WHAT SHOULD A TEACHER KNOW ABOUT MOTIVATION TO LEARN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Learning English as a foreign language has many advantages socially, culturally, economically and politically. At the same time, the students often face some difficulties in learning English because it is not daily used as a means of communication. Under this view, building the student’s motivation is strongly required because it has an important role to elevate the student’s achievement. Motivation to learn English covers language learning and classroom learning motivations. The first refers to motivation to learn English in the context of social-educational. While the second relates to pre-actional, actional and post-actional motivation. The later asserts that the individual perception of the task, atmosphere, the course content, materials, facilities, personal characteristic of student can influence the individual’s classroom learning motivation.

Key words: teacher, motivation, to learn English

A. Introduction

Having a good understanding of the subject of motivation in the domain of the foreign language classroom such as an English classroom is, indeed, very meaningful for the sake of the teaching and the learning achievement. Many types of motivation have been researched and talked either by the researchers and the linguists. In this paper a variety of techniques, strategies and macro strategies which teachers can employ in order to motivate their students will be theoretically and briefly discussed. Dornyei (2001: 116) writes that teacher’s skills to motivate the learners can contribute to the effectiveness of teaching. Believing in the significance of motivation as stated by Dornye (2001) a set of techniques and strategies related to motivational strategies to raise the students’ motivation in learning English as a foreign language students are elaborated below.

B. Power in the classroom

The importance of the relationship between the teacher and the learner is a thing that should be known before talking about the power of classroom in relation to the motivational strategies. The relationship between the teacher and the learners is understood in its relevancy to the power and the status specifically result with the rights and the duties owned by teachers and learners. For example, many teachers are in the opinion that they have a right to give a reward and a punishment to the students. The students who behave and obey the
rules usually get the reward. Otherwise those who have bad behaviours receive some punishment. The same case can happen in any social relationship involving two or more people. There must be relationships ‘which looks unsymmetrical’ (Wright, 1987: 17). The psychologists have theorized the three types of power: a) coercive, b) reward-based, c) referent.

The coercive power is based on punishment. Those who have a right to punish must be some individuals or institutions. The reward-based is based on reward. Delivering reward to workers or employee is the authority owned by some individuals or institutions. A salary and bonus can be labeled as the reward. The basis of referent is motivation. Referring to the three types of power previously explained, it is clearly seen there is the close links and interest between the individuals or the institutions. In view of the paradigm of the three mentioned power, it is good to foster the motivation of learner as it is considered to be the most effective and proactive to speak up the power relationship.

C. Group Processes and Motivation

Discussing a motivation and motivational strategies is not separated from a consideration of group processes. This is because here is usually a group of people that teachers are called on to motivate. Tuckman (1969, quoted in Argyle, 1969) has written that a group went through four stages from its formation, which has important implications for the study of the classroom and the use of group activities during teaching. The stages are as follow:

Stage 1 is forming. This stage indicates the presence of students’ anxiety as the members of the group in the classroom. They rely on the teacher and learn which behaviour is commonly acceptable within the group members in the classroom.

Stage 2 Storming. This stage is marked by the conflict between sub-groups and the teacher. Members of the group show their resistancy to their teacher. They question the role of relations.

Stage 3 Norming: The group starts building cohesion and working cooperatively with Members of the group. At this stage, the students share views and feeling about their role.

Stage 4 Performing: At this stage the interpersonal activities happen. Everyone is responsible with the task has been assigned.

Teaching experiences tell that the four stages passed by every group until the equilibrium is reached. Theoretically, it is said that this process
can last forever for sake of the effective teaching and learning (Daniels, 1994). This view is considered to be underlying theory to design a framework for motivational strategies.

**D. A framework for motivational strategies**

An ability to motivate students to learn is strongly required. It has been known nowadays, some teachers have practiced “bag-of-tricks” approaches to manage their classroom and motivate their learners. Good and Brophy (1994: 212) proposes that these approaches have been based on the two contradictory views stating that: a) learning with joys and fun can raise the student’s motivation; and b) Some school activities and tasks have made the students get bored.

