

# Research on Second Language Teacher Motivation: From a Vygotskian Activity Theory Perspective

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## ***Abstract***

*Second language (L2) teachers' motivation has considerable influence on their students' L2 learning motivation, personal satisfaction, and fulfillment. It has important influence on national educational reform and development. Although a number of studies have examined teachers' motivation to teach, to date, few have focused on L2 teacher motivation. Based on the limitations identified in previous research, this paper articulates the inherent complexities of L2 teacher motivation and identifies its dynamic characteristics from the perspective of Vygotskian Activity Theory (AT). With a concise overview of AT, this paper elaborates on the applicability and relevance of AT to L2 teachers' motivation by emphasizing its comprehensiveness, its inclusive nature embracing inner contradictions, and its focus on the agent's longitudinal development. By giving a novice teacher's changes of L2 teacher motivation in Kumazawa's (2013) study, we present the way of analyzing and synthesizing L2 teacher motivation from a Vygotskian AT perspective.*

*Key words: L2 teacher motivation, sociocultural theory, activity theory, teaching motivation*

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## I . Introduction

This paper aims to present an alternative framework of investigating and analyzing second language (L2) teacher motivation from a Vygotskian Activity Theory (AT) (Engeström, 1987, 1999; Leont'ev, 1978, 1981) perspective. To date, it is difficult to find a study that explores L2 teacher motivation<sup>1)</sup> from an AT perspective. This paper first provides a summary of previous studies including teachers' motivation in general and then L2 teachers' motivation specifically. Then, it presents AT as a theoretical framework for research on L2 teachers' motivation. For this, the present paper discusses the applicability and relevance of AT to research on L2 teachers' motivation. Following this, it investigates how researchers explore and analyze L2 teacher motivation from a Vygotskian AT perspective by presenting a novice teacher's changes of L2 teacher motivation in Kumazawa's (2013) study. This paper concludes by re-emphasizing the importance of applying AT to research on L2 teachers' motivation.

The purpose of this paper is not to argue that previous research on L2 teacher motivation has no value. Rather, while appreciating the contributions of previous studies and their implications for L2 education, this paper aims to present an alternative framework of investigating and analyzing L2 teacher motivation with an AT perspective (Engeström, 1987, 1999; Leont'ev, 1978, 1981). AT is a comprehensive framework that does not separate the individuals from society; rather it focuses constantly on the interaction of the two. In other words, it "maps the social influences and relationships involved in network of human action" (Johnson & Golombek, 2011, p. 9). In addition, AT posits that one's cognition is not embedded in oneself, but emerges during interactions with others, artifacts, and other

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1) In this paper, L2 teacher motivation is a broad term that includes an L2 teacher's initial motivation for becoming an L2 teacher and current motivation or demotivation for L2 teaching. L2 teaching motivation refers to L2 teachers' motivational changes after they enter into an L2 teaching profession.

mediational means (Engeström, 1999). Therefore, by using AT as a theoretical framework, dynamic changes of L2 teacher motivation can be explored and analyzed more comprehensively. L2 teachers are real people, who "are necessarily located in particular cultural and historical contexts, and whose motivation and identities shape and are shaped by these contexts" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 78). In other words, AT helps researchers identify the role of individual teachers' specific and diverse social, cultural, and political contexts surrounding L2 teachers, and how he/she perceives or reacts.

## **II. Previous Research on Teacher Motivation**

Researchers of L2 motivation have investigated various educational contexts using different motivational theories (e.g., Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, 2011; Gardner, 1985; Kim, 2007, 2009, 2010; Lamb, 2007). However, teacher motivation, especially L2 teacher motivation, has received relatively little attention from researchers in the field of L2 motivation. In this section, three major areas of research on teacher motivation are presented and a few but significant studies of L2 teacher motivation are discussed.

### **A. Three Major Areas of Research on Teacher Motivation**

As Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) pointed out, previous studies have examined teachers' motivation in general by applying various models of motivation, including expectancy-value theory (e.g., Watt & Richardson, 2007, 2008), self-efficacy theory (e.g., Ashton, 1985), goal-orientation theory (e.g., Butler & Shibaz, 2008), and self-determination theory (e.g., Kunter et al., 2008; Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007). Broadly, previous studies of teachers' motivation can be classified into the following three categories: 1) those identifying the factors influencing an individual's initial motivation to become a teacher, 2) those considering factors having negative effects on teachers'

current motivation, and 3) those focusing on the longitudinal trajectory of changes in teachers' motivation.

