

MOTIVATION: THE OVERLOOKED FACTOR IN SECOND LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

Yousef Alotaibi

Kuwait College of Science and Technology, Doha,
KUWAIT.

Yousef.utsa2018@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Motivation is the willingness and desire to invest time and effort in learning and progressing. If students are motivated, learning will be easier and more fun: herein lies the significance of this topic for educators. It has been proven that motivation is one of the most important factors for success in almost every aspect of life including language learning. This paper aims to present a synthesis of research findings that emphasizes the importance of motivation in language learning. Given the scarcity of research studies on motivation in Kuwait, this paper is not only expected to contribute to the limited research conducted on this topic, but also it will raise awareness among educators of the significance of motivation for academic success.

Keywords: Instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, target language.

INTRODUCTION

Motivation has been always associated with hard work, dedication, and success. It is commonly defined as the desire to start doing an activity and the effort and time devoted to keep doing it. It goes without saying that motivation is crucial in every aspect of life not only in education. Successful businesspeople, entrepreneurs, scholars, employees, and students all have many characteristics in common; one of them is that they are highly motivated. In language education, motivation is one of the primary contributors to language acquisition (Gardner, & Lambert, 1972). Brown (2007) stated that motivation is what makes the difference. It is probably the most important factor for success or failure in completing a task. In addition, Dörnyei (2009) pointed out that motivation is one of the most significant concepts in psychology and language instruction, which commonly determines failure and success in learning. Cook (2000) stated that language learning is not the same among learners. He added that there are many factors that influence language acquisition such as length of exposure, age, language aptitude, and motivation. Among all these factors, motivation is the most important one. The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of research findings to demonstrate the importance of motivation in language learning. The results of the studies reviewed in this paper are presented in four sections: definitions of motivation, types of motivation, the power of motivation, and how to motivate students.

Definition of Motivation

The online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines motivation as “eagerness and willingness to do something without needing to be told or forced to do it.” Elliot & Covington (2001) define motivation as the reason behind our actions, desires, and needs to attain a goal. To put it simply, motivation is the need and desire that drive us to pursue a goal. The definition of motivation has been influenced by several psychological theories. This paper presents two definitions of motivation: behavioral, and cognitive.

The behavioral theory

Behavioral psychologists suggest that learners are driven by the anticipation of a reward. In other words, they do an activity because they expect to get something in return for their effort (Brown, 2007; Lepper, 1988). For example, people go to work to earn money and have a better life. The reward could be money, praise, raise, or good grades. According to this theory or definition of motivation, our actions are often inspired by a need to gain external reward or to avoid punishment.

The cognitive theory

According to Brown (2007) the cognitive theory of motivation is quite different from the behavioral viewpoint. The reward is a part of the cognitive motivation as well, but the difference is that the source of motivation is not external. It results from an internal need or interest. In this sense, students study to enhance their knowledge and gain mastery of a certain subject not because they expect a reward in return.

TYPES OF MOTIVATION

Integrative and instrumental motivation

Research on motivation in the field of second language learning has been strongly influenced by Robert Gardner and his colleagues. Gardner & Macintyre (1991,1993) classified motivation under two orientations; integrative orientation and instrumental orientation. According to them, integrative motivation stems from a student's interest and desire to integrate in the second language culture. In other words, integratively motivated students learn a second language for social and cultural purposes. They may have a partner, a friend, or a family member who speaks the target language, and they want to communicate with them. On the other hand, instrumental motivation is defined as the desire to learn a language in order to achieve certain academic, professional, or financial goals. For example, in second language instruction, some students learn English in order to pass a course, graduate, and have a good job opportunity. Gardner and Lambert (1972) claimed that integrative motivation was stronger than instrumental motivation among learners of French in Canada. However, according to Brown (2000), integrative and instrumental motivations are closely intertwined; they both facilitate learning. He pointed out that international students in the United States learn English to succeed academically (instrumental orientation) and to become a part of the target language community (integrative orientation).