Rewards and punishments have been considered as the motivational strategies used by the teachers in the teaching-learning process. Anyhow, they are not the only instruments in motivating the students. Dornyei (2001: 119) argues that the motivational strategies could be in various ways. What should be done to design the a framework of motivational strategies is they must be orderly arranged with different themes. The taxonomy of motivational strategies model offered by Dornyei and Otto that is based on the process-oriented model may be applicable. This model consists of several part as follow

1. Creating the basic motivational conditions, This part deals with setting the scene for the use of motivational strategies;
2. Generating students’ motivation. This part relates to to the pre action phase in the model;
3. Maintaining and protecting motivation. This part refers to the actional phase;
4. Encouraging positive self-evaluation. This part refers to to the post actional phase

**E. Creating the basic motivational conditions**

The success and effectiveness of Motivational strategies which are executed more or less depend on certain preconditions. Some of these preconditions are as follow:

1. Appropriate teacher behaviour and good teacher-student rapport;
2. A pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere;
3. A cohesive learner group characterised by appropriate group norms
F. Good Teacher Behaviour and Good Teacher-Student Relationship

In the context of classroom, the teacher’s words and behaviours have a impact on the students’ motivation. In other words, teacher’s behaviour is a powerful ‘motivational tool’ (Dornyei, 2001: 120). Believing in this paradigm, it can be said that the students’ engagement, participation and attraction in completing tasks is determined by the goodness or badness of the teacher-student relationship. Hence according to Alison (1993), a relationship between the students and the teachers can be established by mutual trust and respect. They can talk each other personally. This mutual trust could result with enthusiasm. To some extend, the enthusiastic teachers can elevate the students’ sense of commitment and interest in, the subject matter they are learning either verbally or non-verbally. The two-way communication between the students and the teachers which run well can increase the motivation because the learner finda safe classroom climate. This situation provide students with opportunities to express their opinions freely without worring to the risk of being ridiculed.

To be motivated to learn, students need both ample opportunity to learn and steady encouragement and support of their learning efforts. Because such motivation is unlikely to develop in a chaotic classroom, it is important that the teacher organise and manage the classroom as an effective learning environment. Furthermore, because anxious or alienated students are unlikely to develop motivation to learn, it is important that learning occurs within a relaxed and supportive atmosphere (Good and Brophy, 1994: 215).

G. A Cohesionon of Learner Group Featured By Appropriate Group Norms

A strong commitent of group members is able to create cohesiveness within the group.. The togetherness, then, create motivation to learn. There are several factors that can promote group cohesiveness, such as the time spent together and shared group history, learning about each other, interaction, intergroup competition, common threat, active presence of the leader (Ehrman and Dornyei, 1998: 142). Besides, the the norm mandated by the teacher is also necessary to discuss in order to become a group norm and accepted by the class member.
H. Generating student motivation

Naturally, a human has eagerness to investigate the world. In this vein, all learners have always a curiosity to explore the world by learning. Doing some exploration is targeted to gain the learning experiences. In this situation, some factors as compulsory school attendance, relevant curriculum, content are necessary for the learner’s goals orientated. The questions are how to make relevant curriculum with the goal-oriented, how to raise the students’ awareness being involved in certain activity and create the students’ belief.

J. The Curriculum Must Be Relevant To The Learners’ needs

Many students will do any tasks assigned to them and participate in all classroom learning activities, even when a subject is not very interesting if they have the belief that the curriculum contribute and beneficial to the students’ needs. There are a lot of things to do to make the learners to concern themselves with most learning activities, It is important for the teachers to find out the students’ goals and the topics they want to learn, and try to incorporate them into the curriculum. According to Chambers (1999: 37), ‘’if the teacher is to motivate pupils to learn, then relevance has to be the red thread permeating activities’’.

K. Creating Realistic Learner Beliefs

It is absolutely acknowledged that learners expect they get some progress in learning. Otherwise they do not want to face disappointment. Therefore, it is important to help learners get rid of their difficulties and get an attainment in learning English as foreign language. The learners need to enhance an understanding of the nature of second language learning, and should recognize the fact that the mastery of English can take various ways and strategies. For the learners the success of learning English can not be
separated from the methods and techniques applied.

L. How To Preserve And Protect Motivation

The assigned tasks which make the learners get bored and tired are seen as the serious causes of demotivation. Therefore, there should be a motivational repertoire including several motivation maintenance strategies. There are two recommended things to maintain and protect motivation: a) increasing the learners’ self-confidence; and b) creating learner autonomy.

