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A Descriptive Study of Kiswahili as a Foreign Language Learners' Motivations: HUFS Case Study

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Abstract

This study is a descriptive account of 40 Kiswahili as Foreign Language (KFL) students of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in South Korea of the 2009/2010 academic year. A questionnaire was administered to these students, after they agreed to take part in the study. The study is guided by Cohen and Dörnyei's (2002) process motivations and by Brown's (1981) traditional intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. The findings indicate that the students were variously motivated, although there was predominance of actional motivations over pre- and post-actional ones. Moreover, the majority of students were intrinsically motivated to learn KFL mainly within the global motivation framework, and others were integratively and instrumentally motivated. It was concluded that, given the dynamic nature of leaner motivations, the role of a foreign language teacher is sustaining and, whenever possible, strengthening such motivations.

Keywords: *motivation, learners, foreign language, Kiswahili*

Introduction

> "Sparking student motivation is an important part of any teacher's function. Effective teachers will make sure that students know WHY they need to learn the language that is the target of the day's lesson" (FLE Boot Camp, 2008) in http://teflbootcamp.com/tefl-skills/student-motivation-in-efl/ accessed on 2010-09-24.

Motivation in Second/Foreign Language Learning Context

Motivation has been recognized by both teachers and researchers as "... one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of second/foreign language (L2) learning" (Dörnyei, 1998: 117). It has been widely established that motivation is one of the most important variables that determine the achievement of foreign language learners, and stronger motivation can lead to greater achievement. As Gardner (2001:8) notes, "Other variables are dependent on motivation for their effects to be realized." Motivation itself is regarded as a psychological trait that leads people to achieve a goal. For language learners, mastery of a language may be the goal. Jack (1992:338)

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defines motivation as "... the factors that determine a person's desire to do something." In Second Language and Foreign Language Learning, learning is affected differently by different types of motivation. To put it simply, motivation in L2 learning is the desire to develop the L2 language proficiency.

Individual learners have different motivations for learning a second or foreign language: they may be intrinsically motivated as they seek to experience enjoyment in the pursuit of their interests and in the absence of external rewards or controls (Deci & Ryan, 1985:34; Pintrich, 2000); or they may be instrumentally motivated (Dörnyei, 1994; Williams, 1994), in which case language learning is a means to an end, such as getting better jobs, promotion, or scholarships. The latter motivation type is closely related to what Harter and Connell (1984) call 'achievement motivation' which, they argue, includes the expectancy and incentive value of success, whereby the individual assumes control over the learning situation and does what is necessary to get what s/he wants. Learners may be extrinsically motivated, in which case some other individuals or agents—such as parents or employers—may require a person to learn a particular language (Williams, 1994). Others may be motivated to learn a language for integrative purposes, where they desire to be identified culturally (and thus linguistically) with the speakers of the target language.

In the realm of classroom based, instructed second/foreign language, motivation may be *pre-actional, actional* or *post-actional.* Cohen and Dörnyei (2002:140) see this as a complex character of motivation that is not static or stable, but rather a dynamic, cyclic process of continuous change with at least three distinct phases. The first, *pre-actional motivation* (also called *choice motivation*), relates to the initial motivation that defines the goal/reason for learning a foreign language. It also includes learners' beliefs, perceptions, linguistic self-confidence and goal direction (what they think they can achieve, or how they will cope). The second, phase, *actional motivation* (or *executive motivation*), is about the actual classroom processes as involved in meeting the pre-actional motivation. The third phase, *post-actional* (also called *motivational retrospection*), relates to how learners evaluate how things went (ibid,: 175), which influences their future actions and motivations in second or foreign language learning. In a language classroom setting, this self-evaluation may largely be determined by marks/grades, feedback or praise.

Other Related Terms

In addition to motivation, it is worth defining two other terms that have been used in the study: foreign language, and foreign language learners.

(a) Foreign Language

The term 'foreign language' is essentially as sociolinguistic notion, referring to the extent and domains of use that a language is used in a multilingual community. Richards and Schmidt (2002) define a foreign language as a

language which is not the native language of large numbers of people in a particular country of region; is not used as a medium of instruction in schools; and is not widely used as a medium of communication in government, media, etc. They note that foreign languages are typically taught as school subjects for the purpose of communicating with foreigners, or for reading printed materials in the language. This is the case with Kiswahili in Korea, which is opted for by tertiary students whose aspirations are to come and work in East Africa.

