeman 2015; Waninge, Dörnyei, and de Bot, 2014). Real examples are those language learners who are highly motivated/ demotivated in the beginning of a course, but throughout the course and due to some factors change into demotivated/ motivated learners. A number of L2 studies have found support of L2 motivation to be dynamic, diverse and complex (Campbell and Storch, 2011; Shoaib and Dörnyei, 2005). In a ground breaking study to examine the progressive nature of motivation over time, Shoaib and Dörnyei (2005) reported motivational dynamicity and fluctuation in L2 learning. They found a series of 'motivational transformational episodes' which had an either positive or negative impact on foreign language learning. The signs of diversity and complexity in L2 motivation were also found in a group of non-English language learners (Campbell and Storch, 2011).

## 2.2. A Time-Sensitive Approach to L2 Motivation

As de Bot puts it 'timescales refer to the granularity of the developmental process; we can take a very global perspective and look at changes over the life span, sampling many moments of time' (2015: 31). He argued that the sub-systems of the language system develop on all timescales (decades, years, months, weeks, days, and even moments) during the human life span. None of these timescales yield a definitive and all-inclusive portrayal of language development, and only the interaction of different timescales possesses such a potential. This interaction is a result of complexity of the process of language learning and the fact that its development on one scale is affected by what happens on smaller and larger scales or preceding and following ones. Because of this, he argued that looking at phenomena at only one timescale may lead to misrepresentation of actual development. At the same time, it will not be feasible to take into account all the potential timescales in the study of SLD. A compromise would be to examine the timescale that is of primary interest to the construct under investigation, for example studying motivation over a semester or on performing language tasks. Temporal and situational nature of motivational features in German learners was examined by Busse and Walter (2013). Unlike the findings of similar studies done on L2 motivation, their findings showed that learners' engagement with language learning has progressively reduced over time. In the same way, Waninge, Dörnyei, and de Bot (2014) reported a close and complex connection between spatial/temporal context and learners' motivation. In their study, students' motivation was found to be subject to variation even on short-term scale. A moment-by-moment variation in L2 motivation was reported by MacIntyre and Serroul (2015). They found that motivation to learn a foreign language can be influenced by different types of motivation on different timescales. As a result, they suggested that motivation at different timescales interacts with other processes and its strength may vary over time.

### 2.3.L2 Task Motivation

Tasks can be seen as 'primary instructional variables or building blocks of classroom learning' (Dörnyei 2002, 137). Moreover, research has shown that proper implementation of the tasks positively affects L2 performance (Ahmadian, Tavakoli and Vahid Dastjerdi, 2015). As a result, complex learning process can be made more manageable through using tasks and units with well-defined boundaries. Because of this, during the past decade Second Language Acquisition (SLA) researchers have increasingly paid attention to the analysis of tasks (Dörnyei, 2002, 2009; Ellis, 2000). Dörnyei suggested that each task 'activates a number of different motivational contingencies, resulting in dynamic motivational processes underlying task completion' (2009: 1). This proposal put aside prior conceptualization of task motives in favor of a more dynamic systems view. In general, fluctuation in task motivation can be generated by dynamic interrelationship of arrange of contextual and situational demands of the task (Poupore, 2013). The dynamic nature of L2 motivation over different task types (e.g. argumentative communicative L2 task, interactional tasks, etc.) was also examined in a number of studies (Kormos and Dörnyei, 2004; Yanguas, 2011). Students' attitudes toward L2 course and tasks, their linguistic self-confidence, and their appraisal and noticing capacity were reported as the three most important factors affecting L2 task motivation.

### 2.4. L2 Motivation Research in Iran

Recent years have witnessed a resurgence of interest on motivational research in foreign language learning, particularly after the introduction of the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS, for more information on this model see Dörnyei, 2009) to the field. In an early attempt to empirically investigate this model in an eastern context, Papi and two of his Japanese and Chinese co-researchers tried to validate this model in an Asian context (Taguchi et al., 2009). Apart from their general support for and validity of this model, they found various elements of L2MSS not to be country-specific, though some of these components enjoyed certain cross-cultural differences in different educational contexts. Drawing on the framework of the L2MSS, Papi and Teimouri (2014) did a similar study on Iranian language learners to identify their different L2 learner motivational types. Their findings yielded five different groups based on the strength of different variables within their motivational configurations. Different motivational, emotional, and linguistic characteristics were revealed for different motivational groups of this study. Apart from L2MSS, there have been a number of studies who worked on other aspects of L2 motivation. Kiany, Mahdavy, and Ghafar Samar (2012), for instance, studied the impact of the educational system on the motivational change of a group of Iranian high school students. Statistically significant and insignificant declines were observed in the last years' rate of ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self, respectively. The same pattern was reported for instrumental-promotion and instrumental-prevention categories. In an attempt to address the complexity of L2 motivation in an Iranian context, Azarnoosh (2014) investigated the fluctuations in secondary and high school students' motivation. Her findings supported the general idea of an age-related decline in students' motivation in compulsory settings. Unfortunately, there

