

ENHANCING MOTIVATION IN LEARNING ENGLISH: STUDENTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Motivation is the most important factor for educator in order to improve learning. A number of teachers have contributed their study how to enhance student's motivation. It is one of the most important targets in daily basis. Conceptualized student's learn, work effectively, drive to engage and energy, and achieve students' potential at school. This paper describes the characteristics of primary students, the role of primary English teacher and focuses on the strategies of the teachers to motivate children to learn English. There are three ways to motivate children: achieving intrinsic, extrinsic and group motivation. In achieving intrinsic motivation, it is concluded that TPR, using songs and playing games are good strategies for children. Whereas, achieving extrinsic motivation, from the weakest to the strongest degree, extrinsic motivation is classified into 'external regulation, interjected regulation and identified regulation'. And the last is group motivation, group motivation plays a very important role in language teaching which occurs in the classroom. So it is wise for primary school English teachers to create an active motivational atmosphere where children feel secure to learn.

Key Words: *Children, Motivation, Primary School Teacher*

INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a foreign language is quite a complex process. In other words, English learners need to learn not only its pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, but also its abundant culture. Indeed, there are many factors influencing English learners' success or failure, such as learners' motivation, intelligence, aptitude, family background and so on. Among these factors, it has been often said that English learners' motivation plays a crucial part in their English learning. In fact, the role of learners'

motivation in learning a second language has been examined by many researchers who are interested in this subject area (e.g. Belmechr and Hummel, 1989 et al).

Among English learners are children, who are young and special and need certain or special ways to motivate them to learn English well. As a primary school teacher, we have a very important role. We must cultivate children's interest in learning English and to some extent; we are responsible for their success and failure of English learning in their later stage of life.

Then understanding more about children and theories about motivation could improve teachers' practice. The teacher are motivators in the classroom. They should apply the better approach to improve their students' motivation. There are some factors that influence human motivation like the right goal, challenge, responsibility, opportunity and leadership.

This paper aims at presenting the characteristic of children as young English learners, to discuss strategies to motivate children in English learning based on different motivation theories.

The Characteristics of Children

Children are naturally curious and active. They are full of enthusiasm and often show a lot of eagerness to participate. But when we try to motivate children to learn, we need to know what they like or dislike. The following are some statements about their characteristics. They are:

1. Many children do not often have a clear purpose for learning.
2. Many children like to do things with achievable learning target because they want to feel sure that it is not something beyond their ability.
3. Many children like to do things with their hands, bodies and minds. If not satisfied, they sometimes would like to make noises and move around.
4. Many children love listening to songs. They are good at imitating sounds and facial expressions.
5. Children are not good at analyzing language rules.

They can't understand abstract concepts. They don't like boring classes with little activities and listen to the teacher all the time.

The Role of Children's English Teacher

Having known Children's characteristics above, we may find a good primary school teacher have to play many different roles, such as a parent, a friend, a motivator, a discipline controller, an evaluator, and even an actor. We need to possess special qualities in addition to language competence and teaching capabilities. We need to understand how children think and learn. We need to care for "the whole child" instead of just carrying for the language that we are teaching. We need to help children to develop in an all round way-linguistically, intellectually, culturally, and morally. We need to guide them in mastering learning strategies and learning how to learn, help them to develop the ability of using imaginations and learning to solve problems. We also need to teach them to care for others and respect others. However, according to some educationists, one of the most important roles the primary English teachers play is a motivator. That is to say, as a good primary school English teacher, we have to know how to motivate children to learn English.

Motivation

Motivation is a psychological term which usually refers to a feeling of enthusiasm, interest, or commitment that makes somebody want to do something, or something that causes such feeling.

According to Redmond (2008), motivation causes an organism's behavior, or the reason that an organism carries out some activity. In a human being, motivation

involves both conscious and unconscious drives. Psychological theories must account for a “primary” level of motivation to satisfy basic needs, such as those food, oxygen, and water and for a “secondary” level of motivation to fulfill social needs such as championship and achievement.

Sasson (Success Consciousness.com) states that motivation is the inner power or energy that pushes toward acting, performing actions and achieving. Motivation has much to do with desire and ambition, and if they are absent, motivation is absent too.