In terms of the first area, intrinsic rather than extrinsic components have been highlighted as the most important reason for becoming a teacher (e.g., Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Watt & Richardson, 2007, 2008). For example, Watt and Richardson (2007, 2008) examined the factors influencing Australian pre-service teachers' motivation for choosing to become teachers. Grounded in expectancy-value theory, they developed the factors influencing teaching choice (FIT-Choice) scale and found that the intrinsic value of teaching was the highest-rated motivating factor. One of the intrinsic components identified in previous research is the altruistic factor, which is the motive to serve people (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). Brookhart and Freeman (1992) suggested that "altruistic, service-oriented goals and other intrinsic motivations are the source of the primary reasons entering teacher candidates report for why they chose teaching as a career" (p. 46). Teachers are motivated by their willingness to serve their society, to achieve the moral high ground, and to impart their knowledge or personal beliefs onto others (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000).

The second area identifies demotivational factors that negatively influence teachers. Previous studies have indicated that there is an overall decline in motivation after they have become teachers (e.g., Dinham & Scott, 2000; Zhang & Sapp, 2008), mainly because of job dissatisfaction, stress, and burnout. Typically, extrinsic or contextual factors are likely to be demotivating factors (e.g., Dinham & Scott, 2000), which can include macro-contextual (e.g., politicians and students' parents) and micro-contextual (e.g., the immediate teaching environment such as the school atmosphere and class size) factors. For example, teachers are motivated by their encounters with students, but at the same time, they tend to be demotivated by insufficient salaries, excessive workloads, or unsatisfactory teaching conditions.

The temporal axis of teacher motivation, the third area, has

received considerable attention from many researchers (e.g., Alexander, 2008; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Studies of teachers' motivation focus not only on the factors influencing individuals' motivation to become a teacher and current teaching motivation but also on the ongoing degree of motivation throughout their career (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Alexander (2008) suggested a need for a developmental model of teachers' motivation and pointed out that "there are complex cognitive, motivational, and socio-contextual factors that interact to predict the course of one's development in any formal domain, including the teaching profession" (p. 483).

### **B. Studies of L2 Teacher Motivation**

Although a number of studies have examined teachers' motivation in general by applying various theories of motivation, few have explored L2 teachers' motivation (e.g., Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Igawa, 2009; Kassabgy, Boraie, & Schmidt, 2001; Kumazawa, 2013; Pennington, 1995; Zhao, 2008). It is possible that there are differences between L2 teachers and teachers of other subjects.

L2 teaching is much more than simply teaching skills of a language. As Gardner (1985) pointed out, "languages are unlike any other subject taught in a classroom in that they involve the acquisition of skills and behavior patterns which are characteristic of another community" (p. 146). In particular, if an L2 (i.e., the content) is taught while using the L2 (i.e., the instructional medium), as in English as a Second Language (ESL) (i.e., Hwang, Seo, & Kim, 2010), then the boundary between the instructional content and the medium often becomes blurred, which is not the case in other classes. In this regard, Hammadou and Bernhardt (1987) stated that "being a foreign language teacher is in many ways unique within the profession of teaching" because "the content and the process for learning the content are the same. In other words, in foreign language teaching the medium is the message" (p. 302). Accordingly, an increasing number of studies specifically examining the

characteristics of L2 teachers have confirmed that there are unique characteristics that differentiate L2 teachers from others (e.g., Bell, 2005; Borg, 2006; Brosh, 1996; Lee, 2010; Shishavan & Sadeghi, 2009), such as the nature of the subject, the content of teaching, the teaching approach, and the teacher's characteristics.

Even though there are unique differences between L2 teachers and teachers of other subjects, few studies have included L2 language teacher as their participants (e.g., Igawa, 2009; Kassabgy et al., 2001; Pennington, 1995; Pennington & Riley, 1991; Zhao, 2008). Generally, researchers have examined L2 teachers' motivation since the 1990s, and Pennington and her colleagues pioneered the field (Pennington, 1995; Pennington & Riley, 1991). Pennington (1995) examined ESL teachers' job satisfaction and motivation by using a questionnaire and concluded that teachers are motivated mainly by factors related to intrinsic rewards and human relations. In addition, she addressed various stressors and causes of burnout that can negatively effect teachers' motivation. She recommended that school administrators provide teachers with sufficient support and environments conducive to working. Moreover, she suggested that ESL teachers should not regard their careers as trivial or transitional and that there is a need for upward mobility and a sense of optimism.

Similarly, Kassabgy et al. (2001) considered 107 Egyptian and Hawaiian ESL/English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers and assessed their rewards, satisfaction, and views on motivating factors. They found that, as a group, teachers prefer intrinsic rewards to extrinsic ones. In addition, they found that teachers value intrinsic aspects of work more than extrinsic ones and that there is a positive relationship between rewards (both intrinsic and extrinsic) and job satisfaction. Igawa (2009) determined that intrinsic aspects of teaching are a major factor influencing an individual's initial motivation to become an English teacher. Zhao (2008) investigated the reason why 17 high school EFL teachers in China chose their profession by examining accounts of their own teaching histories. He highlighted the social and psychological factors influencing the teachers' identity and

commitment and suggested ways to enhance the intrinsic aspects of teachers' motivation.