has been a little research done on language learners' learning Persian as their L2. In a somehow pioneering study, Sedighifar and Khaleghizadeh (2016) examined the relationship between motivational orientations and academic achievement of a group of Arab learners of Persian. The results of this study lent support to and laid emphasis on enhancing the internal motivation of Persian learners in both language classes and educational resources which in turn breeds their academic achievement.

## 2.5. Purpose of the Study

There have been several research studies examining the dynamics of motivation in short and long periods of time (MacIntyre and Serroul, 2015; Waninge, Dörnyei, and de Bot, 2014). However, few studies have tried to examine the dynamics of motivation in interacting timescales. Examining motivational dynamics over different timescales has the dual function of revealing effective factors in L2 motivations and indicating the motivational proportion of each factor in different points of time. In other words, such an interactive analysis might yield time-specific influence of different motivational variables, i.e. which ones do have an enduring effect and which affecting motivation only at the specific task or time? Interaction between and among different timescales in the process of SLD (de Bot, 2015) is a novel area of investigation and of utmost importance to the field. Since fluctuation, complexity, nonlinearity, etc. are among the main concepts of Complex Dynamic Systems (CDS) theory (Larsen-Freeman, 2015), the researchers believed that they could be better represented when the construct under investigation is studied in longer timescales composed of a number

of tasks performed on shorter timescales. Given these points, the present study attempted to look at the motivational dynamics of a group of language learners over both performing specific L2 task and a semester-long period, with the specific purpose of seeing how motivational experiences of learners dynamically change over these timescales. Moreover, it investigated the participants' potential attribution (causes and reasons) for the probable variation in their motivational intensity.

Based on the review and the aforementioned discussion, the following research questions were addressed:

1. Is there any effect of task level motivation on semester level motivation?
2. Are there any visible signs of complex dynamic systems in the participants' motivation over task and time?
3. To what extent do the participants discuss variation in their motivation over task and time?
4. What attributions do the participants make for such a variation in their motivational intensity?

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Participants

The present study was conducted with a group of Persian learners attending Dehkhoda Institute, Tehran, Iran. This institute is affiliated to the University of Tehran and has always provided Persian language courses for foreigners who have applied to study in some of the universities in Iran as well as those who are attending this institute for non-academic purposes, such as pursuing theirgeneral interest. This

language course was composed of 18 studentsamong which 10 participants were selected. They were chosen among both male and female students (see Table 1). These participants had varied nationalities and first languages (American, Indian, Chinese, Russian, Syrian, Senegalese, to name just a few). Their proficiency level was intermediate. The demographic data of this sample (e.g. nationality, age, gender, learning experience, etc.) was obtained through a short questionnaire implemented before the first round of interview. To gather

rich information concerning participants' previous Persian experience, they were asked about their living in or traveling to Persian-speaking countries, their family members (both immediate and extended) familiarity with Persian, etc. In the information sheet about the study, they were informed about their voluntary participation and were told that it has no effect on their scores. In presenting qualitative results, numbers were used to cater for identity protection.

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Information

| Participants | Age | Sex | Previous L2 Experience (months) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 22 | M | 14 |
| 2 | 26 | F | 19 |
| 3 | 24 | F | 16 |
| 4 | 27 | M | 32 |
| 5 | 19 | M | 8 |
| 6 | 18 | M | 11 |
| 7 | 26 | M | 26 |
| 8 | 28 | F | 20 |
| 9 | 23 | M | 17 |
| 10 | 25 | F | 21 |

*M*=male, *F*=female

As can be seen in this table, there were 6 male and 4 female students in this study. Their age ranged from 18 to 28 (M= 23.8) and their L2 experience ranged from 8 to 32 months (M=18.4).