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

Motivating students to learn is one of the most difficult tasks a teacher faces in English language teaching. That raises a few questions: Why are some students highly motivated while others uninterested? Why do we do the things we do? What drives us? To answer these questions, we have to understand the difference between extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. According to Ryan & Deci (2000), intrinsic motivation comes from inside the students. It is the desire to devote time and effort in learning for its own sake, not because it leads to an external reward. In one sense, intrinsic motivation exists within learners. In another sense, it exists within the relation between learners and the tasks they perform. In other words, if students find a task enjoyable and interesting, they will be intrinsically motivated to do it. In addition, learners engage in intrinsically motivated activities because they look for internally rewarding outcomes such as feeling of competence, autonomy, self-esteem and fulfillment. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation comes from outside. It is defined as the doing of a task to earn a reward or to avoid punishment. Extrinsically motivated behavior is driven by the anticipation of an external reward such as praise, grades, recognition, or money (Brown, 2007; Maslow, 1970; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

THE POWER OF MOTIVATION

Motivation plays an important role in the process of learning a second language. It is undeniably one of the determining factors of success in second language learning (Bradford, 2007; Dörnyei, 1998). According to Gardner (1985), a motivated learner is one who is eager to learn the language, willing to devote effort on the learning activity, and willing to sustain that effort to achieve his/her goal. Motivation is what distinguishes hardworking students from average and struggling students. A study of successful language learning conducted by Naiman et al., (1977, as cited in Ur, 1991) found that successful students exhibit certain distinctive characteristics that are closely related to motivation. Here are a few of them: a) they are willing to do challenging tasks, b) they are determined to succeed in order to maintain a positive self-image, c) they are ambitious, d) they set goals, e) they are positive and not discouraged by failure, f) if they find a task ambiguous, they try very hard to understand it, and g) they overcome difficulties in order to succeed. In addition, motivated students put more effort into performing learning tasks, invest more time in learning, and never quit when they face challenges (Masgoret, & Gardner, 2003).

HOW TO MOTIVATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Maslow (1970) found that intrinsic motivation is stronger than extrinsic motivation. He claimed that external rewards could decrease intrinsic motivation. However, Brown (2007) suggests that extrinsic and intrinsic motivation complement each other. It is best to combine them to facilitate learning. For example, praise and feedback (extrinsic motivation) validate students' hard work, autonomy, and self-fulfillment, which increases and maintains intrinsic motivation. He concluded that extrinsic motivation is good for short-term goals, whereas intrinsic motivation is good for long-term goals. Dörnyei & Csizer (1998) conducted a survey to collect data about classroom motivation strategies. In the survey, 200 Hungarian English language teachers were asked to choose the most important and effective motivation strategies from a list of 51 strategies. Based on the teachers' responses, they have put together the set of 10 strategies listed below, which they called "Ten commandments for motivating language learners: final version." (p. 215-218):

1. "Set a personal example with your own behavior." In other words, lead by example. Your personality and attitude in the classroom are contagious. Your students will reflect on what you offer them. If you want them to be prepared, punctual, respectful, and hardworking, you will have to set a good example to your students.
2. "Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom." A positive classroom atmosphere does not happen on its own. You have to create it. You have to be positive and warm towards your students. Get to know their hobbies and interests. Learn their names and use them. Greet them when you see them inside and outside the classroom.
3. "Present the tasks properly." Give clear instructions on how to do tasks. As mentioned above, some students are intrinsically motivated by the task or the activity itself. Therefore, you have to explain fully to your students how to do a task in the classroom. Some students may lose interest if they find the task confusing or ambiguous.
4. "Develop a good relationship with the learners." This is one of the most important strategies here. If your students like you, they will accept you. If they accept you, they will learn from you. Therefore, you have to build a good rapport with your students. Students will feel more comfortable if they like their teacher.
5. "Increase learners' linguistic self-confidence." Many students are insecure about their language proficiency. They don't feel confident using English because they do not want

to be laughed at or ridiculed by their classmates. As a teacher, you have to uplift your students and encourage them to use English in order to improve.

