

HOW TO MOTIVATE THE STUDENT'S INTEREST
IN ENGLISH LEARNING

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Date: April 29, 2010

HOW TO MOTIVATE THE STUDENT'S INTEREST IN ENGLISH LEARNING

A Seminar Paper

Presented to

the Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree

Master of Science

in

Education

by

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2009

Abstract

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Today, more and more people realize that motivation is the most important factor in EFL(English as Foreign Language) class. In recent years many teachers try to find a right way to improve students' English. They found motivation is a critical point in English learning.

The paper reports on the literature and includes a discussion of the factors that affect the motivation in English learning class. Motivation is divided into two basic types: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Around these two aspects, the researcher found that the relationship between student and teacher is an important clue to motivate student interest in English learning. How to motivate student's interest in English learning? The teacher of language should have a good influence on students and develop students' keen interest in study in order to strengthen their intrinsic motivation. The paper gives some helpful methods to motivate the interest in English class.

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Chapter One: Introduction

An important factor that contributes greatly to failure or success in learning a foreign language is motivation. Motivation is defined as the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language (L2). Motivation is divided into two basic types: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is characterized by the learner's positive attitudes towards the target language group and the desire to integrate into the target language community. Extrinsic motivation underlies the goal to gain some social or economic reward through L2 achievement, thus referring to a more functional reason for language learning. Both forms of motivation are examined in light of research which has been undertaken to establish the correlation between the form of motivation and successful second language acquisition. The research on learning motivation now has become a hot issue in the area of foreign language teaching. Learning motivation might influence the result foreign language learning. The paper begins with a description of a current English class in China, then provides a definition of motivation and factors that affect motivation, and concludes with recommendations for motivating Chinese students to learn English as a second language. Chinese students who are motivated to learn English are more efficient at becoming fluent in English.

Statement of the Problem

The problem expressed as a question is, “What factors influence students’ interest in ESL classroom?”

Definition of Terms

Motivation The learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language. Motivation is divided into two basic types: integrative and instrumental (Retrieved May 8, 2009 from <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Norris-Motivation.html>).

Interest The feeling of wanting to give your attention to something or of wanting to be involved with and to discover more about something (Retrieved May 10, 2009 <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/define.asp?dict=CALD&key=41409&ph=on>).

Delimitations of Research

The research will be conducted in and through the Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville over ninety (90) days. Primary searches were conducted via the Internet through EBSCO with ERIC, Academic Search Elite and Google/Google Scholar as the primary sources. Key search topics included “motivate,” “interest,” and “language learning.”

Method

A brief review of literature on motivational factors that affect student learning of a second language was conducted. A second review of literature relating factors that affect the learning strategies was conducted. The findings are summarized and recommendations made.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Introduction

Motivation is the key to success and having interest in new learning influences students in the area of developing a second language. The instructional practices used by teachers of foreign language teaching contribute to their students' motivation and interest in learning another language. In China, learning English as a second language is often associated with a classroom atmosphere of inactive students.

The inactivity may be because students have no clear idea about English learning, and their attitudes and learning motivation around English language learning are still vague. In addition, teachers of English often adopt traditional teaching methods and the schools have no normatively united English teaching—learning group. According to Cabral (2002), “In EFL (English as Foreign Language) classes, students negatively mentioned the fact they had to re-learn the same grammar items again” (p.24), and “foreign students were aware of their lack of interest in class work and clearly indicated that their inadequate behaviors were the result of low attention and lack of challenge in their EFL classes” (p.25). Students learning a second language must be responsible for a variety of tasks and responsibilities. In order to successfully pass the course, Chinese students are required to learn English vocabulary and grammatical rules and demonstrate a fluency in both oral and written presentations. Furthermore, students are expected to willingly use English outside of their classroom (Gardner, 2001).

A definition of motivation

What is the meaning of motivation? Motivation is “effort expended, desire to learn, and attitudes toward learning the language” (Gardner, 2001, p.13). There are two types of motivation--intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan 1985). According to Deci and Ryan, intrinsic motivation refers to motivation that comes from desire by heart individually instead of through external or outside rewards. Being intrinsically motivated does not mean a person does not want to seek rewards but means external rewards are not enough to keep a person motivated. Extrinsic motivation means that rewards from the outside world, such as grades and reputation, influence students to achieve. The motivation comes not only from the satisfaction in finishing a task but also from the pleasure of finishing the task.