(b) Foreign Language Learners

Foreign language learners are persons who are learning *a language* in addition to their *native language* in an environment where that language is not widely used in the learner's home and host institution's environment. This is in contrast with second language learners who learn an additional language to their mother tongue in an environment where that language, according to Crystal (2003), though not a native language to the natives, is used for a special purpose, e.g. for education, government, business, etc. Foreign language learners are said to heavily motivation-driven given the limited scope of actual application of the language they are learning in naturalistic setting.

The Current Study

The Problem

This study is specifically on the construct of motivation, precisely in its dynamic nature, in a classroom situation of Kiswahili as a foreign language class at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) in South Korea. The University was, at the time of data gathering, offering the teaching and researching of more than 45 languages, three of which were African languages (Herald, 2012). These were Kiswahili from East Africa, Hausa from West Africa, and isiZulu from South Africa. On the part of Kiswahili, which I had the opportunity to teach from October 2009 to June 2010, the students were of diverse backgrounds, with differing levels of performance, and also—most importantly—with differing motivations for choosing to study Kiswahili as a foreign language. I then felt the need to explore these students' motivation for learning Kiswahili and how, over time in the course of teaching, such motivations changed or held constant. Thus, this study is exploratory, seeking to find out and make analysis of motivational factors for Korean students' choice of Swahili as a foreign language.

Method

A total 40 Kiswahili as a foreign language (KFL) students volunteered to take part in the study. These were 51% of all my elementary and intermediate Swahili learners for the 2009/2010 academic year. Of these, 14 were males while 26 were female. In terms of year of study, 21 were in second year, while 8 and 11 were in the third and fourth year, respectively. As for their age profile, 12 were from an age range of 18-20, whereas those between 21 and 27, and those above 30 were 27 and 1, respectively.

The study involved a questionnaire as single tool; and it was a texture of open-ended and closed- in items so as to capture as much of what was needed of the data as possible. The closed-in items were twenty researcher-made motivational factors of the scope that included process, classroom-based motivational variables (pre-actional, actional, and post-actional); and the traditional types of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations (the latter subsuming instrumental, integrative, global and attitudinal motivational types). The open ended item gave students an opportunity to list down any other variables not given in the list, or to provide more descriptive account on how some of the motivational variables mentioned applied to their situation at a more personal way.

The data from closed-in items were classified into their motivational categories and, using SPSS software, the responses were posted to establish the descriptive statistical values such as frequencies and percentages. The quantitative data were summarized into the thematic categories defined by motivational types.

Findings

The respondents' motivation types were classified into different categories as defined by different scholars of second/foreign language learning.

Process-oriented Motivation Analysis

The first category of analysis was guided by Cohen and Dornyei's (2002) classroom-based motivational types classified as pre-actional, actional and post-actional motivation types. This was achieved by assigning the students' reasons for opting for Kiswahili course into their relevant categories, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Proposed Motivational Factors for KFL Classified according to Process-Based Types

	Item	Process
1.	My parents told me to learn Swahili	Pre-actional
2.	My employer asked me to learn Swahili	Pre-actional
3.	I would like to go and work in East Africa	Pre-actional
4.	I learn Swahili because I want to have high scores in my final examination	Pre-actional
5.	I would like to work as a translator of Korean into Swahili in Korean companies	Pre-actional
6.	I would like to read and listen to Swahili news	Pre-actional
7.	I pity poor people of East Africa so I need Swahili so as to go and help them there	Pre-actional
8.	Koreans who speak Swahili are very nice	Pre-actional
9.	Studying Swahili is important for me because I can make new friends from East Africa	Pre-actional
10.	I would like to speak with other people in another language	Pre-actional
11.	If it were possible I would like to be born a Swahili speaker	Pre-actional