6. “Make the language classes interesting.” Students have to be actively engaged in the classroom. They should not sit passively listening to the teacher talk throughout the lesson. To make your class more fun, engage your students in the learning process by using technology, group work, pair work, and games.
7. “Promote learner autonomy.” Encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. Help your students to move gradually from dependence on you to independence. Teach them how to study on their own and how to set goals.
8. Personalize the learning process.” Align your lesson with students’ goals and interests. Your lessons have to be interesting and relevant to your students’ academic goals.
9. “Increase the learners’ goal-orientedness.” Encourage your students to set goals and track progress. Setting goals is one of the most important techniques for success. Teach your students how to set achievable long-term and short-term goals and how to achieve those goals.
10. “Familiarize learners with target language culture.” In other words, teach your students the target language culture. Language and culture are closely related. Most students who learn English are interested in the culture as well. Familiarizing your students with the target culture’s traditions, music, foods, festivals, and holidays will surely motivate and influence them. (Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998, pp. 215-218).

CONCLUSION

A great deal of research has been conducted on motivation. In psychology and pedagogy, motivation has been defined as a desire, a need, a drive, an incentive, or an impetus that push students to set goals and pursue them. As a matter of fact, motivation is a complex human quality that determines success and failure in every aspect of life. In language instruction, every student has a different motive or motives to learn. This overview of research findings is aimed to define motivation and present its importance, and how it can facilitate language learning especially among college students. As a teacher, you have to understand why your students are interested in English in order to motivate and influence them. In addition to understanding the reasons why your students want to learn English, your, activities, materials, teaching practices, and the atmosphere in your classroom have to be channeled towards those reasons.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Bradford, A. (2007). Motivational orientations in under-researched FLL contexts: Findings from Indonesia. *RELC Journal*, 38(3), 302-323.
- [2]. Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. New York, NY: Longman.
- [3]. Brown, H. D. (2007). *Teaching by principles: An Interactive approach to language pedagogy (3d ed.)*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.
- [4]. Cook, V. (2000). *Second language learning and language teaching*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- [5]. Dörnyei, Z. (2009). *The L2 motivational self-system*. In Z. Dörnyei, & E. Eshioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- [5]. Dörnyei, Z. (1998). Motivation in second and foreign language learning. *Language Teaching*, 31(3), 117-135.
- [6]. Dörnyei, Z., & Csizér, K. (1998). Ten commandments for motivating language learners: Results of an empirical study. *Language Teaching Research*, 2, 203-229.
- [7]. Elliot, A. J., & Covington, M. (2001). Approach and Avoidance Motivation. *Educational Psychology Review*. 13(2).
- [8]. Gardner, R. & Lambert, W. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- [9]. Gardner, R. C., & Macintyre, P. D. (1991). An instrumental motivation in language study: Who says it isn't effective? *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 13, 57-72.
- [10]. Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. London: Edward Arnold.
- [11]. Gardner, R. C., & MacIntyre, P. D. (1993). A students contribution to second language learning. Part II: Affective variables. *Language Teaching*, 26, 1-11.
- [12]. Lepper, M. R. (1988). Motivational considerations in the study of instruction. *Cognition & instruction*, 5:4, 289-309, DOI: 10.1207/s1532690xci0504_3
- [13]. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. (n.d.). Motivation. In *ldoconline.com* dictionary. Retrieved June 6, 2020 from <https://www.ldoconline.com/dictionary/motivation>.
- [14]. Masgoret, A. M. & Gardner, R. C. (2003). Attitudes, motivation, and second language learning: A meta-analysis of studies conducted by Gardner and associates. *Language Learning*, 53(1), 123-163.
- [15]. Maslow, A. (1970). *Motivation and personality (2nd ed.)*. New York: Harper & Row.
- [16]. Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L., (2000). Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 25, 54–67.
- [17]. Ur, P. (1991). *A course in language teaching: Practice and theory*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.