Another definition of motivation is in the socio-educational model. Motivation (integrative and instrumental) has been defined as a factor of different kinds of attitudes that influence interaction patterns and participation in classroom (Gardner, 2001). External motivation is from outside the classroom--political, economic and cultural factors (Schmidt, Boraie, & Kassabgy, 1996). External motivation can be furthered divided into sub-groups--integrative motivation, instrumental motivation, motivation and achievement motivation attribution (Gardner, 1982). According to Gardner (2001, integrative motivation is the desire to participate in the activities of the target language community and develop in their language. Instrumental motivation is the desire to master a foreign language to seek employment or improve their self-cultivation or improve the social status. The type of motivation that is the

subject of this study is considered an example of instrumental motivation. Social group identification is similar to the integrative motivation. But the motivation level is stronger than the latter. Achievement motivation is the desire to engage in meaningful activities of their own and successful outcome. Internal motivation of learning foreign language is from English learners themselves, as the intention of learning needs, desire, interest, thirst for knowledge and attitude. They are the most direct and most dynamic factors. Relative to external motivation, the internal motivation plays a greater role. It is the internal of foreign language learning.

Factors that affect the motivation

Intrinsic satisfaction. It is recognized that only a relatively small number of students get a sense of intrinsic satisfaction from learning English. For the vast majority of people, language is not, in itself, very interesting, and it is unlikely to spark and, still less, to sustain motivation (Song, 2006). For some older learners, the satisfaction of learning and using a foreign language may be connected to what Gardner (2001) has called an ‘integrative motivation’- a desire to identify with the culture of the foreign language-but this is not widespread and it is not likely to be the case with students who are mainly from countryside. Some teachers of higher vocational school students endeavor to relate to what they see as their pupils’ sense of intrinsic satisfaction by using games, songs and puzzles in the class. Often these have a positive impact in increasing the motivation of the pupils-but the effect is usually temporary, and once they return to normal classroom work, the effect wears off (Wurr, Theurer & Kim, 2008). In general, then, the learner’s natural interest is not, therefore,

something which we can rely on to generate sustained motivation in language learning, which can explain why the students are “less competitive.”

Extrinsic rewards. Aware of these facts, many teachers turn to a second source of motivation, extrinsic reward, and its opposite, extrinsic punishment, as a means of motivating students. In the classroom, for example, teachers may ‘reward’ students with good marks, or, in effect, punish other students with low marks (Henry & Apelgren, 2008). ‘Better’ students may be rewarded by being given more advanced work to do, or by being placed in a higher level group, which increases their sense of self-worth. The principal problem in this approach, however, is that rewards only lead to sustained motivation if students actually get them. For the failing student, unlikely to get rewards, it does not take long to work out that it is always someone else who gets the rewards-no matter how hard he or she works. In this case, the reward system itself is not an incentive for the weaker students. The increase in the motivation of the better students is more or less proportional to the decrease in motivation of the weaker students.

Success in the task. As human beings, we generally like what we do well, and are therefore more likely to do it again, and put in more effort. If we put in more effort, we generally get better, and so this sustains our motivation. Feelings of being able to do something and feelings of sustained motivation can therefore be linked into an upward spiral which causes us to commit ourselves to what we are doing. It is also true with the students who are inferior due to their background and psychology. Unfortunately for many students, this spiral relationship between motivation and

ability can often function in reverse. Few people like to fail and they generally avoid space where they anticipate failure. In the classroom, this can mean that students who develop an image of themselves as ‘no good at English’ will simply avoid situations which tell them what they already know-that they aren’t any good at English. Feelings of failure, particularly early in a student’s school career, can therefore lead to a downward spiral of a self-perception of low ability - low motivation - low effort – low achievement, and so on. It is the existence of these upward and downward spirals in the motivation-ability relationship that explain a situation commonly found by teachers (Margaret & Orla, 2005). In many classes where there are different levels of student ability, the gap between the ‘weaker’ students and the ‘stronger’ students appears to get wider and wider over time, as some students thrive in an upward spiral, whilst other students actually deteriorate in a downward spiral, believing “I can’t learn English well.”

Self esteem and confidence. What all this points to is that we should not underestimate the importance of self- esteem and a sense of competence in language learning as crucial factors affecting motivation of students who are more sensitive and likely to give up learning English if their self-esteem is damaged. For the failing students, in particular, it is important that teachers try to develop students’ sense of success and a feeling that they can do something, rather than a feeling that they cannot. In practical terms, this means that teachers need to be sensitive to the psychology of language learning. When they plan a lesson, devise a test, or use a particular type of exercise, teachers need to ask themselves a very important question: how will the

weaker students feel if they cannot do this?

