

Dörnyei, Z.; Kubanyiova, M. (2014). *Motivating Learners, Motivating Teachers: Building vision in the language classroom*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press

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This volume deals with motivation and vision. More specifically, it explores *how* to motivate (learners and teachers) *through* vision. The concept of *vision* is defined throughout as one of the most powerful motivational forces, a concept that incorporates both the idea of a desired *cognitive goal* (i.e. becoming a competent language user or a competent language teacher) and also a *sensory representation* of the ways in which this goal can be achieved. While considering the transforming power of vision, this book explores both the students' side and the teachers' side of the matter. The authors explain that in order for classrooms to become truly conducive environments for the acquisition of a foreign/second language, a deep transformation of how they work needs to begin with teachers. Visionary language teachers have the power to emotionally *infect* their learners and thus stimulate their vision too: «the two [teacher and student] are inextricably linked because the former is needed for the latter to blossom» (p. 3).

The present volume is subdivided into three main parts. In the first part, we find a theoretical overview of the concepts of vision and motivation (ch. 1); in the second part, there are six chapters (chs. 2-7) that explore the link between motivation and vision of language learners, while in the third part there are two chapters (chs. 8-9) dedicated to the motivation and vision of language teachers. In this review, greater attention is dedicated to the first part, the theoretical one, while the others are concisely summarised, given their practical nature of «user-friendly guide», as the authors define it (cited on p. 161).

In the opening theoretical chapter, vision is presented as inextricably linked with the concept of *self*. Drawing on van der Helm's work (2009, cited on p. 9), the authors identify three fundamental aspects that vision incorporates: the *future*, the *ideal*, and the *desire for intentional change*. It is thus understandable how vision is linked to the concept of self: vision is a sort of 'picture' of the individual's idea of who s/he would like to become, of one's desired possible future self (cfr. Markus, H.; Nurius, P. [1986]. «Possible selves». *American Psychologist*, 41 (9), cited on p. 11).

Moreover, recalling Higgins's Self-Discrepancy Theory, the authors explain that a possible future self can be an *ideal* self (i.e. the person one would really like to become) or an *ought-to* self (i.e. the person one believes one should become, because of external responsibilities or social pressures). These two possible selves can act as powerful future self guides provided that the conditions for them to direct behaviour are in place. First of all, it is necessary that the person *does have* a cherished future self-image, otherwise there would be no goal to reach. Second, this desired future self must be sufficiently *different* from the present self because if there is no perceived gap between current and desired state there is no need to invest energy in the endeavour to lessen this gap. Third, the desired self-image should be *elaborate*, detailed, vivid: if the image is blurred, the individual will invest less effort to reach it. Fourth, the desired self must be perceived as *plausible*, otherwise no energy will be spent in that direction. Fifth, the desired self ought to be considered not so easy (and certain) to reach and getting to it should be perceived as a *demanding* struggle. Sixth, the future self must *not be incompatible* with other parts of one's self (for example, with the ought-to self). Seventh, the desired self-image should comprise a set of *procedural strategies* that the individual could adopt in order to reach it. Eighth, the future self must be *activated* regularly in the individual's mind and, finally, it has to be counterbalanced by the presence of a *feared self* in the same domain.

As regards self-images, the authors present the concept of *mental imagery*, defining it in terms of «quasi-perceptual experience», as those «pictures that stimulate all our senses» (cited on p. 14). Mental imagery is a fundamental tool to develop vision because it helps visualization: defined by Shakespeare in Hamlet as «seeing in the mind's eye», it is the process through which one creates a mental image, vivid and elaborate, of him/herself acting in the future. Neurobiology (cfr. Cox 2012, cited on p. 14) tells us that the human brain cannot discriminate between what happens in reality, physically, and the lucid imagery of a simulated event: therefore, visualization is a powerful tool to direct the individual's energies and efforts towards the future. In addition, studies confirm the existence of a past-future link: brain regions activated when one recalls a past event are similarly activated when one imagines the future. Hence, evoking past self-images is important because it can help the ability to visualize in general (future as well). In sport psychology, for example, mental imagery is largely used because of its two main functions: *cognitive* functions, for planning (winning) strategies; *motivational* function, to propel and energize behaviour. In addition, when envisioning him/herself in the future one can adopt either a first person perspective or a third person perspective. The former – in which the individual sees him/herself with his/her own eyes – allows him to focus on the *experience* itself; the latter – in which the individual sees him/herself as an external observer – *integrates* the experience into

the individual's self-concept, thus creating a unity of self-and-experience, which is not possible when adopting a first person perspective (because the subject of the action is also the observer so s/he is not in the frame).