Often, a person has the desire and ambition to get something done or achieve a certain goal, but lacks the push, the initiative and the willingness to take action. This is due to lack of motivation and inner drive. Motivation becomes strong when one has a vision, a clear mental image of what one wants to achieve, and also a strong desire to materialize it. In this situation motivation awakens and pushes one forward, toward taking action and making the vision a reality.

Motivation is one of the most important keys to success. When there is lack of motivation one either get no results, or only mediocre results, whereas when there is motivation one attains greater and better results and achievements. Compare a student who lacks motivation and who hardly studies, to a student who is highly motivated, and who devotes many hours to his studies, they will get absolutely different grades.

Consequently, motivation in this research is realized in the following indicators: (1) the students’ enthusiasm in listening to explanation, and it is considered as *Inadequate* in this research if the students do other activities during the lesson. *Adequate* when they sometimes listen to the lesson, *Good* if they always listen to the lesson, *Very good* when they always listen to

the lesson carefully. (2) the students’ interest in responding to explanation and questions, and this indicator is said to be inadequate if the students do not give any responses although asked, adequate when they give irrelevance responses when demanded; Good if they give relevance responses when demanded; very good when they give relevance responses without demand. (3) the students’ commitment to work with colleagues, and in this case the indicator is regarded as inadequate if the students do not contribute to the group; adequate when they contribute irrelevantly when requested; Good when they contribute relevantly when requested; very good if they contribute relevantly without request.

As Ball (1957) claims, ‘motivation is a central concept in any theory of education.’ Therefore, it is essential to demonstrate different points of view on definitions of motivation in order to achieve a better understanding of the role of motivation in language learning. According to Ball (1957), motivated students refer to those who wish to do things that teachers expect, while unmotivated students are the ones who are unwilling to do things based on teachers’ expectation. In contrast with teachers, psychologists (e.g. Lewin, 1952 et al) study the concept of motivation to a greater extent. Lewin, a member of the cognitive school, emphasizes that learning itself is motivation which determines success. However, Bruner (1966) seems not to be in line with this suggestion, arguing that when learners are forced or pushed to learn, they might fail to maintain their natural curiosity. In contrast, Beard and Senior (1980), two behaviorist psychologists, believe that ‘incentives and rewards’ are motivations for establishing behavior. Spencer (1959) appears to support this idea, suggesting that it is primarily important for teachers to apply various types

of 'rewards' to stimulate students to possess 'interests and goals' in the performance of tasks.

As illustrated above, definitions of motivation can be given from different ways of thinking. On a basis of these conceptions, many language teaching researchers have contributed themselves to the study of the strategies of motivation in language teaching. Students motivation naturally has to do with the students' desire to participate in the learning process. But it also concerns the reasons or goals that underlie the involvement or non-involvement in academic activities. Although students may equally motivated to perform a task, the sources of their motivation may differ.

Motivation Strategies

1. Achieving Intrinsic Motivation

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), 'intrinsic motivation generally refers to motivation to engage in an activity because that activity is enjoyable and satisfying to do.' At this point, it is obvious that the teaching method is playing a crucial role for shaping and fostering children's motivation in learning. A lot of children like to learn the language simply because they enjoy the classroom activities in which they can demonstrate their capability and gain success. Similarly, children can develop a negative attitude towards the language simply because they do not like their classroom activities. Bearing in mind the theory of multiple intelligences, we need to design a variety of activities that cater for different needs and provide different opportunities for children to exercise their different intelligence. Considering the characteristics of children, the following are some ways concerning planning classes and making classroom

activities enjoyable to the children.

1. 1. TPR (Total Physical Response)

To my knowledge, children like to move and do things with their hands and bodies. It is wise for primary school English teachers to organize some hands-on activities for children to do. They will quickly react to the teacher and it will help them to concentrate on the class well.

Long before children are able to produce any language, they have already been very experienced and efficient listeners. Parents talk to them everyday no matter whether they understand or not. Gradually they can follow instructions like "smile!" or "Don't touch your nose", etc. Take this into consideration, we would find it easy to understand that in English classes, we can offer similar opportunities for our pupils. This means before we ask children to speak or repeat after the teacher or the recorder, children should be allowed to listen and respond quickly or with gestures and actions as a way to show their understanding. So TPR would prepare them for speaking. Furthermore, children like participating in actions and they seldom get bored when they are involved in the activity. Slattery and Willis (2001) point out that if the teacher asks children in English to do something he or she is "using language for a purpose; giving them the opportunity to show that they understand; giving them another opportunity to acquire the language; giving them another opportunity to absorb the sounds and patterns of the language naturally.