However, like other teachers, most L2 teachers find it difficult to maintain this type of intrinsic motivation to teach because of exogenous challenges such as changes in work environments and in education policies (Kumazawa, 2013; Praver & Oga-Baldwin, 2008; Sugino, 2010). For example, Sugino (2010) found four factors that demotivated Japanese L2 teachers, including students' attitudes, students' abilities and school facilities, work conditions, and human relationships. Among them, students' negative attitudes were recognized as being the most detrimental factor on teachers' motivation. In sum, these studies have illustrated that the major factors having negative effects on teachers' motivation tend to be externally derived, including insufficient wages, a lack of advancement opportunities, a lack of respect, and stress from a low level of autonomy.

Despite these insights, previous studies examining the factors motivating individuals to become an L2 teacher or the demotivational factors influencing L2 teachers have focused on either intrinsic or extrinsic dimensions. Although previous studies have identified the representative characteristics of L2 teachers in terms of their motivation (e.g., Pennington, 1995) and provided cross-national findings based on factor analyses (Kassabgy et al., 2001), few have focused on the highly complex individual and social contexts surrounding L2 teachers. As Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005) pointed out, L2 motivation researchers can grasp a multifaceted picture of L2 teachers' motivation by investigating their "professional, cultural, political, and individual identities which they claim or which are assigned to them" (p. 22).

Ushioda (2003) stated that motivation is not an individual concept but "a socially mediated phenomenon" (p. 90) and that teachers' motivation is not an exception. Thus, to explore L2 teachers' motivation, researchers need to consider the broader society in which they exist. Guided by Richardson and Watt's (2010) categorization, we consider the following four distinct streams of research on L2 teacher motivation: 1) initial career

motivation for becoming an L2 teacher, 2) the characteristics of initial career motivation, 3) fluctuation of L2 teachers' motivation based on a longitudinal time scale, and 4) teachers' responses during changes in their motivation. Each of these four streams constitutes a legitimate domain of research, but to better comprehend the broader dynamics of L2 teachers' motivation, L2 motivation researchers need a unifying paradigm or a conceptual tool. In this paper, we consider Vygotskian Activity Theory (AT) as a theoretical framework for exploring and analyzing teachers' motivation in a systematic manner. In the following sections, we review AT by focusing specifically on its relationship with research on L2 teachers' motivation.

### III. A Brief Overview of Activity Theory

According to Kuutti (1996), AT is "a philosophical and cross-disciplinary framework for studying different kinds of human practice as developmental processes, with both individual and social levels interlinked at the same time" (p. 25). AT has been widely employed in studies of human-computer interactions (Nardi, 1996), workplace learning (Engeström, 1987), L2 learning motivation (Kim, 2007; Ushioda, 2003, 2007), education (Wells, 2002), and teacher education (Johnson, 2009; E.-J. Kim, 2008).

AT is theoretically linked to Vygotsky's (1978, 1987) sociocultural theory (SCT), and was further developed by Leont'ev (1978, 1981). The central tenet of SCT is mediation because highly cognitive functions such as learning are fulfilled through conscious interactions between the learner and the proximal external existence which is perceived as important. In the context of L2 learning, learners can use different types of mediational tools, including those physical (pens, notebooks, and computers), psychological (L2 learning strategies), and human (L2 teachers and more capable peers). Note that learning and teaching have a clear reciprocal relationship: if one becomes impossible, then the other also loses its meaning. In addition, L2 teachers and learners play a role as a mediational tool for each

other. On the one hand, the quality of L2 learners' learning depends heavily on instruction, so L2 teachers are a major human tool for learners. On the other hand, students have considerable influence on their teachers' instruction, so in terms of L2 teachers' motivation, students are an important mediational tool. In the ongoing process of education, both the level and characteristics of teachers' and learners' motivation change.

AT "conceptualizes human cognition in relationship to human physically and socially motivated activities" (Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011, p. 97). Davydov (1999) defined an activity as "a specific form of the societal existence of humans consisting of purposeful changing of natural and social reality" and emphasized that "any activity carried out by a subject includes goals, means, the process of molding the object, and the result. In fulfilling the activity, the subjects also change and develop themselves" (p. 39). Kuutti (1996, p. 27) argued that "an activity is a form of doing directed to an object, and activities are distinguished from each other according to their objects."

