

The Significance of Motivation in the ESL Classroom

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Abstract

The paper proposes to shed light on how to establish and manage an effective and successful language classroom in terms of learners' motivation in accordance with the fact that teachers are presently expected to be informed enough to be able to pilot their teaching, satisfying various requirements of different learners. It is designed to explore the significance of motivation in ESL learning and the factors that might affect learners' motivation in language learning context from a theoretical perspective. Motivation is a very significant and effective element in the realm of second language learning. To be precise, motivation has a direct effect on both quality as well as quantity of language learning. It is based on Gardner's (1982, 2010) socio-educational model of second language acquisition. Thus, the language teachers and researchers would discover, realize and pay attention to the whole personality of their learners. It also provides a brief discussion and a few valuable inferences and suggestions for practicing teachers and researchers in the field of English language teaching.

Keywords: ESL classroom, Second language acquisition, Second language learning, Motivation.

Introduction

The achievement of any task often depends on the extent to which individuals strive to attain their purpose, besides their desire to do so. In general, this psychological term is referred to as motivation in second language acquisition (SLA). The term itself indicates that it is a motivating force to stimulate action. A learner's motivation is one of the most crucial factors for success within the language learning setting. Winne and Marx (1989) define motivation as, both a condition for, and a result of, effective instruction. Based on this claim, it is conceivable to consider that learners' motivation plays a significant role in successful language learning. This

study explains the role of motivation and its impact on second language learning. According to Gardner (1982, 2010) motivation is responsible for achievement in the second language development.

Gardner's Socio-Educational Model

Gardner's work in the realm of motivation mainly focuses on second language acquisition. However, Gardner was greatly influenced by Mower's (1950) work which focuses on first language acquisition. Based on this fact Gardner investigated the fact that motivation acts as an influencing factor in the realm of second language acquisition and learning. He ponders specifically at second language acquisition in a systematic classroom setting, rather than an accepted setting. Within this model, motivation is apparently composed of three aspects such as an effort, desire and affect. Effort refers to the time spent in studying the language and the drive of the learner. Desire refers to how much the learner wants to become proficient in the language, and affect indicates the learners' emotional reactions with regard to language study.

Motivation

According to Hall (2011), motivation is a key factor in the accomplishment of a particular activity (p.134). However, teachers usually describe that language learners' accomplishments mostly depend on the absence or presence of motivation. In addition to that Gardner (2010) also states that motivation as an abstract and complex concept is used to describe human behavior. The definition further leads to learners' motivation in second language which is affected by individual attitudes and willingness to engage in the learning process.

Types of Motivation

There are various kinds of motivation as a result of the detailed research by Gardner. Motivation for language learning has traditionally been categorized as seen in the following section.

Integrative and Instrumental Motivation

Gardner and Lambert (1972) classified motivation as two types such as integrative and instrumental (p.32). The integrative motivation comprises of language learning with conscious

participation in the culture of its people. And instrumental motivation proposes and entails a student learning the language in support of a purpose in relation to occupation. These two types of motivation can affect and control the process and outcome of learning. These are effective and useful factors for second language learning.

Learners who lack instrumental or integrative motivation, in fact, would be faced with problems and difficulties in learning and achieving knowledge of a second language in the classroom. (Cook, 2000)

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

It is also found that based on the concept in the field of motivation introduced by Ryan & Deci (2000) is Self Determination theory. This theory says that diverse types of motivation are prevalent in accordance with the different rationales, causes, or targets, which strengthen a task or an achievement. Intrinsic motivation is the eagerness and interest to do and take part in some of the activities, because an individual may feel that they are attractive and pleasant.

Learners with intrinsic motivation are disposed to stay with intricate and complicated problems and gain knowledge from their slips and faults. (Walker, Greene, & Mansell, 2006) On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is the propensity to take part in activities, because of motives which are not associated to the task.

Motivation and Language Learning

Motivation is a significant and essential part of learning. (Brewer & Burgess, 2005) Specially, in learning language, the learner must desire to achieve or do something to attain it. Cook (2000) states that the performance and presentation of second language learners have improved and are superior to others when they are better motivated in the language learning context. While, Ellis (1994) observes that there is incidence of learning by means of motivation and considers that the learning process plainly happens when a person is motivated. He also mentions that language teachers acknowledge the importance of learners' motivation, not explaining their own sense of failure in terms of their students' lack of motivation.

According to Cook (2000), language acquisition is not the same among all learners. He also presents that there are these main factors such as age, personality and motivation, which influence second language acquisition. Amongst all of them, motivation is the most important factor that affects second language acquisition.

Factors Influencing Motivation

Motivation and Personality Variables

Many researchers find a relation between personality attributes and effective learning of a second language. However, the effective learner may exhibit a variety of characteristics such as being an extrovert, or introvert, self-confident, active, or passive, independent and / or shy. Whereas, ineffective learners are more often illustrated as displaying a lack of self-confidence and being shy, afraid to express their opinions and nervous.

