

Motivation: Its Crucial Role in Teaching English in Class Rooms

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Abstract: Motivation is the key to all learning. Lack of motivation is perhaps the biggest obstacle faced by teachers, counselors, school/college/university administrators, and parents. Behavioral problems in the classroom often, or always, seem to be linked to the lack of motivation. Intelligent students are often outperformed by the less bright students with high motivation. If a student is motivated enough, s/he can accomplish learning of any scale. This paper, based on personal observation, focuses on some aspects of motivation as well as how teachers of English, can apply it to students. Our aim is to discuss how motivation in the classroom can help students develop their potentials and make them learn English effectively.

1. Introduction

The proverb “Don’t give your students fish, but teach them how to fish” is perhaps true in language learning. But how do the English teachers teach them the language skills so that they become more interested and motivated in learning the language? Also, how do they maintain their interest in language learning when English is not seen as important for their immediate needs other than to pass the examinations?

Often, English language teachers adopt various languages teaching methodologies e.g. Audio Lingual Method, Direct Method, Grammar-Translation Method, Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning, Natural Approach, Total Physical Responses, Communicative Approach, etc. But what is more important for teachers is to know what the most appropriate approach to teaching the language in that particular environment is and what activities are suitable for a given group of learners. In most cases, teachers in Bangladesh are worried about how to teach the students to improve their level of proficiency in English language. So, the problem for many teachers is how to develop genuine interest among students to continue to learn and use English once the examination is over. Consequently, they should realize that they need to find creative ways to teach the language and increase the students’ motivation to learn the language effectively and to eventually appreciate it.

2. Theories of Motivation:

The term motivation derives from the Latin word *movere*, meaning “to move”. In the present context, motivation represents “those psychological processes that cause the

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arousal, direction, and persistence of voluntary actions that are goal directed. (Kreitner, p 236). Researchers have proposed two general categories of motivation theories to explain the psychological processes: content theories and process theories.

Content theories of motivation focus on identifying internal factors such as instinct, needs, satisfaction and so on that energize motivation. Needs are physiological or psychological deficiencies that arouse behaviour. They can be strong or weak and are influenced by the environmental factors. Thus, human needs vary over time and place. The General idea behind need theories of motivation is that unmet needs motivate people to satisfy them. Conversely, people are not motivated to pursue a satisfied need.

There are four popular content theories of motivation: Maslow's need hierarchy theory, Alderfer's ERG theory, McClelland's need theory, and Herzberg's motivator—hygiene model. Maslow's need hierarchy theory refers to five basic needs—physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization—that influence behavior. Alderfer's ERG Theory refers to three basic needs—existence, relatedness, and growth—that influence behavior. McClelland's Need Theory refers to three needs—need for achievement, need for affiliation, and need for power---that influence behavior. Herzberg's motivator refers to job characteristics that are associated with job satisfaction.

Process theories of motivation focus on explaining the process by which internal factors and cognitions influence motivation. These models also are cognitive in nature. That is, they are based on the premise that motivation is a function of individual's perception, thoughts, and beliefs. Process theories are more dynamic than content theories.

The three most common process theories of motivation: equity theory, expectancy theory, and goal-setting theory. Equity theory holds that motivation is a function of fairness in social exchanges. Expectancy theory holds that people are motivated to behave in ways that produce valued outcomes. Goal-setting theory holds that goals direct one's attention, regulates one's effort, increase one's persistence and foster the development and application of task strategies and action plans.

As far as teaching English language in classrooms is concerned, a teacher is expected to specify issues that should be addressed before implementing a motivational program. Teachers need to consider the variety of causes for the poor performance of students. Motivation is one of several factors that influence performance. Therefore, teachers should not ignore the individual students' differences in the acquisition of English language that affect motivation.

Section 2: Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation

The main idea of motivation is to capture the student's attention and curiosity and channel their energy towards learning. (Lumsden, Linda S, retrieved from World Wide

Web: <http://www.ericdigests.org/1995-1/learn.htm>). Intrinsic motivation is motivation from within the student. An intrinsically motivated student studies because s/he wants to study. The material is interesting, challenging and rewarding, and the student receives some kind of satisfaction from learning. Here is a description of one of intrinsically motivated students. He is one of many good students. He never misses homework, always uses his dictionary when a word comes up he doesn't know, and as a result of these kinds of habits he always does well in his tests. In one class the teacher checked whether the students had their home tasks done or not and after the class that student asked him if he had any mistakes in his home tasks. He prefers tasks that are moderately challenging. He demands more effort from himself and has a need for deep understanding. To have an intrinsically motivated student is the goal of all motivational development.

An extrinsically motivated student studies and learns for other reasons. (Lumsden, Linda S, retrieved from World Wide Web: <http://www.ericdigests.org/1995-1/learn.htm>) Such a student performs in order to receive a reward, like graduating or passing a test or getting a new shirt from parents, or to avoid a penalty like a failing grade. Here is a description of one of extrinsically motivated students. She is a very good student, and actually shows signs of being intrinsically motivated, but in general she is inclined to put forth the minimum effort necessary to get the maximum reward. When an assignment in class is given, she often tries to chat with her friends or fails to get started, but when she hears that this will be taken up and graded, she is often the first one to finish. Her intrinsic motivation may show when the material is of great interest to her, or something she feels strongly about. Also, when she is found curious about something, without her being distracted, she works hard at it. She performs well, as with many of our students who are extrinsically motivated, if a task is given to her where she has control, the task is very clear, and she is involved in the dynamics of the class. It seems that when intrinsic motivation is low or absent, extrinsic motivation must be used. Although extrinsic motivation can, and should, be used with intrinsically motivated students, too. If students aren't given a reward or credit for their efforts and no feedback is given to the students, then most students' intrinsic motivation would begin to decrease.