Based on Vygotsky's work, Leont'ev (1978, 1979, 1981) developed the notion of mediated social processes and attempted to make the dynamic interaction between the individual and his or her society more explicit. He highlighted three conceptual strata in every activity system: motives, actions, and operations. In explaining these strata, Block (2003, p. 102) says that "motives are about why something is done; action is about what is done; and operation is about how something is done." The first stratum (motives) is driven by object-related motives such as biological, psychological, and socially constructed motives<sup>2</sup>). The second stratum (actions) is driven by conscious, tool-mediated,

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2) Kaptelinin (2005, p. 6) stated that the English word "object" translates into two different, but related, terms in Russian: *objekt* and *predmet*, where "*objekt* deals mostly with material things existing independently in mind" and "*predmet* often means the target or content of a thought or an action." Kaptelinin emphasized that, when Leont'ev (1978) wanted to denote "the object of activity," he had always used the term *predmet*, instead of *objekt*. Therefore, in the usage of "object" in AT, we need to pay attention to the target-oriented, underlying momentum inherent in the original Russian term, *predmet*.

and goal-oriented motives. Actions are driven by goals, and implemented by individuals or small groups belonging to a particular community. Operations are "methods for accomplishing actions" and regulated by specific conditions (Leont'ev, 1978, p. 65).

Leont'ev's (1978, 1979) concepts were further elaborated by Engeström (1999), who proposed a complex model of an activity system. This model includes six essential elements of human activity: subjects, mediational tools (or instruments), objects, rules, communities, and division of labor. In Figure 1, the subject of any activity refers to an individual or a group of actors engaged in the activity (e.g., an L2 teacher). The subject mediates various instruments, including both psychical and symbolic tools (e.g., textbooks, blackboards, and the L2), to achieve the object (e.g., an increase in students' L2 competence). The object is then transformed into visible outcomes (e.g., students' achievement of communication skills). These outcomes can encourage or hinder the subject's participation in future activities. The rules refer to explicit and implicit regulations, norms, and conventions that regulate the subject's participation while the subject is engaged in an activity (e.g., the use of an L2 in the classroom and students remaining quiet while the teacher is delivering a lecture). The community is a group or an organization to which the subject belongs, who shares the same interest and involvement with the same object. Division of labor is the shared responsibility coming from different modes of participation by members engaged in an activity (e.g., instructors teaching L2 communication skills and students learning an L2).

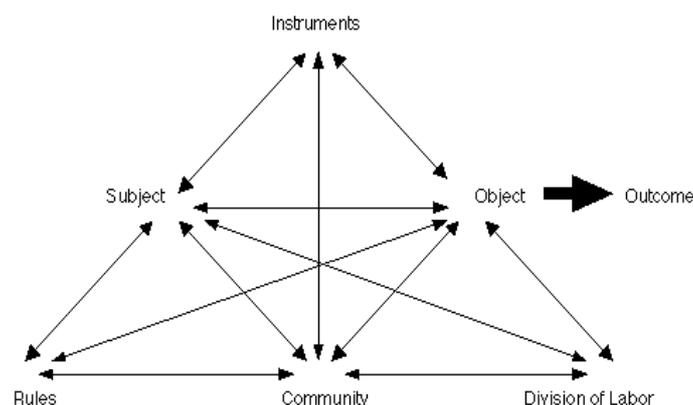


Figure 1. A complex model of an activity system (Engeström, 1999, p. 31).

Compared with the classical AT perspective (e.g., Leont'ev, 1978, 1979), this model "brings together local human activity and larger social-cultural-historical structures" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 222). Note that all six elements are related to one another and that "unless considered together with other elements, each element in Engeström's activity triangle does not have meaning... Each element of an activity system is not static, but continuously shifts with reference to other elements over time" (Kim, 2007, p. 33).

Note that a central principle of AT involves contradictions, which manifest themselves as problems, ruptures, conflicts, and clashes between two (or more) elements of the system. Engeström (1999) emphasized that the essential and inevitable nature of an activity system involves contradictions because human activity does not and cannot exhibit consistency and stability. These contradictions are ubiquitous in every activity system and indicate potential for the agent's (i.e., L2 teachers or learners) development. Multidirectional arrows shown in Figure 1 represent such contradictions.

As an autonomous agent, each human being tries to engage in purposive behaviors, but at times this is not in line with other agents' behaviors. This leads to an initial contradiction, but at the same time it provides opportunities for collaboration or reconciliation. This leads to the individual's (i.e., the subject in

Engeström's AT) cognitive development. For these contradictions, Engeström (1987) argued that, contradictions emerge in any human activity, and evolve within and between the six elements of the activity system (see Figure 1). Because an activity is not isolated and is more like a node in a broader network of activities, it is influenced by other activities and changes in its environment, similar to self-reproduction in complex dynamic systems theory (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). In sum, AT uses the term "contradiction" to indicate a mismatch within and between elements, between different activities, or between different developmental phases of a single activity. AT views a contradiction as a source of development, since activities exist in the process of working through contradictions (Engeström, 1999).