### 3.2. Instrumentations
Since time and temporal variation were major considerations in the present study, several cycles of data collection were predicted to reveal motivational fluctuation over short term and long term periods. In each cycle, the data was gathered qualitatively and via a series of semi-structured interviews. In fact, the dynamicity and complexity of the

motivation is better tapped qualitatively in an in-depth and emic way (Dörnyei, 2014). There were three rounds of interviews. Interview questions were designed in a way to investigate initial motivation (first round), task motivation (second round), and motivational fluctuations over time and the cause of these fluctuations (third round) (see Appendices A, B and C for the interview questions in each of these rounds). There were 7, 8, and 9 questions in these three rounds, respectively. In fact, the questions were developed to trace visible signs of a complex dynamic system in the participants' motivation over task and time, variation in participants' motivation over

task and time, and the cause of such a variation. Interviews were conducted in the initial, midpoint (during the tasks), and final sessions during the autumn of 2016.

The second instrument was a number of L2 tasks. The tasks were taken from the oral argumentative tasks offered by Kormos and Dörnyei (2004). In their study, the tasks were designed as interactive problem-solving activity in order to elicit arguments regarding everyday school matters. Based on an imaginary situation, students worked in pair to choose among and rank order a list of items. They were supposed to compare their preferences with those of their partner and through negotiation came to a compromise.For example, they were asked to imagine that they were a member of school student committee. They were told that their school wanted to participate in the district's social life and asked students to offer help. They were required to read 10 suggestions (e.g. helping out in the library, providing tourist information, etc.) and rank 5 of them based on their preference. Then, they were supposed to compare their preferences with those of their partner and through negotiation came to a compromise. Their final duty was to prepare 3 best activities that they together would recommend to school management.

### 3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

All the data collection processes were carried out during participants' regular Persian classes. The data was gathered in three rounds. Interviews were conducted in

the initial, midpoint (over tasks), and final sessions during the spring of 2018. Since the participants were from various countries and hence had varied first languages, the interviews were done in English. In order to decrease the perceived power-distance between those involved in an interview session (ten Dam and Blom, 2006), the interviews were done in the same institution where participants were studying. One of the researchers interviewed the participants. They were clearly informed about the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of their information. Each interview lasted from 15 to about 25 minutes. They were recorded and transcribed for the final analysis.

In addition, participants' task motivation was investigated in relation to performing motivational tasks along the semester. To make the procedure clear to the participants, the researchers provided them with the instructions on how to complete the tasks. Their task performance was recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

To analyze the data, Ritchie and Spencer's (2002) five-step framework was used. In the first step, the data was transcribed. In the second, a thematic framework was developed based on the participants' responses to interview questions. Table 2 portrays this thematic framework together with some of the participants' exemplar sentences related to each of these themes.

Table 2. Thematic Framework for Coding Interviews

| Thematic Category | Examples |
| --- | --- |
| L2 Learning Experience | "I'm learning Persian in my day-to-day encounters with native speakers" (Participant 4) |
| L2 Learning Enjoyment | "The experience of being involved in an active process of language |

| | learning gives me such a tremendous pleasure" (Participant 3) |
|---|---|
| L2 Desired Proficiency | "My language wish is to reach an advanced level of Persian proficiency" (Participant 9) |
| L2 Future Image | "Five years later, I'll be a competent cultural attaché of Iran in my own country" (Participant 2) |
| Positive Feelings Toward L2 Speakers | "In a world village you should be open to multicultural citizens" (participant 5) |
| Internal Incentives For L2 Learning | "I just love learning Persian since it keeps me connected to my Iranian online friends" (Participant 1) |
| External Incentives For L2 Learning | "My family thinks my future career demands a good command of Persian" (Participant 10) |
| Personal Pursuits In L2 Learning | "In my field of study, it's a must to be familiar with old Persian texts" (Participant 7) |

In the third step, using this framework data was analyzed. At this stage, the researchers tried to discover whether major motivational themes were present in participants' responses to the questions in each round of interviews. To check for inter-rater reliability, the participants' transcripts along with the thematic framework werethen given to an independent researcher familiar with L2 motivation and qualitative research. An acceptable index of inter-rater reliability (Cohen's kappa = .85, Miles and Huberman, 1994) was obtained at this step. In the last step, in order to ensure the exact interpretation of the data, the interviewer read the motivational profiles to each of the participants and gave them the opportunity to resolve any potential misinterpretation (Denzinand Lincoln, 2005).

## 4. Results and Discussion
### 4.1. Factors Affecting Initial Motivation
Table 3 shows the motivational themes at work when starting language study. Presence of a motivational theme in the participant's interview is shown by an X mark.

