


# Chapter 10

## Pleasure or Purpose? Unpacking the Dual Paths of Well-Being in Second Language Learning

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Individual differences significantly influence L2 acquisition outcomes. This study examined how hedonic (pleasure-focused) and eudaimonic (meaning-focused) motives affect L2 learners' autonomy, self-efficacy, motivation, and emotions. Findings revealed hedonic motivation strongly correlates with greater autonomy, self-efficacy, and positive emotions while reducing negative affect. Eudaimonic motivation showed weaker but meaningful connections to emotional experiences, particularly in mitigating negative states. Results suggest both motivational types play complementary roles in L2 learning. Pedagogically, incorporating activities that satisfy pleasure-seeking and meaning-seeking tendencies may optimize learning conditions by enhancing psychological resources and supporting language development. The study highlights the importance of addressing diverse motivational drivers to foster comprehensive L2 learning experiences.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Attribution theory stands as a central notion in the domains of social psychology, motivational studies, and educational psychology, providing a well-established structure for analyzing individuals' meaning-making of their successes and failures

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(Weiner, 2000). According to this theory, people are driven to seek answers to why questions regarding their outcomes, which directly influences their behavior and future expectations (Huang & Wang, 2022; Weiner & Craighead, 2010). The core premise of attribution theory revolves around the idea that individuals attribute their achievements or setbacks to specific causes, and these attributions, in turn, shape their future actions and emotional responses. In educational contexts, particularly in L2 learning, students frequently engage in this process of attribution to make sense of their learning outcomes, often focusing on factors such as effort, ability, and external circumstances (Weiner, 2000). The psychological processes involved in attribution have profound implications for learners' motivation, emotional well-being, and overall learning experiences.

Psychological well-being is one critical factor influencing how learners make sense of their successes or failures (Sahoo et al., 2025). Well-being refers to the intrinsic values that individuals consider essential to their sense of fulfillment and happiness (Giuntoli et al., 2021). When students encounter success or failure in language learning, their sense of well-being significantly affects how they interpret these outcomes (Yu et al., 2025). For example, students who are in a positive psychological state may attribute their success to factors like effort or motivation, reinforcing their confidence and desire to continue learning. In contrast, students experiencing negative psychological well-being may credit their lack of success to fixed, personal reasons such as incompetence, which can diminish their motivation and hinder their learning progress (Shafiee Rad & Hashemian, 2023). Thus, understanding the connection between attribution processes and well-being is crucial for gaining insight into how students' psychological states impact their learning behaviors and outcomes (Fan & Cui, 2024).

Well-being research distinguishes hedonic (pleasure-focused) and eudaimonic (meaning-focused) dimensions, where hedonic well-being emphasizes the pursuit of short-term positive emotions (Huta & Ryan, 2010). In the context of L2 learning, learners driven by hedonic motives might be more inclined to seek enjoyable activities or experiences that make language learning feel less like a chore (Qu & Wu, 2024). For example, these students may engage more actively in communicative tasks that they find personally enjoyable or rewarding, thereby improving their motivation and emotional language involvement. On the other hand, eudaimonic motives emphasize self-actualization and optimal functioning, and the pursuit of one's core values (Huta & Ryan, 2010). Learners motivated by eudaimonic factors may view language learning as a means to achieve long-term goals, such as personal development, cultural understanding, or career advancement (Zhou & Liu, 2025). This type of motivation often leads to deeper engagement with learning tasks, as students seek to fulfill their potential and harmonize L2 acquisition with intrinsic life aspirations (Mirzaei et al., 2024).

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