Given this, L2 teacher motivation refers to an L2 teacher's actions and reactions resulting from interactions between him/her and his/her community by using various mediational tools in his/her longitudinal L2 teaching activity. In the following sections, we elaborate on the applicability and relevance of applying AT to L2 teachers' motivation by focusing specifically on its relationship with research on L2 teacher motivation.

#### **IV. Applying Activity Theory to Research on L2 Teacher Motivation**

Recently, a small but increasing number of studies have employed AT to shed fresh light on L2 motivation research (e.g., Kim, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011; Ushioda, 2007) and the field of L2 teacher education (e.g., Johnson, 2006, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011; E.-J. Kim, 2008, 2011). However, few have applied AT to research on L2 teacher motivation. It is clear that research on L2 teacher motivation is no less complex than that on L2 learning motivation. In addition, although a model of general motivation may be applied to research on L2 teacher motivation, teaching is a unique professional activity with certain specific motivational characteristics (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Thus, a comprehensive approach is needed for exploring the

complexities of L2 teacher motivation and its interactions with sociocultural factors in the dynamic context of the teaching profession. In other words, for an in-depth understanding of L2 teachers' activities, it is essential to understand the broader social, cultural, and historical macro-structures that shape those activities (Johnson, 2009). Using AT for research on L2 teacher motivation is promising for the following three major reasons: 1) its comprehensiveness, 2) its inclusive nature that embraces inner contradictions, and 3) its focus on the agent's longitudinal development.

First, the AT framework is comprehensive in that it can examine the interactions between individual teachers and their social, cultural, and historical contexts without being confined in previous research paradigms in L2 motivation. L2 teaching is a special professional activity and involves much more than teaching language skills in the classroom. That is, it involves intricate relationships within the community, such as between students, parents, schools, colleagues, and the national education system. AT "can afford us to track multiple relations between individuals and institutions and between artifacts and rules that mediate relations between them" (Roth & Tobin, 2002, p. 113). In Engeström's (1987, 1999) activity model, the six elements are connected to one another, and each element influences another either directly or indirectly. For example, to investigate the changes in an L2 teacher's motivation, researchers need to consider his or her personal experience, history, and specific social contexts within a community. Although some studies have identified the factors motivating an individual to become an L2 teacher and the demotivational factors influencing L2 teachers, no study has examined the sociocultural interaction between individual L2 teachers, their personal experience, and their broad social context. To explore L2 teachers' motivation, researchers need to consider their specific social, cultural, and political contexts of teaching and learning. In this regard, AT can help identify the roles of L2 teachers' social lives and communities and determine how they perceive or react to their environments.

Second, the AT framework does not exclude the

contradictions, conflicts, or tensions often identified in the context of L2 teaching. Instead, this framework embraces such contradictions as a major component of analysis. Engeström (1999) argued that every human activity system connotes "inner contradictions" because of the unstable and unpredictable nature of human activity. In L2 teaching, there exist potential conflicts between the subject (e.g., the L2 teacher) and the community. For example, in the context of L2 learning and teaching in Asia, communicative language teaching (CLT) is often regarded as a default in L2 education, and there may be conflicts between this educational mandate and actual L2 teaching. In some cases, L2 teachers' attempt to introduce CLT can be met with considerable resistance in traditionally grammar-oriented and teacher-centered classrooms (e.g., Shamim, 1996). From a discourse analytic view, Hwang, Seo, and Kim (2010) reported that in South Korea, CLT is misappropriately used by high school students in CLT classes to challenge the authority of English-language teachers. When L2 teachers face such conflicts, they try to solve and overcome them by using available tools.

As shown in E.-J. Kim (2008, 2011), the way the activity system resolves contradictions provides an opportunity for exploring future trajectories because the process toward conflict resolution can lead to new activities by bringing qualitative changes in the existing activity system. Given this, contradictions can become the growth point for changes in human activity systems, and AT can be an effective heuristic device for illustrating emerging contradictions in the teaching activity system (Engeström, 1987, 1999). However, if teachers cannot resolve and overcome such contradictions, tensions, or conflicts, they may face a demotivation or amotivation.

Therefore, AT can be useful for identifying such conflicts and revealing the status quo of L2 teaching. Examining what contradictions or tensions emerge in L2 teaching, why they emerge, and, most importantly, how they are resolved in different teaching activity systems can provide a valuable account of changes in L2 teachers' motivation.