Feedback. One important element in shaping the students' view of themselves is the feedback that teachers give them. From the practical perspective, very young children, in their first years of school, are able to identify who the 'clever' pupils are and who the 'not very clever' pupils are. They do this by monitoring the teacher's oral feedback and developing a fairly clear picture of where they stand in the classroom league table. The importance of this in shaping the pupils' self-esteem and feelings of competence, motivation cannot be underestimated. According to Zhang (2005), teachers need to be very careful about how to give feedback, in particular who gets praise and who does not.

Suggestions and measures to stimulate the English-learning motivation.

According to Song (2006), since most of the students are aware of the importance of English to their future training or finding jobs, teachers may enhance their extrinsic motivation by setting definite goals for themselves, both short terms and long terms. For example, encourage the students to take part in exams such as PETS and other English proficiency tests. However, the pressure should be carefully conducted according to different students or it will reduce the confidence of the failing students.

Teachers also must work to increase their students' confidence around learning English. Most students showed high spirit in learning English at the beginning. When the burdens of English increase and/or when their teachers use poor instructional techniques, students gradually lose interest in learning English. Teachers should

monitor and revise their teaching tasks so that they appropriately address the needs of fast learners as well as the needs of learners who need more time. For slower learners, teachers must show more concern and support so that these students can establish a sense of self-worth.

Students benefit when their teachers explain in great detail what is expected of them. Teachers should help students be aware that they must take the initiative to learn, rather than depend on others. The student-centered approach is crucial in increasing their sense of self-learning.

Teachers who are themselves optimistic about learning can use this optimism to motivate their students. It is important that they communicate a belief that everyone can learn and encourage students to try and to take risks without fear of losing marks or feeling stupid. Teachers must show their students how much they are learning and offer assistance when students ask for it.

Students are motivated by feedback. When teachers identify students who are beginning to sink, they need to identify the aspects where students are doing well and offer praise and encouragement for students' efforts. Just giving students low marks will not encourage them. Students need an explanation, in concrete terms, of how they can improve.

Students appreciate having teachers inquire as to their progress. Teachers should find out if students think they need more practice, if they have suggestions of their own, if they find things easy or difficult, or if classroom instruction is boring or uninteresting. Students could place a 'suggestion box' in class, write an open-ended

letter, or answer questionnaires as means to communicate with their teachers their ideas for instructional improvement.

Different ways to motivate the student interest in English learning

In China, English is the first foreign language that is taught from elementary school until university. English as a school subject has been introduced in elementary school because learning a foreign language is better when it is done as early as possible.

Motivation is needed very much in language learning. Motivation is a power which gives desire to the students so they have awareness that language learning is their responsibility. Motivation is a primary factor in whether students of English fail or succeed at acquiring this new language. They learn English because they want to get a good mark and pass the exam. Learning English is important for Chinese students so their teachers should do everything they can to motivate their students by explaining the usefulness of acquiring English skills. Students with an integrated motivation will have greater success in learning English than those with mere instrumental motivation. Student whose motivation is integrated into their future career preparation will be more actively involved in improving their English not only in class but out of class as well.

Pleasure, interest, and confidence should be included in motivation in students learning English. Some factors may increase students' desire to more actively engage in English language learning. In English teaching class, the heroes of the class cannot be separated because teacher need students at the same time the other students need the students who are doing very well in class. A favorable relationship between teacher and students will influence the learning process. If there is a good relationship between teacher and students, students will feel more comfortable during the learning

and teaching process. A good teacher-student relationship involves cooperation and communication between them. Teachers must do everything they can to help the students get what they want and need from the class but students have responsibility, too, in communicating their needs to the teachers. A good relationship involves “give and take” on the part of both teachers and students.

Motivation is one of the psychological factors that influence language learning. It is easy in second or foreign language learning to claim that a learner will be successful with the proper motivation (Hubenthal, 2004). Motivation is a power form internal to external which can lead someone get goal. Because of this motivation have three aspects. The first is that motivation starts at energizing. Secondly, the feature of motivation is internal arousal. Third, motivation is marked by the reaction to get a goal. Summary motivation is a power which arouses, maintaining, and directs behavior toward a goal.

According to Gao (2008), motivation is probably the most frequently used catch all term for explaining the success or failure of virtually any complex task. It is easy to assume that success in any task is due simply to the fact that someone is motivated. It is easy in second language learning to claim that a learner will be successful with the proper motivation.