12.	Swahili is a prestigious African language	Pre-actional
13.	Learning a language is fun	Actional
14.	Knowing any language e.g. Swahili makes people clever	Actional
15.	I like Swahili because the assignments in class are easy	Actional
16.	Learning Swahili helps me understand African culture which I like very much	Actional
17.	Of all classes in the University, Swahili is the one I like best	Actional
18.	I like the way people speak Swahili	Post-actional
19.	I study as little as possible for my Swahili class	Post-actional
20.	To me learning Swahili is boring	Post-actional

As shown in Table 1, there were a total of 20 researcher-generated responses to which respondents were asked to react to by giving their stance regarding their own situations. Out of 20 factors, 12(60%) were pre-actional, 5(25%) were actional, while 4(15%) were post-actional. The prevalence of pre-actional motivation is justified by the fact that this motivation type is in essence related to the reasons for a course of study, which are usually decided before, or at the onset of a course. In this sense, KLF learners had their own ideals of what they needed to do in the future using Kiswahili. This is as contrasted with reasons that are in the here-and-now situations (related to formative evaluation of the course of study and of learning, and thus actional), which Crookes (2003) says has to do with teaching, making sure the content and teaching methodology that are of interest to the learner are at par with their expectations, as well as relevant to their learning strategies. Pre-actional motivations are also unlike after-the-course motivational factors, which are back-pointing and therefore evaluative (hence, post-actional) (Dörnyei, 2001).

The overall resulting data are as summarized in Figure 1, in which the most prevalentent category was actional motivation, followed by post-actional. This was despite its having a very small number (though not the smallest) of the motivational factors. Interestingly, the last category was pre-actional, which had only slightly less than a quarter of all the responses, its being the biggest category in terms of number of motivational variables notwithstanding.

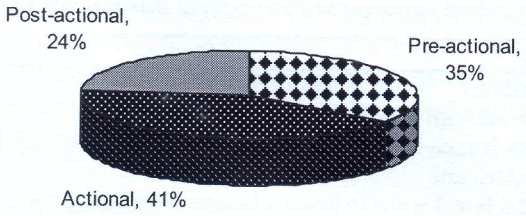


Figure 1: *Process-oriented Motivational Factors for KFL Learners*

More detailed analysis was made of the responses in which the respondents were asked to indicate their stances regarding the given list of motivational

factors. They were to agree (by indicating "Yes"), disagree (by indicating "No") or admit that they were "Not sure". Figure 2 summarises the data that resulted the analysis.

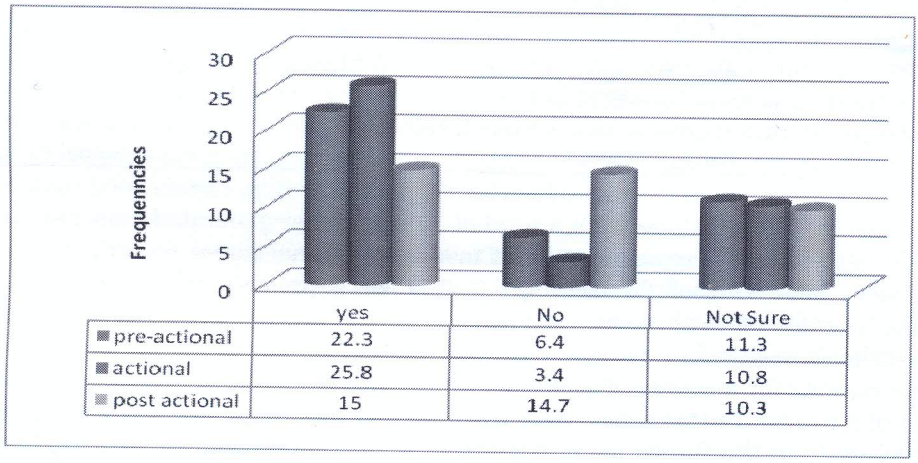


Figure 2: *Learners' Stances on Process-based Motivations of KFL*

As can be seen in Figure 2, the general impression that one gets is that majority of the respondents indicated that the proposed set of motivational factors applies to their own individual situations. Actional motivation once again dominated by having about one quartet of all responses pointing to the fact that the proposed set of factors under actional category applied to them, followed by pre-actional (25.8 responses). The post-actional factors were the least by having only 15 responses in which about 15 and 10 respondents indicated the motivational factors did not hold true to their situations and they were not sure, respectively.