Third, AT is a developmental theory that seeks to explain

the qualitative changes in human practices over time (Engeström, 1999). Activity systems are not stable, but with their constituent entities and relations, they undergo a continuous transformation. In other words, activity systems are inherently historical. Note that, like learner motivation, teacher motivation has longitudinal characteristics. Watt and Richardson (2008) suggested that there are three main areas of teacher motivation: 1) issues concerning teachers' career choice, 2) complexities of the teaching process, and 3) factors influencing the development of teachers and their students. We need to know not only why people want to be L2 teachers but also understand their current motivation. That is, we should understand what motivates them to become teachers and what demotivates them once they start teaching. From there, we can understand how they cope with contradictions and conflicts as well as changes in their motivation. Individuals who want to be an L2 teacher may later exhibit a decreased level of motivation after becoming a teacher, or vice versa. Thus, AT has the potential to capture longitudinal changes in L2 teachers' motivation.

## **V. L2 Teacher Motivation from an Activity Theory Perspective: An Example**

In the previous section, we elaborated on the applicability of AT to L2 teacher motivation by focusing its comprehensiveness, its inclusive nature that embraces inner contradictions, and its focus on the agent's longitudinal development. This section exemplifies how to apply Vygotskian AT in L2 teacher motivation by examining a novice EFL teacher's changes of L2 teaching motivation in Kumazawa's (2013) study. Although this research highlights Japanese EFL context, we believe that this can shed light on English teacher research in South Korea.

Kumazawa (2013) examined the changes of self-concept and motivation of four novice EFL teachers at public secondary schools in Japan. This longitudinal study traced the participants' changes over the period of two years by adopting various

qualitative research methods. This study indicated that the four participating novice teachers had various initial motives for becoming secondary school English teachers. In addition, they expressed their own versions of ideal teaching selves and diverse teaching goals and showed signs of fresh enthusiasm for teaching. However, they experienced "reality shocks" after having entered into L2 teaching profession and eventually presented different trajectories of L2 teaching motivation.

In order to provide an in-depth analysis of changes of L2 teachers' motivations for teaching English from an AT perspective, we focus on one of the four participants, Emiko, because she shared general characteristics with the majority of findings of previous studies. That is, intrinsic factors have been highlighted as the most dominant reason for becoming a teacher, whereas extrinsic or contextual factors, particularly immediate teaching environment, have been likely to be detrimental factors that demotivated L2 teachers. We will explain her changes of L2 teaching motivation from an AT perspective through a series of activity systems.

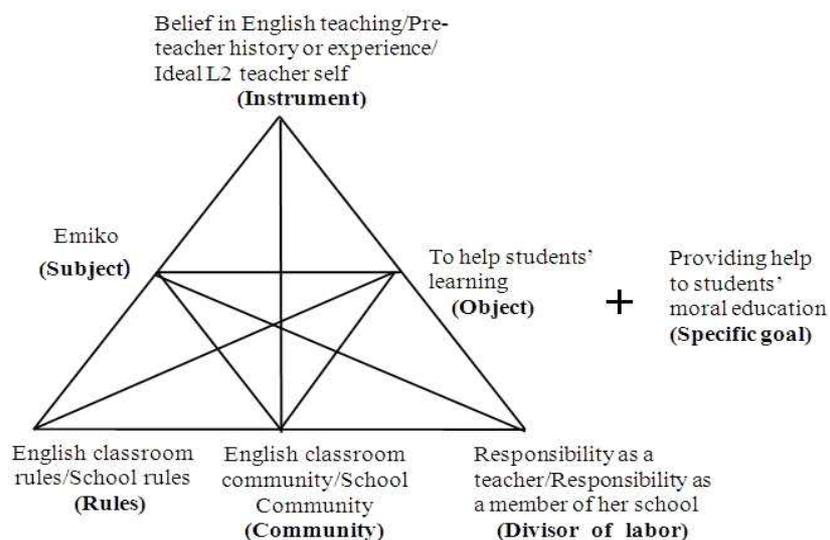


Figure 2. Emiko's initial motives for becoming an English teacher.

Emiko was a 22-year-old female novice junior high school teacher. For Emiko, becoming a teacher was her dream since her childhood. She had a positive attitude toward the teaching profession and regarded teaching as her lifetime career. In addition, she chose to become an English teacher because she wanted to have positive influences on students. This altruistic attraction can be seen as one type of intrinsic factors (cf. Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). In particular, she was interested in students' moral education. She reported that "many students in public secondary schools needed to know appropriate social behaviors" (Kumazawa, 2013, p. 50). Moreover, she mentioned that she was positively influenced by her teachers, and it was now her turn to do the same for students. Emiko's initial L2 teaching activity system is illustrated in Figure 2 above. In her initial activity system, her ideal L2 self and pre-teacher history and experiences functioned as instrument. Her teaching object was to help students' learning, especially providing help to students' moral education.