People involved in language teaching often say that the student who really wants to learn will succeed whatever the circumstance is. All teachers can think of situation in which certain “motivated” students performed significantly better than their peers. They succeed in what appears to be an unfavorable condition. They succeed despite using methods which experts consider unsatisfactory. In the face of such phenomena it seems reasonable to suggest that the motivation that students bring to class is the biggest factor affecting their success. Motivation is one of the psychological factors

that give effect to language learning.

Learning achievement of a person or learners can be influenced by many factors. Gardner (2001) states that individuals are motivated both internally and externally. Internal motivation comes from inside of the person or learner. External motivation comes from outside of the person or learner.

Gardner (2001) characterizes internal factors as having two points--physical factor and psychological factor. Physical factors are those people access in their daily lives and environments. Living in the environment greatly impacts the learners' interest. Psychological factors are those social and behavioral conditions that contribute to a change in motivation. Examples include excitement, inhibition, anxiety, depression, fear, anger, and sadness. (Guz, 2008). All of these factors impact students' English learning.

Gardner (2001) also discusses the impact of external factor, such as social and culture factors, that impact student learning. We all live in a society so there are many factors that affect or direct our life style. Social factors that affect our lifestyle include, among other factors, religion, ethnicity, and family. Culture involves all the experiences surrounding a person as he/she is growing up. Interest in learning English has a profound impact. It affects people's understanding and use of English (Yu & Watkins, 2008).

Developing techniques to motivate students is very important to every teacher because the more motivated the students are the harder they will work to increase their development of English learning. There are two kinds of motivations--direct motivation and indirect motivation. Direct motivation is one of motivation which emerges straight from the teacher to the student in the classroom. For example, the teacher provides support when the student studies in the class (Zhang, 2005). Indirect

motivation is motivation that emerges, not from within the classroom, but from outside the classroom. For example, the teacher gives homework to the students. In general strongly motivated students with long-term goals are probably easier to teach than these who have no such goals. For such students short-term goals will often provide the only motivation they feel (Zuo & Wang, 2002).

Encouraging students to become motivated around English language learning is one thing but the other challenge for teachers is to encourage students to stay motivated. There are three main strategies teachers use to increase motivation. 1) Try to get information as much as possible about that kind of activity. For instance if we want to learn English, try get information as much as possible about English (Hansen-Thomas, 2008). That information could be found from encyclopedia, teacher, or even try to discuss with other who knows English as well. 2) Do the relevant thing or activity. It means that if students have strong motivation to speak English well, we should do relevant things with English (Poon & English, 1992). For example, we join the English course; have an English interest group, etc. 3) Try to talk with the native speaker more, so we know to speak English right

The significance of the application

The topic of this paper, motivation, is significant because motivation encourages student learning. There are numerous variables dependent on motivation for their effects to be realized (Gardner, 2001). Teachers' use of motivational teaching methods may reduce students' burden in learning English, facilitate their development of practical English knowledge, and encourage students to effectively study English and quickly develop fluency.

Chapter Three: Conclusions and Recommendations

Motivation is the key to successfully learning English and interest in learning English is one of the most important factors in how well students learn a foreign language. Motivation to language learning is a complex set of variables including effort; desire to achieve goals, and attitudes toward the learning of the language (Gardner, 2001). Individuals' motivation to second-language learning also includes their motivation orientations, interest in the second language, attitudes toward the second-language group, attitudes toward the second-language learning situations and second-language anxiety. Some students do not like English class because it is very hard for them to speak English, and their writing is often full of mistakes (Faver, 2008). They cannot use English fluently and most students are afraid to study English because they fear the examination system and the teaching methods.

Teachers should develop students' self-efficacy. Teachers also need to help students to raise their self-efficacy in order to enhance motivation for learning by providing opportunities of achieving success and help students set criteria to be compared with their own progress. Teachers, however, can implement various teaching methods and student activities that will arouse students' interest in learning English. The forming of motivation needs teachers and students. The class must be vivid and interesting in order for students to actively involve themselves in their study of English (Fien, Baker, Smolkowski, Smith, Kame'enui, & Beck, 2008). The teachers shall encourage the students to participate in various activities such as acting out plays,

giving a speech, participating in a debate , listening to English songs and watching English films (Henry & Apelgren, 2008). Based on the basic theories and approaches, teaching activities are part of motivation in English classes. It is proved that all these activities greatly arouse the students' enthusiasm and strengthen their interest. Teachers who offer a relaxing and joyous study atmosphere and merge student interests with their teaching promote student interest in their classroom instruction. If the teachers can organize their classroom teaching nimbly by the above methods, they can achieve a great success in teaching and learners' linguistics can be improved as well.

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