2. Proper Instruction

Proper explanation for lessons is needed by the teacher, so the students can well understand what is expected of them. (Harris, Robert, 2001, Retrieved from the World Wide Web: <http://www.virtualsalt.com/motivate.htm>.) In the English language classroom this is more appropriate to create anxiety because the explanations are given in another language that requires even more effort by the students to comprehend than their own mother language. A well-planned lesson is essential. The teacher must be creative and flexible. Depending on the nature of the class and the students' levels, the dynamics of the class must be appropriate. Some students at the advanced level, a little above what

they already know have been observed. They are energetic. But sometimes when they don't understand, teachers have to change mechanism and think of another way as not to lose the energy of the class. Some students who are not energetic at all have also been observed. The lessons must be simple, and interesting, with a lot of changes from a writing exercise, to a speaking session, then to a listening practice, again back to writing, and so on, all in the same class. If the students' span of attention and levels are lower, they usually don't like to take in something a bit challenging. But students who enjoy challenging materials will try harder to understand some things on their own. Rightly instructed students when they face with something they do not understand, will say, "I think I know what the teacher means, I'll give it a try", instead of "I didn't understand, I can't possibly start this on my own."

3. Achievable, Relevant Materials

The material must also be relevant to the students. Teachers may try to use vocabulary that the students can relate to the material they would find interesting. With beginners' or relatively weak students this is rather difficult because it is the first-level English session and the average caliber of those students is not up to their mark as they should be, but in this case teachers may try to introduce relevant material. Another very important part of proper classroom instruction is to make the materials simple and structural to reach the bottom level of the classroom. Here is a description of a student who needs constant individual instruction. It's not that he lacks the energy, but simply understands less than the other students. With him teachers have to keep lesson points simple, slow, and repetitive, usually after the other students have started on the exercise. When he feels the task at hand is achievable, he works diligently towards finishing. When the teacher is introducing a lesson, sometimes s/he focuses on him and keeps trying until he understands, then the teacher knows the whole class will understand too. Through this slow effort the teacher may keep his level of anxiety low, and hopes for intrinsic motivation up.

4. Caring Teacher

Another important aspect of improving the intrinsic motivation of students is to be a caring teacher. Although guidelines and rules must be set and understood by the students, and if they cross the guidelines a punishment will follow, the teacher must be caring approachable, and understanding. (Harris, Robert, 2001, Retrieved from the World Wide Web: <http://www.virtualsalt.com/motivate.htm>.) Students must feel the teacher is bonafide and supportive, and the students' values and opinions will be respected. (Lumsden, Linda S, 1995, Retrieved from <http://www.ericdigests.org/1995-1/learn.htm>)

Teachers must be kind and helpful to the students, and be patient when they don't understand. There are some teachers, who conduct their classes very strictly, almost as a sort of dictator in class. The teacher gets upset when it appears that the students don't understand what is taught in the class.

A caring teacher tries to develop a relationship with the students. If the teacher sees potential in all students, and communicates this well to the students, they will in return build a desire to learn and participate. When the students realize that teacher is not going to get angry, s/he is being nice and understanding, and the reason they are trying so hard is because it is important to them that their students learn and do well.

5. Energy Sells

A teacher's positive energy could lead to the students becoming more motivated. If the students see that the teacher is happy to be in the classroom and excited to teach them, then the students can learn by example. A smile is contagious. Positive attitude is a must for successful learning atmosphere. To promote self-confidence, it helps if the teacher is self-confident. Positive approval and appreciation of student efforts is very effective, even if the student is wrong. Let the student know that the teacher is glad, they tried and being wrong or making mistakes is not such a big problem, and the students won't be so reluctant the next time when they are called on to participate. Positive energy affirmation and a belief in the student's ability develop a comfortable atmosphere for the students in the classroom.

6. Parental Awareness

Increased parental awareness is also crucial to a students motivation (Bantjes 1994, p 56). To support motivation, parents must participate actively in their children's life. The same set of goals and practices at school that promote motivation should be followed at home. If they are not also followed at home, it could dilute classroom efforts. Thorough appropriate parent/ teacher/student communication, everyone can understand what is expected from each other. And the student will see that every one involved cares about his/ her academic success.

7. Conclusion

Motivation is one of the most important factors in determining success or failure in any learning situation. Being language teachers, we must be familiar with different practical motivational techniques and strategies as well as how to implement them into our class rooms. As Dornyei (2001, p. 116) notes, "Teacher skills in motivating learners should be seen as central to teaching effectiveness." When the students are motivated, we can

perform our job in the best way. In fact, we as teachers can do a lot to create the students' motivation, and our effort involved is an essential part of our teaching profession.

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