As for the open-ended question asking the respondents to add motivation types of their own apart from those given, most of them gave motivations that were of pre-actional type. They are as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Learners' Own –generated Pre-actional Reasons for Learning Kiswahili

	Motivation types	Respondents
1.	To work in East Africa	6
2.	I am interested in African art and culture	5
3.	Swahili is a lingua franca of East Africa	2
4.	To befriend East Africans	1
5.	It is a language of a few; I want to learn a language spoken by few people	1
6.	Swahili language is important to the world	1
7.	Swahili is special in Korea	1
8.	Structural similarities between Swahili and Korean make it easy to learn Swahili	1

Table 3 illustrates the fact that some students (8) gave their own motivations for the course, in addition to the researcher-generated ones. Of the eight, 'working in East Africa' (which is also an instrumental motivation) was the most prevalent, followed by 'interest in African art and culture' (which also belongs to the group of integrative motivation). The rest of the reasons were mentioned by either one or two respondents.

Generally, while in each motivational type the majority of the respondents indicated 'Yes' to the proposed set of motivational factors, a significant number (11.3 (28.3%), 10.8 (27%), and 10.3 (25.8%) for pre-actional, actional and post-actional motivations, respectively) showed as not being sure of which reasons prompted them to opt for Swahili courses. Only a small minority, which is less than 10 respondents (except for post-actional), were explicit in indicating that the proposed set of motivational factors were not relevant to their individual situations. The descriptive accounts given by the learners that were evaluative (and thus post-actional) are as given in Table 3.

Table 3: Students' Own-generated Post-Actional Motivational Factors

	Motivation types	Respondents
1.	Home-works and assignments were very difficult	2
2.	Teaching methods of the professor were good and effective	3
3.	Swahili has proved the hardest language I have tried to learn	1
4.	There was more use of English than Swahili while in Class	2

The students' own-own generated evaluation motivations given in Table 4 were such that teaching methods being easy was the most popular, acting as a 'strengthener' or 'energizer' to whatever the respondents had held as pre-actional motivations. The rest of the motivations were , however, 'demotivators' or 'weakeners' of pre-actional motivations; the most notable ones being the difficulties of tasks and assignments given (No. 1), and the learning of the language (No. 4), which might not have been congruent to what Brown (1991) refers to as the particular learner's cognitive style.

The predominance of actional motivational factors point out to the dynamism of learners in engaging in formative evaluation of a course and its teaching; as well as their own re-evaluation of themselves in terms of their learning of the course, and their aspirations regarding the instrumental value of the course at post-graduation and occupational level.

Intrinsic Vs Extrinsic Motivation

Another set of motivation types that was explored in relation the data was the traditional intrinsic-extrinsic motivation types. The first task involved re-clustering the data from the researcher-generated motivations, to which students were asked to respond to into the two types. The results of re-

clusering and re-classifying showed that the grand majority of the motivational factors, i.e. 18 (90%) were intrinsic in orientation; while the remaining 2 (10%) were extrinsic, showing the study's obvious bias of the intrinsic over extrinsic motivation.

As concerns intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the analysis of the responses of the respondents produced the data as presented in Fig. 2. According to Fig. 2, a large percentage (67%) of all motivational factors was intrinsic motivational factors, as contrasted with 33% that were extrinsic. The list of motivational factors in Table 1 was long because, as will be explained shortly, there were more sub-types of intrinsic motivational factors, such as integrative, instrumental and negative.

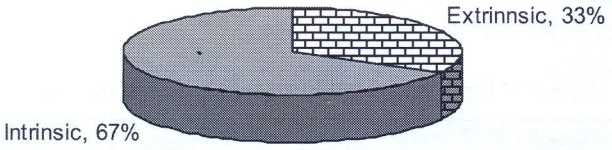


Figure 2: *Distribution of Motivational Factors into Intrinsic/ Extrinsic Types*

Skehan's (1989) internal cause hypothesis sums up very well the notion and significance of intrinsic motivation in Foreign language learning in which, as Brown (1994) observes, both two of its sub-types (integrative and instrumental motivations) are mutually inclusive. In the absence of external rewards or controls, intrinsically motivated people experience enjoyment in the pursuit of their interests (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Pintrich, 2000). On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is essentially a feature associated very much with embarking on a language learning as a way of carrying out somebody else's will or plan, or as a result of external rewards or punishments, such as (for a students) a concern about grades or pleasing others (Kelly, n.d.). However, Williams (1994) maintains that language motivation depends on a complex interplay between internal and external factors (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