The introductory chapter continues with two sections: the first is specifically dedicated to language learners and the second to language teachers. In the first one, we find a concise excursus of how studies on language learning motivation developed from the Gardnerian *social psychological period* (1959-1990), through the *cognitive-situated period* (1990s), to the current *socio-dynamic approaches* (2000-present), with the description of Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System, comprising three main elements: Ideal L2 self, Ought-to L2 self and L2 learning experience (cfr. Dörnyei 2009, cited on pp. 21-22). In the second section, we find a discussion on how motivation and vision apply to language teachers as well. As regards teachers, their cognitions are said to have a great impact in shaping their teaching practices. Kubanyiova's research on language teacher conceptual change (cfr. Kubanyiova 2012, cited on pp. 24-25) discovered that the teachers' vision of themselves in the future plays a major role in how they get involved in new ideas and therefore develop (and change) as professionals. In particular, the author found that in order to understand what motivates teachers to do the job they do, it is necessary to gain understanding of their «possible language teacher selves»: Ideal L2 teacher self (i.e. who a teacher would like to become), Ought-to L2 teacher self (i.e. who a teacher thinks s/he should become) and Feared L2 teacher self (i.e. who a teacher is afraid of becoming). Depending on the characteristics of the novel approaches/ideas that teachers are confronted with, three developmental routes are possible: the *nice-but-not-for-me route*, when the new approach/idea does not integrate with the teacher's professional future self-image; the *couldn't-agree-more route*, when there is no perceived discrepancy between actual and desired states and the *nice-but-too-scary route*, when the new approaches/ideas clash or threaten the teacher's self.

The second part of the present volume comprises six chapters which represent a practical section about how to motivate language learners through vision. The authors propose a flexible framework, a sort of 'path' along which learners should be guided (by their teachers) until they become visionary students, whose daily efforts are energized by their motivation to reach their cherished ideal L2 self. The first step of this route (ch. 2) consists of *creating* the language learner vision: the five strategies proposed aim at raising the students' awareness about their capabilities, a process thanks to which learners recognize their personal strengths and values and, based on these, are able to picture a future ideal self-image. The second step (ch. 3) involves the process of *strengthening* the vision through imagery enhancement. The five strategies presented here share the aim of helping learners' build as elaborate and vivid a vision as possible: as previously said, if one's vision is blurred and unclear the

individual will not feel any urgency to act in order to reach it. The following step (ch. 4) consists of *substantiating* the learner's vision by making it plausible. Three strategies are highlighted here and their objective is to help learners create realistic expectations about their future ideal selves, avoiding self-deception. The next step (ch. 5) consists of *transforming* the vision into action. Drawing on a Japanese saying according to which «vision without action is daydream» (cited on p. 99), the three strategies suggested here aim at channelling the energy released by one's vision into constructive routes towards success. The fifth step (ch. 6) involves the effort of *keeping* the vision *alive*. The three strategies suggested aim at activating the learners' vision regularly, in order for it to be linked to their pure, context-independent transportable identity (cfr. Zimmermann 1998, cited on p. 109) rather than to their artificial student identity (highly context-dependent). The last step (ch. 7) involves *counterbalancing* the vision by considering failure, in other words envisioning a feared self (i.e. personalisation of the negative consequences of not succeeding) in order to obtain maximum effectiveness of the vision (cfr. Oyserman; Markus 1990, cited on p. 114). However, as failure is a deeply emotive subject, before adopting the three strategies presented in this last chapter, a careful consideration of the learner characteristics (especially in terms of self-esteem) is highly recommended.

The third part of this book comprises two chapters dedicated to the motivation and vision of language teachers. Chapter 8 deals with the subject of *igniting* (or *re-igniting*) the flame of vision: the four strategies suggested aim at helping teachers understand who they are in order to understand who they want to become (i.e. their ideal future self). Moreover, teachers should reflect upon the '*whys*', the reasons, values, moral purposes and theories that inform their practice in order to gain a better understanding of themselves in their roles. When teachers become aware of the discrepancy, or dissonance, between their ideal and their actual language teacher self, «creative tension» (Senge 1990/2006, cited on p. 140) is released and fosters the process of real change. Chapter 9 discusses four strategies aimed at *guarding* the flame of teachers' vision; the social environment where teachers work causes pressures and constraints that can undermine it. It is thus important that they keep faith with their original vision and do not give way to ought-to self-images, externally imposed. The message which concludes this chapter is an invitation to nurture hope: «vision rests in hope» (cited on p. 155) so it is important that teachers never surrender to negative situations but always strive to find an aspect of their future that promises hope.

What implications for teaching do we get from this volume? First of all, we recognize that the role of vision is of great importance to foster motivation, which is the energy that stimulates the individual's striving towards the desired goal. This is true for both learners, wishing to become

competent second/foreign language users, but also for teachers, aiming at becoming truly motivated professionals. What vision offers – provided that the conditions we described above are in place – is both a *route* to a desired end-state and the *fuel* to stimulate action: hence, vision-related strategies should be incorporated in the teaching practice and aimed at both learners and teachers themselves. Second, we understand that *learner* and *teacher motivation* are deeply interrelated and thus have the power to influence each other. In particular, as regards teachers, they should be well aware of this mutual relationship because if they show engagement, commitment and enthusiasm for what they do, in all likelihood their students will follow suit. Several studies (not only in the field of applied linguistics) offer evidence of the fact that motivated learners are more likely to obtain better results than non-motivated ones so motivating students is a worthy endeavour. Last, we realize that the concept of vision is inextricably linked with that of *self*, both present and future (there would be no ‘future’ self if there were no current, present self). Teachers should be aware of this because when they are in class, working with students, they not only display a series of skills or adopt certain techniques but offer their true self (cfr. Hermanson 2009, cited on p. 161). Students receive such implicit messages and behave accordingly. We agree with Tompkins when he claims that «the kind of classroom situation one creates is the acid test of what one really stands for» (Tompkins 1990, cited on p. 161): in other words, when a whole class is successful, there are good chances that this is largely due to a successful teacher.