Learned helplessness, is a term that refers to people who have no control over their actions and perceive intelligence as that which is unchangeable and failure as essentially resulting from lack of ability. At the end, it is evident that inhibition may be the output of both internal and external elements, and it is related to the capability to find clarifications to troubles in the past. The other important element, which influences motivation, is to learn the individual learners' feelings of competence and self-sufficiency.

The learners do not exhibit any signs of inhibition; usually, they are eager to take risks, not afraid of making language mistakes and ready to adopt some of another culture group's traits. However, the learners' affective filter is low and they can perceive much of the comprehensive input they have come across. These learners are often referred to as mastery-oriented, even though, they tend to comprehend failure effortlessly and seek to improve their subsequent performance. Although, motivated learners may have more confidence as well as a better self-image than non-motivated learners, such characteristics might make them feel comfortable when they interact with others. Motivated learners' approach to language learning is without any ambiguity, when compared with non-motivated ones.

Attitudes and Motivation

It is agreed that attitudes and motivation are closely related to accomplishment in language learning. It provides a brief explanation why some people have a much easier time of learning languages than others in the same classroom setting; some students may progress rapidly, while others just struggle along and never achieve command of a second language. (Rivers, 1983)

It also explains that the fact of variables in second language acquisition obtained from the amount of comprehensible input the acquirer receives and comprehends through the affective filter. Only, learning happens when there is minimal external pressure, optimum internal motivation and attitudes towards learning that are not likely to be annulled. And if learners have favorable attitudes towards the second language and its speakers, towards the teacher and the course, they would perhaps be more attentive in the classroom, would take assignments more carefully and be willing to achieve more, will look for conditions where they can achieve more practice in the second language. Thus, attitudes revolve around the educational elements of second language acquisition and of social attitudes focusing on cultural implications of second language acquisition.

Implications

In the process of learning a language, motivation can be an effective and helpful factor, by paying attention to the significant role of motivation in teaching process and improving, enforcing and strengthening it. In fact, teacher's awareness about learners' attitude and its relation to the teaching process provides a conceptual thought by which language teachers can use more productive and more effective methods.

In brief, motivation can be defined as a physical, psychological and social need which motivates the learner to reach or achieve his goal and fulfill his need, and at last, feel satisfied owing to the achievement of his aim. Here the learning process may happen, determining the role of motivation range and type which play a major role in it. However, the language teacher has an important function and role in providing motivation to the individual learner for learning the language.

Generally, motivation can be observed among learners based on their attitude to learning a language. When they have a good attitude, it has a positive, efficient and optimum effect, and the other one is bad attitude which creates blocks and causes weakness for learning a language. In reality, it is essential and significant for teachers to know what type of motivation it is and how it is formed, captured, and displayed in the learner. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can activate the learners. Providing conducive educational and academic advantage to students, and asking simple and easy questions at the beginning of the class would increase motivation for learning.

In another respect, motivation is an instrument for the learner. That means, the learner uses for example, English language in order to fulfill his need. In fact, the teacher should know the class should be in such a way that motivates the learners who have instrumental motivation in order to become familiar with and realize the value of the learners who think about English language as an instrument for reaching a particular goal such as achieving grades or passing examinations.

In order to create the scene above, learner must have a positive view about his own effort; some rewards such as grade, academic encouragement and so on should be presented to him/her as rewards. Accordingly, the encouragement for the students plays an important role for achieving a good or positive learning outcome. The learner should know that his/her efforts are recognized by the teacher. Therefore, the teachers should be aware of all their learners' activities. Thus, providing proper and appropriate rewards on account of the language learners' behavior is the important and indispensable point. The teacher should consider, pay attention and strengthen the language learners' positive behavior.

As a result, motivation directly influences and affects the language learners' learning methods, skills, and practices. So, motivation has a high effect on students' communication with others, determining learning amount, besides developing the desired levels of language teaching such as reading comprehension, speaking and writing. In brief, motivation has a direct effect on both quality and quantity of language learning.

Teachers should identify and understand the language learners' social, cultural, economic, and sentimental features and backgrounds in order to be able to help them, so that the language learners have a clear picture for themselves and respect their own roles.

Conclusion

Motivation is a very significant and effective element in the realm of learning language. Thus the language teachers and researchers should discover, realize and pay attention to the personality of their learners. However, they should be aware of motivation, its high importance, and its types. They should also realize and be aware of the character as well as the personality of each learner. According to that specific personality type, teachers should identify and recognize the form of motivation that relates to that personality and highlight it in their teaching process. They can have practical, productive, and effective teaching in the ESL classroom, in addition to a positive outcome in their teaching setting. When the learners are motivated, the teacher could and would discharge their responsibilities in the best way possible.

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