Table 3. Initial Motivation (Interview 1)

| Participants | L2 Learning Experience | L2 Learning Enjoyment | L2 Desired Proficiency | L2 Future Image | Positive Feelings Towards L2 Speakers | Internal Incentives For L2 Learning | External Incentives For L2 Learning | Personal Pursuits In L2 Learning |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | X | | | X | | |
| 2 | | | | X | | | X | X |
| 3 | | X | X | | | | | |
| 4 | X | | X | | | | X | |
| 5 | | | | | X | | X | X |
| 6 | | | X | X | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | | | X | X |
| 8 | | X | | | | | X | |
| 9 | | | X | | | X | | X |
| 10 | X | | | X | | | X | |

As can be observed in Table 3, the principal motivational categories which were mostly selected by the participants in the first round were 'external incentives for L2 learning', 'L2 desired proficiency', and 'personal pursuits in L2 learning',

respectively. This finding supported previous research in which external incentives, proficiency and personal goals were reported to play a key role in motivating participants in the beginning of a course (Campbell and Storch, 2011; Yaghoubinejad, Zarrinabadi, and Ketabi, 2016). Among those participants who were externally oriented to this language course was Participant 10 who referred to her parents' pressure as the main motive behind taking this language course. She stated:

*"My parents are originally Iranian, but they are living in America. They are running their own business, which is offering immigration advices mostly to Iranians. They think I'll have the same job in the future. The kind of difficulty they experience more is their staff's poor Persian. They need someone who is capable enough to deal with such situation."(Interview 1)*

In the same manner, some other participants' reason for attending this course was their desire to reach an acceptable Persian proficiency. Unlike the previous participant, they were not pursuing a specific future passion, but for a number of reasons they sought for a well-established language command. Participant 3told she was mad of Persian movies, particularly those directed by contemporary Iranian directors. She told she had a very in-depth knowledge of movie-making. However, her language knowledge was quite shallow and made her deprived of a full grasp of the content of the film. Here is her comment:

*"You know, I'm deeply into recent Iranian movies. Farhadi is my favorite director and I really appreciate his style and genre, but the problem is I can't understand the content of his films to the full. I wish I can cope with*

*this language barrier in near future." (Interview 1)*

The last dominant motivational theme in the first round of interviews was 'personal pursuits in L2 learning'. There were four participants that mentioned this factor as one of their main motives to attend a language learning class. They had set a series of personal goals and were trying to achieve them by the end of this course. Among them was Participant 5 who wished to be able to create effective Persian communication:

*"Ali and I have been engaged for more than 5 months. We madly love each other and intend to get married in the next year. However, I think something is not working properly. He continuously complains about communicating in my mother tongue, i.e. Mandarin. He is somehow right. It's a very difficult language to acquire in such a short period. Instead, I decided to learn Persian, which is relatively easier." (Interview 1)*

What can be inferred from these quotations is that motivational factors, like external incentives, desired proficiency and personal goals were initially influential in pushing the learners across the course.

## 4.2. *Factors Affecting Task Motivation*

The motivational themes related to the second round of interview are illustrated in Table 4. As is shown, except for the 'personal pursuits in L2 learning' which was reported equally important in both round of the interviews, the other mostly stated themes of the first round of interview, i.e. 'external incentives for L2 learning' and 'L2 desired proficiency', were among the least referred motivational themes in this round. This finding supported previous findings on task motivation which claim that the more

students engage with language tasks the more motivational contingencies arise which take them away from external motives and towards internal and dynamically interrelated ones (Kormos and Dörnyei, 2004; Dörnyei, 2009). 'L2 learning enjoyment' and 'internal incentives for L2 learning' were the dominant categories mentioned in this round which once again lent credence to and further supported abovementioned claim. 'L2 learning enjoyment' was mentioned by seven participants as the only most important factorbehind their motivation to pursue their language learning. The kind of tasks they were engaged with was referred to as the cause of their pleasure. Participant 9 viewed argumentative communicative tasks used by teacher as a major motivational factor. He commented:

*"Today I understood language learning can be fun and real life experience as well! We were placed in a situation to decide about a real issue. We worked together and in such doing we learned a lot from each other. It was my first time that I used my new language as a tool of social life. I'll never forget what I learned today forever. What's more, negotiation with my teammates gave me great gratification." (Interview 2)*

This finding is exactly in line with Kormos and Dörnyei's (2004) study in which attitudes toward L2 course and tasks was found as one of the most important factors affecting L2 task motivation. 'Internal incentives for L2 learning' was considered as the second most important motivational factor during task completion. Some of the participants talked about a perceived affinity between their character type and the task type at hand. They felt as though being involved in this specific communicative task made them internally ignited to practice perseverance and expect success in accomplishing it. Following excerpt by Participant 7 can be a representative of this fact:

