

Study on Generating and Maintaining Ss' Learning Motivation of L2 Learning

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ABSTRACT: Authors of the paper firstly review the classification of learning motivation, relationship of learning motivation and learning effect, the recent motivation study in recent years and the framework for motivational strategies. On the basis of the review and the authors teaching experience, different means of generating and maintaining students' learning motivation are raised.

KEYWORD: learning motivation; generating and maintaining

1 REVIEWING LEARNING MOTIVATION

1.1 *Learning Motivation*

“Motivation may be construed as a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and / or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal/goals.” (Williams & Burden 2000:120) Learning motivation intends to explain why a person learns, how much efforts he /she is willing to pay and how long he/she will sustain the effort.

1.2 *Classification of learning motivation*

1.2.1 *Instrumental Motivation and Integrative Motivation*

Instrumental motivation refers to motivation to acquire a language as means for attaining instrumental goals: furthering a career, reading technical material, translation, and so forth. An integrative motive is employed when learners wish to integrate themselves within the culture of the second language group, to identify themselves with and become a part of that society. It was originally found that integrative motivation correlates with higher achievement in the language, leading to the suggestion that this is a more important form of motivation.

1.2.2 *Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation*

“Very simply, when the only reason for performing an act is to gain something outside the activity itself, such as passing an exam, or obtaining financial rewards, the motivation is likely to be extrinsic. When the experience of doing something generates interest and enjoyment, and the reason for performing the activity lies within the activity itself, then the motivation is likely to be intrinsic.” Williams and Burden (Williams and Burden, 2000:123) give ideas about extrinsic and intrinsic motivation as above.

1.2.3 *Short-term Motivation and Long-term Motivation*

Short-term motivation (direct short-range motivation) refers to the need, desire, interest or curiosity, which lasts, for example, in an English classroom, a particular exercise, a particular topic, a particular song, may make the students appear involved in the class. Long-term (indirect long-range motivation) refers to the motivation which lasts for a long time. It is a fairly stable attitude in a student's mind.

1.3 *Relationship between learning motivation and learning effect*

Learning motivation is an intrinsic drive which moves students to learn. Motivation, together with one's original knowledge, forms two major factors

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which affect one's learning. But the two factors play different roles in one's learning. The original knowledge, affecting one's learning as a cognitive factor, is the foundation whether one can succeed in studying new knowledge; learning motivation, as an emotional factor, helps students make efforts to learn the knowledge, actively overcome the difficulty in learning and get achievements in learning. Scientific research shows that learning motivation and learning effect are correlative: high level of learning motivation is attributive to good achievements in learning. Conversely, good achievements raise the learning motivation.

1.4 Motivation Study in recent years in China

Since the 1980s, scholars in our country have begun to do the research work for motivation on the research basis of scholars abroad. Although it's a little bit late, we sincerely see some achievements in the field. Yet with the development of modern science and technology, the study of motivation, especially strategies of generating and maintaining motivation of learning appears limited and insufficient, for example, in ShiBaolin's (2007). In order to compensate the insufficiency, further study of generating and maintaining motivation of learning is necessary.

2 A FRAMEWORK FOR MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES

How can we generate learners' learning motivation? Is there any procedure for us to follow to motivate learners? Dornyei (2005:119) provide us a framework for motivational strategies based on the process-oriented model by Dornyei and Otto(1998). The key units include:

- Creating the basic motivational conditions, which involves setting the scene for the effective use of motivational strategy.
- Generating student motivation, corresponding roughly to the preactional phase in our model.
- Maintaining and protecting motivation, corresponding to the actional phase.
- Encouraging positive self-evaluation, corresponding to the postactional phase.