The responses of the respondents to the proposed motivational types in the light of the extrinsic/intrinsic motivation type are as summarized in Fig. 3. According to Fig. 3, about three-quarters (total of about 32 respondents, which is 80%) of the 40 respondents indicated that the proposed list of motivational types was congruent to their motivations for the course. Of these, slightly over half (21 respondents, which is 54%) indicated factors that were of intrinsic motivation type; whereas the rest 10.5 (26%) indicated extrinsic motivation factors. In that sense, it could be said that most KFL learners were intrinsically motivated to learn Kiswahili as a foreign language.

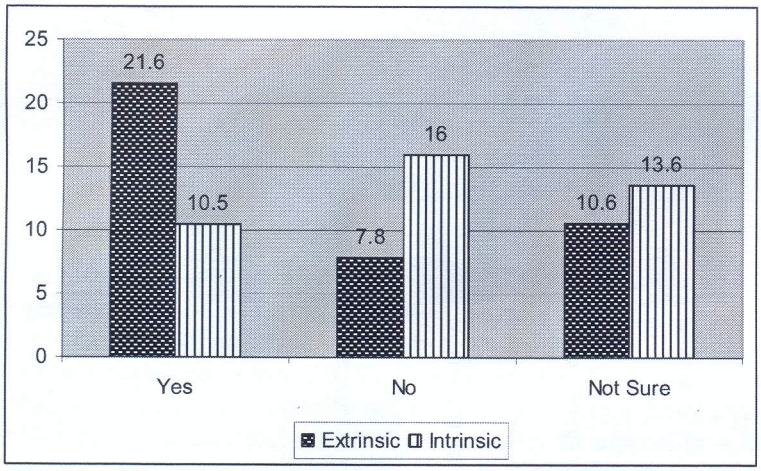


Figure 3: *Learners' Level of Prevalence of Intrinsic/Extrinsic Motivations for Learning KFL*

However, Fig, 3 shows that 8 (20%) and 16 (40%) of the respondents indicated intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors, respectively, as not holding true to their own situations; while 10 (27%) and 14 (34%) for intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors, respectively, were not sure of belonging to any of the factors proposed. Stated differently, one can conclude that as many as 24 of the respondents were not sure which factors motivated them to join the Kiswahili courses.

In delving deeper into those who were intrinsically motivated, a further analysis was made of the sub-categories of intrinsic motivation types. The first is global motivation, seen by Brown (1981) as consisting of a general orientation to the goal of learning a second or foreign language. The second is instrumental motivation, defined by Gardner and Lambert (1972) as language learning for its utilitarian value or purpose. The third—which is a counterpart of the preceding one—is integrative motivation, which is when a learner takes interest in the TLC (Target Language Community) and their culture in an open minded way, with a genuine interest to become a member of that group (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). According to Agnihotri and Khanna (1994), the last one—which is tied to attitude and post-actional process-based motivational type—is negative motivation, or resentment motivation, referring to a situation of compelling a learner to learn a language or an aspect of it; or (which is relevant to this study) liking the language but resenting the pedagogy of its teaching or some aspects of it such as examination, assignments, etc. The respondents' choices of the motivational types under this new re-categorization of motivational types were analyzed, and Fig. 4 shows the resulting data.