*"Generally speaking, I like doing tasks. This morning, our teacher got us involved in a language task through communication and argumentation. In my view, it was a good fit, particularly suitable for my personality. I learned a lot from my friends."(Interview 2)*

Table 4. Task Motivation (Interview 2)

| Participants | L2 Learning Experience | L2 Learning Enjoyment | L2 Desired Proficiency | L2 Future Image | Positive Feelings Towards L2 Speakers | Internal Incentives For L2 Learning | External Incentives For L2 Learning | Personal Pursuits In L2 Learning |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | | | | X | | |
| 2 | | X | | X | | X | | X |
| 3 | | X | | | | | | |
| 4 | X | | X | | | | X | |
| 5 | | X | | | X | | | X |
| 6 | | X | X | | X | | | |
| 7 | | X | | | | X | | X |
| 8 | | X | | | | | X | |
| 9 | | X | | | | X | | X |
| 10 | X | | | X | | X | | |

In sum, in this stage it was revealed that personal goals, internal incentives, and learning enjoyment were task-specific motivational factors. Although the first factor kept motivating the participants both initially and over the tasks, the last two ones

were significantly motivating just during the task completion.

### 4.3. Factors Affecting Final Motivation

Table 5 summarizes the data collected at the third round of interviews. 'L2 learning enjoyment' and 'internal incentives for L2 learning' were ranked equally motivational in this round of the study. Both of them received 6 occurrences, though the former had a minus occurrence and the latter had a plus one compared to the second round of interview. The kind of motivation resulted from involvement in task performance was conducive to their future performance over semester. As the following excerpt shows, Participant 2 attributed her motivation to follow the course more seriously to an internally induced enjoyment driven from her previous language exercise (i.e. task performance):

> *"The more I go ahead the more I like the course. Early in the semester, I didn't imagine that this course will turn out in such an involving way. As its name suggests, I thought that we'll be engaged in a couple of skills promoting our Persian studies. But, the other side of the story once revealed itself that I found myself performing some game-like tasks. From that time, I approached each activity as a game and it was a great source of satisfaction." (Interview 3)*

'L2 learning experience' and 'personal pursuits in L2 learning' was the second pair of highly motivational factors which received four occurrences in participants' responses. Unlike the latter motivational theme which remained equally motivational in all rounds of interview (four occurrences in each round), the former was doubled by the third round. Participant 6 was one of those students who finally referred to this motive after three rounds of interview:

> *"Initially I didn't have a clear image of what is this course like since I attended it with some orientalist intentions. In fact, I was interested in orientalism and Islamic studies. During the first weeks, this ambiguous image didn't change any more. However, the more I learned about Iranian culture, the more I aspired to narrow down my interest area to Iranian studies. Here, I got familiar with Persian literature and read and interpreted some of its masterpieces which were totally different from my preconceptions." (Interview 3)*

Table 5. Final Motivation (Interview 3)

| Participants | L2 Learning Experience | L2 Learning Enjoyment | L2 Desired Proficiency | L2 Future Image | Positive Feelings Towards L2 Speakers | Internal Incentives For L2 Learning | External Incentives For L2 Learning | Personal Pursuits In L2 Learning |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | | | | X | | |
| 2 | | X | | X | | X | | X |
| 3 | | X | | | | | | |
| 4 | X | | X | | | X | | |
| 5 | | X | | | X | | | X |
| 6 | X | X | X | | X | | | |
| 7 | X | X | | | | X | | X |
| 8 | | X | | | | | X | |
| 9 | | | | | | X | | X |
| 10 | X | | | X | | X | | |

While comparing data over various timescales, some signs of dynamicity and fluctuation of the participants' motivation were traced. Two major features of CDS, namely variability and stability, were revealed over different cycles of data collection. Gradual decrease or increase in motivational intensity of the participants on different scales was also evident. Moreover, a surge of motivational current was observed due to situational demands of task. And, there were cases some of the motivational themes were so steadily stable that self-organized into some attractor states. As can be observed, main features of a CDS were at work in the present study, stability, variability, ups and downs, surges and attractor states, to name just a few.In what follows, visible signs of this complexity and dynamicity are discussed.