1. 2. Playing Games

Halliwell (1992:5) points out that "games are fun for children and are very useful and important for learning. It is

not because they are fun. It is partly because fun elements create a desire to communicate and partly because games can create unpredictability". Cant and Superfine (1997) have pointed out that games can provide a meaningful context for activity and help develop both a positive classroom atmosphere and a more effective learning environment. More importantly, games reflect children's interest and usual behavior; they help children's cognitive development, help them explore social behaviors and feelings, provide variety in language learning and they can also be used as an effective way to evaluate the class performance in a non-threatening way. We can use games for vocabulary practice, grammar practice, for listening, speaking, reading and writing. Language teaching should be concerned with the children's real life. Halliwell (1992) believes that it is more than a matter of enjoyment, but it is very much of an authentic part of being a child.

There are generally two types of games in the classroom. One kind stresses accuracy which is called *Language-focused games* and the other kind stresses fluency, which is called *communication-focused games*. The latter one pays more attention to the development of fluency and communicative ability of the learners (Xie, 2001). Language-focused games are more commonly used with the whole class, while the communication-focused games are often done in pairs or in small groups. As their names suggest that in language-focused games the teacher has more control in terms of what language point is practiced, while in communication-focused game is hard to predict what specific language learners

might use. Moreover the language requirement of the communication-focused games is more advanced than the language-focused ones, because these games are intended on the overall language ability of learners. Generally they will come later than the language-focused ones. However, this does not mean that communication-focused games are better than language-focused ones only because they are more advanced. When new language points are introduced language-focused games are very necessary before more challenging activities could be successfully carried out. The following are some ideas of the games that can be used in the classroom with or without modification.

1. 4. Using songs

The value of using songs in the primary English classroom has been widely recognized. Both teachers and learners find songs in class can often bring a change to the routine procedures of language presentation and practice. More and more teachers have realized that songs can serve as magic teaching tools to develop learners' language abilities, e.g. in helping learners in learning pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence patterns; in helping children's memorizations and in helping children develop a natural sense of the language. On the other hand, songs can help teachers create a relaxed classroom atmosphere where learners feel safe and non-threatened.

The above are some ways to achieve intrinsic motivation. It seems that a satisfaction or an enjoyment with an activity, personal interest and a goal or goals are the most important aspects in motivating language learners intrinsically. The following is about

extrinsic motivation.

2. Achieving Extrinsic Motivation

Vallerand (1997) and Vallerand et al (1989, 1992, 1993) suggest that three forms of extrinsic motivation have been taken into account according to the degree to which the goal for achieving a performance is determined by language learners. From the weakest to the strongest degree, extrinsic motivation is classified into 'external regulation, introjected regulation and identified regulation'.

'External regulation' refers to external factors which are used to motivate language learners' performance in language activities, such as 'tangible benefits and costs'. As a primary school teacher, must pay much attention to external regulation.

'Introjected regulation' implies that individuals have incorporated external pressures, such as parents' and teachers' expectation or personal desire to surpass another person in a language test, into internal force.

'Identified regulation' is the strongest form of extrinsic motivation, suggesting that language learners contribute a great deal to language activities because the choice for doing so are made by themselves.

3. Achieving Group Motivation

Group motivation claiming that 'group cohesiveness, group norm and

group leadership' are effective motivation conditions of a learner community because these three determines 'the behavior of the learner group'. Group motivation plays a very important role in language teaching which occurs in the classroom. So it is wise for primary school English teachers to create an active motivational atmosphere where children feel secure to learn.

CONCLUSION

The characteristics of children have been demonstrated in this paper and it implies the roles of primary school teachers. Then it comes to the main part of this paper, that is, the strategies to motivate children to learn. It can be conclude that students motivation is the key in teaching and learning process. Motivation has a positive relation with the students' English learning achievement. It can be increased through any effective teaching and learning strategic to improve the students' achievement.

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