M. Rising Up The Learners’ Self-Confidence

Teaching learning activities involves face-to-face context. In the area of language teaching and learning, it is significant to find out how to maintain and increase the learners’ self-confidence. There are five approaches that can help to raise the learners’ self-confidence (Dornyei, 2001: 130):

1. Teachers can build the belief that competence is a changeable aspect of development
2. Favourable self-conceptions of L2 competence can be promoted by providing regular experiences of success
3. Everyone is more interested in a task if they feel that they make a contribution
4. A small personal word of encouragement is sufficient
5. Teachers can reduce classroom anxiety by making the learning context less stressful

N. Creating Learner Autonomy

Many educationists and researchers (Benson, 2000; Little, 1991; Wenden, 1991; also see an article, “What is Learner Autonomy and How can it be Fostered?”) argue that taking charge of one’s learning, that is, becoming an autonomous learner, can prove beneficial to learning. This assumption is premised on humanistic psychology, namely that ‘the only kind of learning which significantly affects behaviour is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning’ (Rogers, 1961: 276). Benson (2000, found in Dornyei, 2001: 131) distinguishes between five types of practice fostering the development of autonomy:

1. resource-based approaches, which emphasise independent interaction with learning materials
2. technology-based approaches, which emphasise independent interaction with educational technologies
3. learner-based approaches, which emphasise the direct production of behavioural and psychological changes in the learner
4. classroom-based approaches, which emphasise changes in the relationship between learners and teachers in the classroom
5. curriculum-based approaches, which extend the idea of learner control over the planning and evaluation of learning to the curriculum as a whole

Good and Brophy (1994: 228) note that ‘the simplest way to ensure that people value what they are doing is to maximise their free choice and autonomy’—a sentiment shared by Ushioda (1997: 41), who remarks that ‘[s]elf-motivation is a question of thinking effectively and meaningfully about learning experience and learning goals. It is a question of applying positive thought patterns and belief structures so as to optimise and sustain one’s involvement in learning’.

O. Encouraging positive self-evaluation

Research has shown that the way learners feel about their accomplishments and the amount of satisfaction they experience after task completion will determine how teachers approach and tackle subsequent learning tasks. By employing appropriate strategies, the latter can help learners to evaluate themselves in a positive light, encouraging them to take credit for their advances. Dornyei (2001: 134) presents three areas of such strategies:
1. Promoting attributions to effort rather than to ability
2. Providing motivational feedback
3. Increasing learner satisfaction and the question of rewards and grades.
We will only briefly discuss the third one.

P. Increasing Learner Satisfaction and the Question Of Rewards And Grades

The feeling of satisfaction is a significant factor in reinforcing achievement behaviour, which renders satisfaction a major component of motivation. Motivational strategies aimed at increasing learner satisfaction usually focus on allowing students to display their work, encouraging them to be proud of themselves and celebrate success, as well as using rewards. The latter, though, do not work properly within a system where grades are ‘the ultimate embodiment of school rewards, providing a single index for judging overall success and failure in school’ (ibid.). In other words, grades focus on performance outcomes, rather than on
the process of learning itself. Consequently, ‘many students are grade driven, not to say, “grade grubbing,” and this preoccupation begins surprisingly early in life’ (Covington, 1999: 127).

There is also a wide assortment of macrostrategies used to foster motivation, but we will not dwell on them (see Dornyei, 2001: 137-140 for more details).

Q. Conclusion

In general, motivation is defined as the ‘neglected heart’ of our understanding of how to design instruction (Keller, 1983, quoted in Dornyei, 2001: 116). Many teachers have the belief that by sticking to the language materials and trying to discipline their refractory students, they will manage to create a classroom environment that will be conducive to learning. Nevertheless, these teachers seem to lose sight of the fact that, unless they accept their students’ personalities and work on those minute details that constitute their social and psychological make-up, they will fail to motivate them. What is more, they will not be able to form a cohesive and coherent group, unless they succeed in turning most “curriculum goals” (goals set by outsiders) into “group goals” (goals accepted by the group members, that is, students). Learning a foreign language is different to learning other subjects. Therefore, language teaching should take account of a variety of factors that are likely to promote, or even militate against, success. Language is part of one’s identity and is used to convey this identity to others. As a result, foreign language learning has a significant impact on the social being of the learner, since it involves the adoption of new social and cultural behaviours and ways of thinking.

REFERENCES