The data analysis showed that 'L2 learning experience' gradually gained importance as a motivational element. Interesting point regarding this finding is that it reached this state on a short-term scale. Though, in the period between the first and second rounds of interviews this motivational theme remained the same (2 occurrences in each round by the same participants), in the period between the second and the third it was doubled. Interestingly enough, the participants experienced a positive change in their motivational direction throughout the course just due to their short experience of language learning. Unlike'internal incentives for l2 learning','external incentives'increasingly lost theirmotivational importance. This condition continued till the point that in the last round just one of the participants (Participant 8) still attributed her success to externally triggered motivation. A similar story was observedfor the 'L2 learning enjoyment' with just a bit of variation on the number of occurrences in participants' excerpts (7 and 6 times in the second and third interviews compared to 5 and 6 of internal incentives for l2 learning). Moreover, 'L2 desired proficiency', which was very strong in initially motivating participants (4 occurrences), remained in a stable weak state during task performance and at the end of the course (2 occurrences in each round). It showed the fact that there were participants whose priority was no longer aiming for higher levels of language proficiency. An interesting finding was that 'personal pursuits in L2 learning' remained an average stable state in all three interviews (4 occurrences by the same people). This finding supported the fact that some motivational elements resistsituational demands and still stay intense no matter what the contextual contingencies are. Finally, 'L2 future image'and 'positive feelings towards L2 speakers' were the least frequently mentioned categories over all the three rounds of interviews. Despite the fact that they were the weakest motivational themes throughout the whole study, the interesting and unexpected point about them was that they were treated differently by different genders. In each round of interview the former was chosen by the same participants (participant 2 and 10, two female ones), while the latter was chosen by the other same participants (Participant 5 and 6, 2 male ones).

## 4.4. *Motivational Fluctuation and its Major Causes*

Some changes occurred to participants' overall motivational intensity. The direction

of and the main reasons behind these    changes are reported in Table 6.

Table 6. Fluctuation in Participants' Motivation (between 1st and 2nd interview)

| Participants | Overall Change in Motivational Intensity | Cause |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Weaker motivation | Not receiving what he expected |
| 2 | Stronger motivation | Visualizing a high future image of self |
| 3 | Weaker motivation | Not advancing much in her L2 proficiency |
| 4 | No specific progress | Nothing specific mentioned |
| 5 | Stronger motivation | Working hard to materialize his long established goals |
| 6 | Stronger motivation | Being made sensitive to multicultural understanding |
| 7 | Stronger motivation | Feeling a fit between task type and his character type |
| 8 | No specific progress | Nothing specific mentioned |
| 9 | Stronger motivation | Being engaged with real life simulation tasks |
| 10 | Stronger motivation | Getting what it needs for her future career |

In the period between the first and second interviews, most of the participants experienced kind of progress in their motivational profiles. However, two students' (Participant 4 and 8) motivational level remained the same and two others (Participant 1 and 3) deteriorated in both interviews and on all the motivational scales. Apart from these four participants' data the overall group showed an increase in their L2 motivation. Though, there were individual specific variation among the single participants regarding the pace of change in their motivation and the variables affecting it. This finding supported similar studies which claimed for unique trajectories, and not general trends, followed by individual cases in the process of SLD (Dörnyei, Henry, and MacIntyre, 2015). 'L2 learning enjoyment', 'internal incentives for l2

learning', and 'personal pursuits for L2 learning' were among the factors influencing learners' motivation the most between these two timescales. The first two were exactly reported by Yaghoubinejad, Zarrinabadi, and Ketabi (2016) as the motivational themes driving Iranian EFL learners' L2 learning. This finding provided evidence for culture-specificity of some of the motivational factors. Real-life simulation in language tasks, the fit between task type and their character type, family expectations, active involvement in task completion, visualization, and raised sensitivity were among the reasons mentioned for being positively motivated.

Table 7 provides the global changes to participants' motivational levels over the whole semester (between first and third interview).

Table 7. Comparison of overall Motivation from Interview 1 to Interview 3

| Participants | Motivational intensity |
|---|---|
| 1 | Lower |
| 2 | Higher |
| 3 | Lower |
| 4 | The same |
| 5 | Higher |

| 6 | Higher |
|---|--------|
| 7 | Higher |
| 8 | The same |
| 9 | Higher |
| 10 | Higher |

Like the data in the second round, just two participants (Participant 1 and 3) reported lower levels of motivation. While two motivational themes were present in their initial data (not that much motivated at the onset), there was just one theme in their final data (exactly the same as their data concerning task motivation). In their opinion, this problem had its roots in their low rate of progress against their hardworking and their unfulfilled expectations. Apart from these two outlier cases and the two students who remained at the same motivational level, a general positive change in learners' motivation was revealed (6 students indicated higher motivation), though the intensity and pace of which was once again individual specific.