Unlike Emiko's ideal EFL teaching situation, she experienced harsh reality shocks of secondary school teaching. These conflicts mainly occurred in her teaching community and English classroom community; that is, her school and her students. For example, extensive extracurricular activities that her school assigned to her and her students' less-than-ideal English proficiency levels were the two major challenges for Emiko. Consequently, these conflicts "quickly led to the weakened effects of their ideal self images and thus negatively affected their motivation" (Kumazawa, 2013, p. 50).

To be specific, Emiko strongly desired to emphasize the humanistic side of education. However, after she entered into the L2 teaching profession, she found that her school overemphasized teachers' duties of the extracurricular activities than L2 teaching. The extensive range of duties of her school put great pressure on her and then decreased her teaching motivation. She was dissatisfied and often complained about her teaching situation. On the one hand, these various kinds of extensive duties resulted in psychological sufferings for Emiko.

On the other hand, these extensive duties constrained her professional development since the busy teaching life left her with little time to prepare for her classes and to study for better teaching ideas and methods. Additionally, students' lower level of proficiency in English was another salient detrimental factor that demotivated Emiko. She was frustrated about her students' English proficiency levels. She reported that "none of the students here could write words like "teacher," "school," or "student" even though they were second-year students" (Kumazawa, 2013, p. 51). These two factors eventually decreased Emiko's motivation for teaching English.

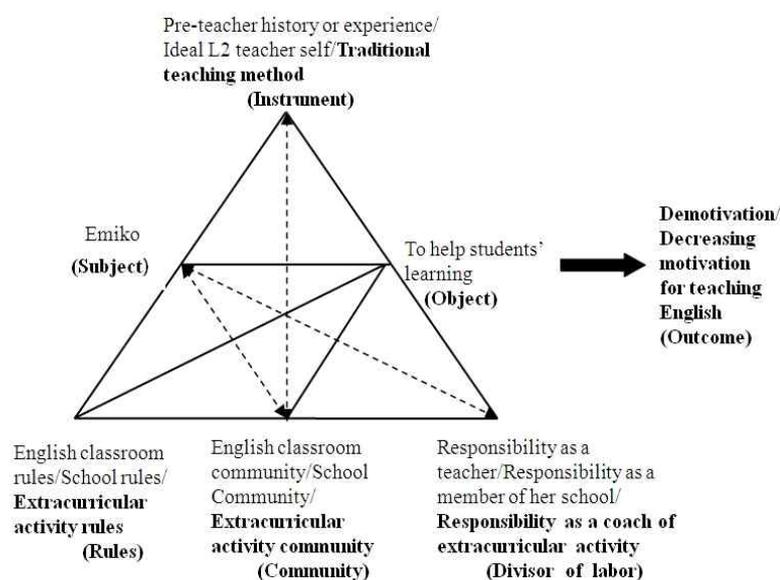


Figure 3. Demotivational stage of Emiko's L2 teaching<sup>3)</sup>.

As previous studies indicated, in-service L2 teachers' motivation tended to decrease after entering the profession (Kassabgy et al., 2001; Pennington, 1995; Pennington & Riley, 1991; Sugino, 2010). The majority of novice L2 teachers found there was a large gap between their ideal and actual L2 teaching

3) The double-headed arrows represent tensions between the elements (i.e., subject, instrument, object, rule, community, and division of labor).

situations. As Kumazawa (2013) pointed out that "under inescapable pressure from the environment, the novice teaches' ideal English teacher selves gradually surrendered to the "imposed" ought-to selves, depriving them of the energy to strive for their initial goal of teaching communicative English" (p. 51). Given this, from an AT perspective, when L2 teachers attempted to resolve or overcome conflicts occurring in their teaching contexts through mediational tools, they were able to maintain or regain motivation (i.e., remotivation). However, when they failed to overcome these conflicts, their teaching motivation tended to decrease (demotivation) or disappear (amotivation).

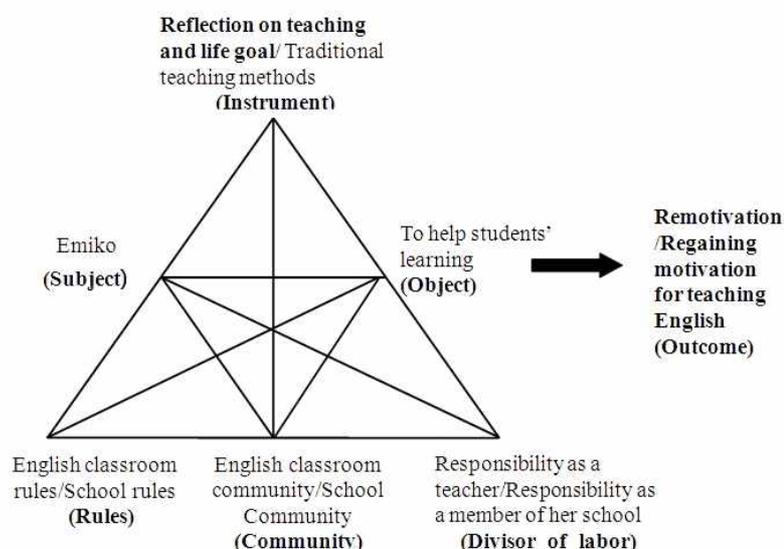


Figure 4. Remotivational stage of Emiko's L2 teaching.