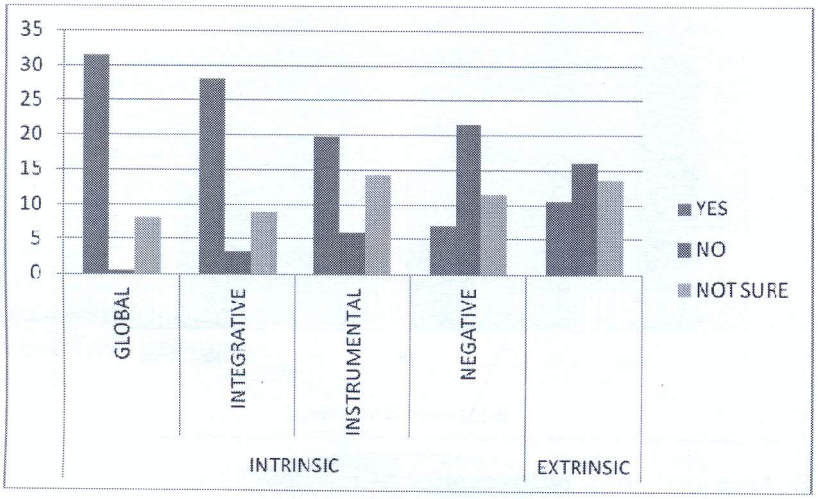
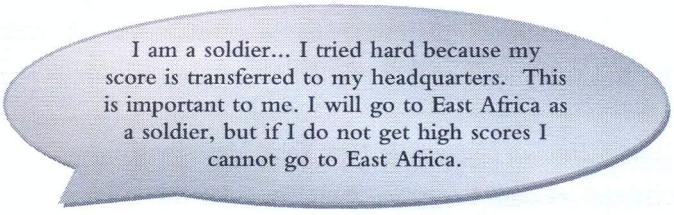


Figure 4: *Kiswahili as a Foreign Language Learners' Motivation Types*

The data in Fig. 4 point to the prevalence of global motivation above all other intrinsic motivation types, as well as extrinsic types. Out of the 40 respondents, 30 (75%) indicated that they were globally motivated; specifically favouring the factors stating that Swahili is a prestigious African language, and that learning a language is fun. Ranking second is a cluster of integrative factors, with 27 (68%) respondents indicating it as true to their situation, particularly favouring two factors: namely, Koreans who speak Kiswahili are very nice, and learning Swahili helps them (the respondents) understand African culture which they like very much. Instrumental motivation had slightly less than 20 respondents, and their particular interest was to go and work in East Africa; and learning Swahili for the single desire of high scores in their final examination. One respondent had a unique goal of going to East Africa to help the poor people there, as s/he felt pity for them! On the instrumental motivation, one respondent gave this descriptive account:

> There is a huge chance related to business in East Africa. I visited Tanzania last winter vacation for volunteer work; at that time I had gotten a good impression

Another respondent, who disclosed his occupation as a soldier, gave an account that belonged to both extrinsic motivation (he was sent by his superiors in the army to learn Kiswahili), and instrumental one (Kiswahili was to help him in his impending mission to serve in East Africa) as follows:



However, among the least favoured instrumental factor was the one indicating that the respondents' parents told them to learn Kiswahili. The respondents also highly disfavoured negative motivation as only 7(18%) indicated that it applied to their situation, while 22 (55%) made it clear that the factor was not holding true to their case. Virtually all rejected the factor that stated; *to me learning Swahili is boring*, but which does not fully fit smoothly with some of the post-actional motivations (notably Nos.1 and 3) in Table 3.

Conclusion

In the light of the above findings, we can conclude that learners of foreign or second language have motivations as diverse as their own personalities. However, there are situations in which some motivation types tend be shared by a majority. Such was the case in this study in which actional motivation was dominant over pre-actional or post-actional motivation; signaling dynamism of students' motivation as teaching and learning of the target language (Swahili) was in-session. Similarly, there was dominance of intrinsic motivations (notably global, integrative and instrumental) over extrinsic ones, pointing to the fact that most learners chose to learn Kiswahili from their own free will; a factor that is highly and positively correlated with the rate of proficiency of the target language. However, the motivational types, as the data have pointed out, cannot be treated in isolation since they are interdependent (as cautioned by Kambon, 2005).

At a more practical level, the findings suggest that the pedagogy one employs in teaching a foreign language is very crucial in strengthening, weakening or totally reversing the learners' motivation for the target language. As Kiswahili gains its market to foreign students -- who opt for it when it is offered in their local institutions, or even when they make financial and cognitive commitments to come to East Africa to learn it -- Kiswahili teachers are at the heart of the sustenance of students' original motivation before setting a foot in the classroom.

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