## 5. Conclusion

Results of this study clearly illustrated temporal variation in participants' motivation. The data also showed that the average group motivation was increasingly moving toward an overall stable state, though some individual specific variation was also observed. Besides, it was revealed that factors influencing learners' initial motivation were less influential during the task completion. For example, at the outset, the participants were more externally oriented towards their language studies. However, the more they proceed through the course the more they felt propelled by internal inclinations. At the final stages, internal and personal fulfillment driven from immersion in task performance was

the dominant motivational propeller for the participants. Finally, L2 motivation was found to contain an interrelationship of a number of dynamic and complex factors which varied over different timescales and had different motivational intensity in each specific stage. Steady pattern of increase and decrease, ups and downs, amelioration and deterioration, etc. in participants' motivational intensity together with the pace of change in their motivation and the variables affecting this change were just a few indicators of the dynamicity and complexity of factors involved in L2 motivation.

Following implications for L2 motivation research can be inferred from the present study. Timescales and their interaction are of primary concern to the SLD. In this study it was revealed that the motivational factors exerting impact in task motivation continued to have a role throughout the semester. Therefore, teachers have to recognize these factors and invest on them in their teaching activities or use them as warmers (Waninge, Dörnyei, and de Bot, 2014). In addition, different motivational orientations of male and female language learners necessitate teachers' varied treatment of seemingly homogeneous groups of learners. Finally, some of the findings were found to be individual and culture-specific. This fact requires teachers to exercise caution in dealing withdifferent students, especially in those classes made of different cultural backgrounds. In such situations, practicing

similar motivational strategies for all of the students is ineffective and having equal expectations from all is something beyond their capabilities.

It should be noted that this study is limited in several ways. First, this study is limited to the weaknesses of interview research as the data collection tool used for examining fluctuations in L2 motivation. New methods for researching CDS, such as retroductive qualitative modeling approach, have been recently introduced by motivation researchers (Dörnyei, 2014) and can be employed

accompanied by well-established ones, such as questionnaire.This study is also limited to the number of the participants. In order to enhance the generalizability of findings larger sample sizes are needed.

## Acknowlegement

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Appendices:
Appendix A Interview A (First Round)

| Guiding questions |
|---|
| 1. Why did you attend this course? |
| 2. What factors motivated you to be here? <br> 3. Compared to previous semester, do you feel motivated to learn Persian is higher or lower? |
| 4. Do you think your Persian teacher is more or less motivated than your previous teacher? |
| 5. If he is more motivated, do you believe this has influenced your motivation? How? |
| 6. If he is less motivated, do you believe this has influenced your motivation? How? <br> 7. What kinds of activities do you perform in or out of class to improve your Persian skills? |

Appendix B Interview B (Second Round)

| Guiding questions |
|---|
| 1. How would you describe your motivation at this point of time? |
| 2. Do you feel there have been any changes over this time? |
| 3. What are your feelings about performing L2 tasks? |
| 4. Has your level of enjoyment changed over this time? |
| 5. Has your learning Persian motivation been affected by anything that has occurred during task completion? |
| 6. Do you think you have progressed over this time? How does this influence your motivation to learn Persian? |
| 7. What factors do you think have influenced your motivation? |
| 8. Did you use any strategies to maintain your motivation? |

Appendix C Interview C (Third Round)

| Guiding questions |
|---|
| 1. Did you have any experiences/ tasks/activities in which your motivation to learning Persian was high/low? Why? |
| 2. Do you think there have been any changes in your motivation compared to the last time we talked? |
| 3. Generally, do you think Persian learning motivation is higher or lower than what it was at the beginning of the semester? |
| 4. What do you think has led to these changes? |
| 5. Do you think you have been successful in maintaining your motivation over the semester? |
| 6. Do you still enjoy learning Persian? |
| 7. Do you feel you have been successful in your Persian studies? |
| 8. To which factors do you relate this success/lack of success? |
| 9. Have there been any occasions in this period when your motivation for studying Persian was specifically high or low? Why? |

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Information

| Participants | Age | Sex | Previous L2 Experience (months) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 22 | M | 14 |
| 2 | 26 | F | 19 |
| 3 | 24 | F | 16 |
| 4 | 27 | M | 32 |
| 5 | 19 | M | 8 |
| 6 | 18 | M | 11 |
| 7 | 26 | M | 26 |
| 8 | 28 | F | 20 |
| 9 | 23 | M | 17 |
| 10 | 25 | F | 21 |