2.1 Creating the basic motivational conditions

- Appropriate teacher behaviours and a good relationship with the students,
- A pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the classroom
- A cohesive learner group with appropriate group norm

2.2 Generating student motivation

- Enhancing the learners' language-related value and attitudes
- increasing the learners' 'goal-orientedness'
- Making the curriculum relevant for the learners
- Creating realistic learner beliefs

2.3 Maintaining and protecting motivation

- Setting 'proximal subgoals'
- Improving the quality of the learning experience
- Increasing the learners' self-confidence
- Creating learner autonomy
- Promoting self-motivating learner strategies

2.4 Rounding off the learning experience: encouraging positive self-evaluation

- Promoting attributions to effort rather than to ability
- Promoting motivational feedback
- Increasing learner satisfaction and the question of rewards and grades

The framework tells us which aspects we should pay special attention to and what to do in motivating learners.

3 STRATEGIES OF GENERATING AND MAINTAINING STUDENTS MOTIVATION OF ENGLISH LEARNING

According to Dornyei's framework and my own teaching experiences at the college, I mainly present strategies of generating and maintaining students motivation of English learning as the following, which may be neglected by others.

3.1 Set a personal example with your own behaviour

Almost everything a teacher does in the classroom has a motivational influence on the students, which makes teacher behaviour a 'motivational tool'. So, as a teacher, you must establish relationship of mutual trust and respect with the students and your teaching should be full of enthusiasm.

3.2 Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom

Learner involvement will be highest in a psychologically safe classroom climate in which the students are encouraged to express their own opinion and they needn't worry about the embarrassment and ridicule when they make mistakes. In order to create such a situations, what should a teacher do? Firstly, the teacher should be a patient and encouraging person who supports students' learning efforts.

Secondly, the teacher must develop a good relationship with the learners. As a saying says: a student, who likes his or her teacher, likes what he or she teaches. Thirdly, the teacher should present the tasks properly, that is, the task must be appropriate to the students, because too easy tasks will make the students bored and too difficult tasks will make them anxious. Fourthly, the teacher must increase the learners' linguistic self-confidence. When the learner has confidence in his or her linguistic ability, he or she can take an active part in the activity involved.

3.3 *Foster the learner's beliefs of participation and obligations*

In order to foster learners' beliefs of participation and obligations, teachers should do the following things. First, promote learner autonomy. Promoting learner autonomy means making the learner be an autonomous learner, that is, let them decide what to do and when and how to do it. In this way, the learner will have the feeling that they are the masters of their learning. Second, personalise the learning process. The teacher should help the learner to set the different goal in learning, choose different content to learn and adopt different manner to learn according to the learner's different characteristics and different learning level.

3.4 *Increase learners' goal-orientedness*

Educational psychological research has found that many students do not really understand why they are involved in a learning activity. They are usually passive and absent-minded in the activity. So it's important to make them understand why they do it or why they do not do it. The teacher need help the learner set their own learning goal and help them reach the goal with their own effort. When setting the goal, the goal should be clear and specific, referring to concrete outcomes; should be challenging and difficult, but not outside the range of students' capabilities. Both proximal and distal goals should be set. For example, a student's distal goal is to pass CET4, he or she should set his or her proximal goals, such as mastering the vocabulary needed, raising writing level etc. so that the distal goal can be realized.

3.5 *Familiarise learners with the target language culture*

In order to learn the target language well, it's necessary for us to know about the target language culture. Only when we are familiar with the target language culture, can we understand the target language very well, and overcome the difficulty met in learning. The learner will become more confident about themselves. On the other hand, the target language culture can provide us some different customs and habits of another people, which can make our learning more interesting. In this way, the students' learning interest is easy to raise.

3.6 *Make good use of the Internet*

Nowadays, the Internet carries so much information and knowledge that almost all the things in the world can be found through the Internet. We must make good use of the Internet so that our English learning and teaching will become more and more successful. As teachers, you can ask students to search for information needed in English teaching and you can also assign them to explore answers to your problems in class. Of course, the students can also teach themselves on line. In a word, the Internet brings us another way to learn English. Making good use of it can eventually bring both students and teachers information, knowledge, convenience, and interest.

4 CONCLUSION

The strategies mentioned above are only the methods the writer uses in English teaching to generate and maintain students' motivation. The writer doesn't aim to provide concrete methods for others to follow. The real purpose is to arouse attention of professionals and scholars so that they can devote more energy to the problem-solving-----generating and maintaining students' motivation.

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