

Taking My Motivational Temperature on a Language Task

Objective

- To target the way you present activities and tasks to help students meet their goals

Materials Needed

Duplicable handout *Taking My Motivational Temperature on a Language Task* (p. 405)

Before you begin, you may want to review “Student Motivation” (p. 52).

Instructions

1. Have students complete the survey.
2. Make copies of students’ responses so they have a record of their own reported motivations.

Tip

You may want to translate the motivational survey into the target language for appropriate levels. Even beginning- or intermediate-level students may follow this type of activity in the target language with simplification and modeling from the instructor.

Adaptations and Extensions

You can take your students’ motivational temperature in less formal ways, and perhaps, in parts. For example, as students are working in small groups on a task, you can ask the groups some of the questions outlined in the survey to gauge their motivation. This can be followed with a brief class discussion on how motivated they are as a group and individually to do similar tasks, and what specifically worked or did not work for them in this task. This can become an ongoing dialogue between students and the instructor that fosters motivation.

**Relevant Pages in
Students’ Guide:**

pp. 169-172

Suggested Time Frame:

10-20 minutes



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- 4 = **very** (much/good/important)
3 = **somewhat** (much/good/important)
2 = **not very** (much/good/important)
1 = **not at all** (good/important)

Pre-task motivation (to be completed only on occasion, like at the start of a course or a new unit)

What “motivational baggage” do I bring to this task?

- _____ How good am I at learning languages in general?
_____ How much do I like this language?
_____ How important is it for me to learn this language?
_____ How motivated am I in this general learning situation (e.g., learning language at school)?

If you are currently taking a language course:

- _____ How much motivation does this language course instill in me?
_____ How motivating is it to study with this teacher?
_____ How much do I like learning together with my peers in this course?
_____ How willing am I to do better in the target language than my fellow students?

Motivation concerning the task at hand

How motivated am I to do this specific task?

- _____ How beneficial does this task seem to be in terms of my goals for learning the language?
_____ How interesting does this task seem to be?
_____ How self-confident am I about my ability to do well on this task?

What is it like for me as I begin to do the task?

- _____ How much does the set-up of the task (e.g., physical conditions, grouping) add to my motivation?
_____ How sufficient has the guidance been (i.e., from the teacher, the textbook, etc.) as I look to completing this task?
_____ How much will my being anxious about this task actually facilitate my successful completion of it?

Looking ahead to the completion of the task:

_____ How much does the prospect of feedback (e.g., praise or grade) contribute to my performance on this task?

After the task is completed:

_____ How motivated am I to do other similar tasks now that I have completed this one?

This instrument was developed at the University of Minnesota by Andrew D. Cohen, with input by Zoltán Dörnyei at the University of Nottingham, England. Many of the dimensions in the instrument were inspired by Dörnyei's book, *Motivational strategies in the language classroom*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Regents of the University of Minnesota. From the Maximizing Study Abroad series published by the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition. See: carla.umn.edu/maxsa/guides
"Taking my motivational temperature on a language task" can be found on pp. 403–405 in *Maximizing study abroad: An instructional guide to strategies for language and culture learning and use* (2009) by Kappler Mikk, B., Cohen, A.D. & Paige, R.M. (with Chi, J., Lassegard, J., Maegher, M. & Weaver, S.), and the survey can be found on pp. 169–172 in *Maximizing study abroad: A students' guide to strategies for language and culture learning and use* (2nd ed.) (2006) by Paige R.M., Cohen, A.D., Kappler, B., Chi, J. and Lassegard, J.

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