*M*=male, *F*=female

Table 2. Thematic Framework for Coding Interviews

| Thematic Category | Examples |
|---|---|
| L2 Learning Experience | "I'm learning Persian in my day-to-day encounters with native speakers" (participant 4) |
| L2 Learning Enjoyment | "The experience of being involved in an active process of language learning gives me such a tremendous pleasure" (participant 3) |
| L2 Desired Proficiency | "My language wish is to reach an advanced level of Persian proficiency" (participant 9) |
| L2 Future Image | "Five years later, I'll be a competent cultural attaché of Iranin my own country" (participant 2) |
| Positive Feelings Toward L2 Speakers | "In a world village you should be open to multicultural citizens" (participant 5) |
| Internal Incentives For L2 Learning | "I just love learning Persian since it keeps me connected to my Iranian online friends" (participant 1) |
| External Incentives For L2 Learning | "My family thinks my future career demands a good command of Persian" (participant 10) |
| Personal Pursuits In L2 Learning | "In my field of study, it's a must to be familiar with old Persian texts" (participant 7) |

Table 3. Initial Motivation (Interview 1)

| Participants | L2 Learning Experience | L2 Learning Enjoyment | L2 Desired Proficiency | L2 Future Image | Positive Feelings Towards L2 Speakers | Internal Incentives For L2 Learning | External Incentives For L2 Learning | Personal Pursuits In L2 Learning |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | X | | | X | | |
| 2 | | | | X | | | X | X |
| 3 | | X | X | | | | | |
| 4 | X | | X | | | | X | |
| 5 | | | | | X | | X | X |
| 6 | | X | | | X | | | |
| 7 | | | | | | | X | X |
| 8 | | X | | | | | X | |
| 9 | | X | | | | X | | X |
| 10 | X | | | X | | | X | |

Table 4. Task Motivation (Interview 2)

| Participants | L2 Learning Experience | L2 Learning Enjoyment | L2 Desired Proficiency | L2 Future Image | Positive Feelings Towards L2 Speakers | Internal Incentives For L2 Learning | External Incentives For L2 Learning | Personal Pursuits In L2 Learning |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | | | | X | | |
| 2 | | X | | X | | X | | X |
| 3 | | X | | | | | | |
| 4 | X | | X | | | | X | |
| 5 | | X | | | X | | | X |
| 6 | | X | X | | X | | | |
| 7 | | X | | | | X | | X |
| 8 | | X | | | | | X | |
| 9 | | X | | | | X | | X |
| 10 | X | | | X | | X | | |

Table 5. Final Motivation (Interview 3)

| Participants | L2 Learning Experience | L2 Learning Enjoyment | L2 Desired Proficiency | L2 Future Image | Positive Feelings Towards L2 Speakers | Internal Incentives For L2 Learning | External Incentives For L2 Learning | Personal Pursuits In L2 Learning |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | | | | X | | |
| 2 | | X | | X | | X | | X |
| 3 | | X | | | | | | |
| 4 | X | | X | | | X | | |
| 5 | | X | | | X | | | X |
| 6 | X | X | X | | X | | | |
| 7 | X | X | | | | X | | X |
| 8 | | X | | | | | X | |
| 9 | | | | | | X | | X |
| 10 | X | | | X | | X | | |

Table 6. Fluctuation in Participants' Motivation (between 1st and 2nd interview)

| Participants | Overall Change in Motivational Intensity | Cause |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Weaker motivation | Not receiving what he expected |
| 2 | Stronger motivation | Visualizing a high future image of self |
| 3 | Weaker motivation | Not advancing much in her L2 proficiency |
| 4 | No specific progress | Nothing specific mentioned |
| 5 | Stronger motivation | Working hard to materialize his long established goals |
| 6 | Stronger motivation | Being made sensitive to multicultural understanding |
| 7 | Stronger motivation | Feeling a fit between task type and his character type |
| 8 | No specific progress | Nothing specific mentioned |
| 9 | Stronger motivation | Being engaged with real life simulation tasks |
| 10 | Stronger motivation | Getting what it needs for her future career |

Table 7. Comparison of overall motivation from Interview 1 to Interview 3

| Participants | Motivational intensity |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | Lower |
| 2 | Higher |
| 3 | Lower |
| 4 | The same |
| 5 | Higher |
| 6 | Higher |
| 7 | Higher |
| 8 | The same |
| 9 | Higher |
| 10 | Higher |