A Brief Discussion on the Motivation of ELT

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Abstract—**This paper focuses on a classroom research question within a certain teaching context about the reason that many students are not very motivated in learning English in their educational background. It is very useful in this teaching context and learning area to motivate the learners to regain their interest to learn a foreign language. An overview literature of motivation linking to the research question mentioned above will be justified by bibliographical references. A discussion about how to motivate students in their language learning classroom will be briefly described.**

Keywords-discussion;motivition, ELT

I. INTRODUCTION

Many things have an effect on second language acquisition although the learners are within the same educational background. Motivation is one of the important aspects in second language acquisition. As Ellis [1] summarizes, "the most successful learners will be those who have both a talent and a high level of motivation for learning". There is a difference in the motivation of the learners according to whether they are learning a first or a second language. If there is no motivation then, where are the "roots of motivation [2] for teachers to water"? The following classroom research question and the teaching context will show the importance of motivation.

II. THE CLASSROOM RESEARCH QUESTION WITHIN A TEACHING CONTEXT

A. The classroom research question

Some teachers are likely to suppose that their students are well motivated. In his book, Cook [3] shows an ideal teacher's world, "students would enter the classrooms admiring the target culture and language, wanting to get something out of the L2 learning for themselves, and thirsting for knowledge". However, the learners are seldom like that in the classroom. They only follow the teachers' instructions about what to do in every task and finish their homework but they do not do anything else beyond that. They were asked the following question: "why did you choose to study English as your main subject?" The answers were, "I like English", or "I may find a stable job in the future", etc. It seems that they had a clear idea about why they are learning English. They have their own motivation. They are also asked about what they do outside the classroom. Not surprisingly, the answers had nothing to do with studying English. Their behaviors made teacher reflect on how to motivate them more since they were in the particular position of learning English.

B. The teaching context

The students mentioned above are in their first year of study in the university, where they take English as their major subject for four years. They are around 18-20 years old with lower intermediate level in English, and the four fifths of them are female. Once succeeding in graduating, some of them will eventually become English teachers. In essence, the career of being a teacher is regarded as being comparatively better and more stable than others. In order to have the opportunity to go to this kind of university, they have to get a certain grade after passing the National University Entrance Examination (NUEE) in China. Besides this, they still have to pass an oral exam, which will show the level of their spoken English. Only one student out of twenty will be given the chance to study in this kind of university. That means they have to work hard while being in high school to get a good result, which is not only their aim but also the teachers'. Fortunately, because of time limitations, their teachers will prepare the learning material well and all the students have to do to learn English is to follow the teachers' routines and memorize everything mentioned by them. Every bit of knowledge they get is from their teachers' teaching. The learners are studying English like this for several years and it becomes a habit, which is rooted deeply into them even after entering university. As a result, this old habit cannot suit the new situation. In the university, they are no longer regarded as children or teenagers but young adults. They are supposed to know how to study by themselves without too much dependence on teachers. They are old enough to have their autonomy in studying. The knowledge is classified in detail and the teachers cannot provide help in every aspect. Having practice only in the classroom is far from enough. Hence, the phenomenon of the students doing well enough in the classroom but doing nothing outside it becomes a big obstacle. Since they are already learning English, how to encourage them to learn even more outside the classroom is the fact that needs further exploration.

III. The Theoretical Framework

In a general sense, motivation is, as defined by Dornyei & Otto and cited by Dornyei, "the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalised and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out"[4]. It is related to the individual behavior of different persons. Meanwhile, "language is not learnt by groups, but by individuals"[5]. That means different people's diverse kinds of motivation result in different attitudes to their second language learning. Therefore, "most teachers would agree that motivation plays an important role in any learning task." [6] Also, as Oxford & Shearin note,

"Research shows that motivation directly influences how often students use L2 learning strategies, how much students interact with native speakers, how much input they receive in the language being learned, how well they do on curriculum-related achievement tests, how high their general proficiency level becomes, and how long they persevere and maintain L2 skills after language study is over" [7].

The research presents only the influences but not the reasons for second language acquisition. In their book, Larsen-Freeman & Long cite Gardner & Lambert 's terms of integrative and instrumental motivation are as follows: Integrative motivation: A learner is said to be integratively motivated when the learner wishes to identify with another ethno linguistic group.

Instrumental motivation: the learner is motivated to learn an L2 for utilitarian purposes, such as furthering a career, improving social status or meeting an educational requirement [8].The former shows that the learner wishes to be integrated in the target language's culture and society while the later shows that s/he can have a practical external outcome after learning the target language. It is not easy to say which one is more motivating than the other.

As Lightbown & Spada point out, "cultural and age differences will determine the most appropriate way for teachers to motivate students [9]". That means learners of different backgrounds may need different methods to be motivated better. In his article, Svanes claims that, "European and American students were found to be more integratively motivated than the Middle Eastern, African and Asian students, who were found to be more instrumentally motivated than the Western student [10]". This shows that different cultural backgrounds do determine different terms of motivation. Some children may learn a foreign language only because of their parents' preference of this particular language, while some adults will learn one in order to be able to use the target language. This is a difference related to age. There are also other differences, which determine the way teachers motivate students. For example, gender is one of them. One of the researches shows the results of a study in the South West of England revealing that girls were more motivated than boys.