In Emiko's case, she overcame these conflicts by making efforts herself. Figure 4 illustrates the remotivational stage of Emiko's teaching. In Emiko's second year of teaching, she released herself from the extracurricular activities through talking with her school principal. Accordingly, she was able to concentrate on her teaching. For Emiko, her reflection on her actual teaching situation, especially her interactions with her students, led her to question her goal for teaching and life. She

started to focus on how to help her students with learning English. These reflective thoughts made Emiko reconfirm L2 teaching as her lifetime career. She adjusted her teaching goal to helping her students learn English. Kumazawa (2013) argued that it was noteworthy that there was a positive impact of the process of reflection on Emiko's teaching. In this stage, her sense of reflexivity was an important mediational tool that led Emiko to regain her motivation for teaching English.

Emiko's story demonstrated her changes in L2 teaching motivation over the period of two years. In this section, by using Engeström's (1999) AT framework, her motivational changes were analyzed and explained through a series of longitudinal activity system models, and the important interactions among the essential components of the AT model were discussed. Specifically, it illustrated that L2 teacher motivation showed a dynamic process mediated by contextual conditions and personal experiences, rather than a static attribute (Richardson & Watt, 2010; Ushioda, 2003). In other words, we not only need to explore why Emiko became an L2 teacher but also need to examine her emergent motivational changes: what factors decreased her teaching motivation, why these factors demotivated her, how these factors influenced her teaching motivation, and, most importantly, how Emiko reacted to or resolved these conflicts.

Given Emiko's story, we argue that AT has the potential to capture longitudinal changes in L2 teachers' motivation. That is, AT is a comprehensive framework that focuses on not only individual aspects but the interrelationships of social factors (Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Kim, 2010). It enables us to understand the intricate relationships between individual teachers and the entire school or regional society and to capture their motivational changes from a comprehensive perspective. AT allows us to investigate the dynamic changes of L2 teacher motivation by considering how and why individual teachers enter professional L2 teaching. Moreover, by adopting an AT perspective, we can reach a lucid understanding how the L2 teacher motivation is shaped through interactions with their

specific contextual, social, cultural, and historical factors.

Furthermore, from an AT perspective, we can understand L2 teachers as active participants in education having their own agency, and how other elements of Engeström's (1999) AT model (e.g., community, division of labor, and rules) affect individual L2 teachers' motivation to different degrees in different phases in teaching. In addition, Emiko's story demonstrated that each element of an activity system was not static, but constantly shifted while interacting with other elements over time.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Previous classroom-oriented studies have consistently demonstrated that L2 learners can easily detect their instructors' motivation to teach. For this reason, teachers' motivation can directly influence their students' L2 achievement (Chambers, 1999; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Williams & Burden, 1997). Given the dynamic nature of L2 teacher motivation, it is important to adopt a comprehensive and systematic framework in research on L2 teacher motivation. To that end, this paper views Vygotskian AT as a potentially useful theoretical framework.

Although previous studies of L2 teachers have adopted AT as a governing principle (Johnson, 2006, 2009; E.-J. Kim, 2008, 2011), few have examined L2 teachers' motivation from an AT perspective. AT maintains that every human activity, including L2 teaching, is a fundamentally artifact-mediated and goal-oriented activity. L2 teachers do not engage in the teaching activity in isolation, that is, their behavior is the product of the social mediation between themselves and their meaningfully perceived context. In addition, the teaching itself becomes a tool for mediating the relationship between the learner and his or her (L2) society.

This paper argues that using AT for research on L2 teachers' motivation can provide a better understanding of its complexities and multiple relationships. From an AT perspective, L2 teaching, a specific type of human activity, is continuously shaped and

reshaped by the L2 teacher's accumulating expertise in his or her local context. This context embraces the teacher's experience and history as well as his or her cultural, social, and historical factors (Johnson, 2006, 2009). This indicates that more concerted academic efforts are required to investigate the dynamics of L2 teacher motivation.

Given this, for future research on L2 teacher motivation, researchers can employ a longitudinal study to explore L2 teachers' motivational changes over a longer period of time. For example, the follow-up studies can recruit participants at the onset of their teaching profession, and trace their changes of L2 teaching motivation through various qualitative research methods. Furthermore, by using Engeström's (1999) AT framework, future research can analyze and explain L2 teachers' changes of L2 teaching motivation through a series of longitudinal activity system models.

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