Tremblay & Gardner [11] assert that, "there is no single motivational theory suited to an understanding of all the factors involved in motivational behavior". From what it has been discussed so far regarding students, it can be seen that, not all the motivational theories can suit their situation perfectly. For example, as Skehan [12] cites Gardner & Lambert's hypothesis, "an instrumental motive is less effective because it is not rooted in the personality of the learner, and therefore, more dependent on fallible external pressures". The fact is, after the NUEE, the students have several ways of choosing to enter various kinds of universities and after graduation, and they can choose other careers than English teachers. However, since they are already studying English, their original and basic motive is the instrumental one, and they are well aware of it. Learning English is something, they will benefit from not only during their four years study, but also throughout their entire lives. That means, the learning of English is a long-term choice and their long-term motivation is instrumental, however, Dornyei [13] claims that, "to 'really learn' the target language, one has to be integratively motivated". However, most of them do have an interest in English; otherwise, they would have chosen to study other courses in the university. Although they do not have any integrative motivation apart from the instrumental one, they can still 'really learn' the language. For these learners, the integrative motivation and the instrumental one are not contradictory due to the various effects on the students.

Since their motivation is already rooted in their minds, how to motivate the learners more is the aspect for teachers to consider. From their behavior inside and outside of the classroom, one of the motivational strategies that should be chosen is to promote learners' autonomy. In Dornyei's "a process model of learning motivation in the L2 classroom", one of the main motivational influences is the "sense of autonomy" in the "actional stage" [14]. According to his figure named "the components of motivational teaching practice in the L2 classroom", "creating learner autonomy" belongs to "maintaining and protecting motivation"[15]. That shows learners' autonomy can be one of the important motivational strategies because Dornyei notes that, "becoming an autonomous learner is beneficial to learning [16] (cf. Benson, 2000; Little, 1991; Wenden, 1991)". Dornyei mentions many ways of promoting learner autonomy as,

"allowing real choices about alternative ways to goal attainment; minimizing external pressure and control; sharing responsibility with the students for organizing their time, effort and the learning process; inviting them to design and prepare activities themselves and promoting peer-teaching; including project work where students are in charge; and giving students positions of genuine authority"[17].

That shows 'choice' is of central importance in promoting learners autonomy. Hence, "the role of the teacher thus becomes one of helping and enabling learners to make suitable decisions" [18]. To give them choices means to let them decide what to do, when and how.

However, that is not enough. The premise is they should learn how to take decisions, because they have never had such an experience before they entered the university and

they were not told that they could decide their own way of learning. In addition, the strategy of learners' autonomy should accompany them during not only their four-year study in the university but their whole lives as well, which would be a long-term motivation. Based on this perspective, a piece of classroom research can be useful for the teachers.

IV. DISCUSSION

Dornyei claims that the aim of L2 motivation research is "understanding the operation of motivational factors/processes in the learning of second language as well as exploring ways to optimize student motivation" [19]. Meanwhile, "long-term motivation would seem *prima facie* a most likely candidate for SL success." [20] For the teachers who want to motivate the students more, they should have this purpose in mind: learners should be "able to control their own learning and perceiving that their learning successes or failures are to be attributed to their own efforts and strategies rather than to factors outside their control"[21]. Dornyei & Csizer in their article show Ten Commandments [22] for motivating language learners and one of them is to promote learner autonomy. The contents in the strategy of autonomy are suitable for the above specific learners. In addition, "learners are unlikely to become autonomous without active encouragement from their teacher" [23]. That's the reason why the teachers should motivate their students inside and outside the classroom.

According to the above indications, what the teachers can do to motivate the learners more are listed here. Find some attractive supplementary materials to arouse their interests. Encourage their creative and imaginative ideas. Encourage group work. Allow them to choose their learning materials. Learn from the experienced colleagues what they do to motivate their students. Use multimedia technology in teaching. Adopt the role of a facilitator. Use various teaching methods in the class. Encourage self-confidence. Provide more chances for them to know the culture of TL. Encourage them to communicate more with native speakers. Encourage the students to help each other, etc. All these ideas can be very successful when using them correctly; however a lot of effort on the part of both teachers and learners is required.

The contents of the classroom research are about whether the teachers do or not do the above things to motivate their learners in and outside the classroom. Since the common teachers are trying to motivate their learners more, the results of the research will show whether their effort is successful.

V. SUMMARY

The above statement is about the motivational theories that can be examined using a specific group of students. Meanwhile, the teachers should think more about how to motivate the learners and take action. However, the classroom research remains an assumption because Spolsky indicates that, "the study of language motivation remains an area where the social and psychological aspects of language learning and use are a source of fruitful exploration and deserves regular revisiting" [24]. As the language instructors, no one can find the shortcut.

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