

Enhancing students' motivation in learning English at the academy of finance

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Abstract: Motivation is not a new term in the language-teaching field and many studies by scholars, linguistics and educationalists have proved that motivation is an important aspect of successful learning. Therefore, they attempt to find out the most useful ways to motivate students in the class. This article emphasizes the role of motivation in language learning and proposes some suggestions to enhance students' motivation in learning English at the Academy of Finance.

Keywords: Motivation, language learning

1. Introduction

In language learning, motivation refers to learners' desire and effort to achieve the goals of getting good results in tests or being more successful in their future career. "In the context of second language (L2) learning, motivation was seen as the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so" (Kissau, 2006, p.76). It is undeniable that motivation is particularly important in education in general and in the classroom in particular because of its strong impact on students' learning. As a critical component of learning, motivation is essential in getting students to engage in academic activities. It is also important to determine how much students will learn from the activities they perform or the information to which they will be exposed to. In the context of the Academy of Finance (AOF), the teachers of English have experienced some difficulties with their students' motivation and passivity in learning the language. In addition, their motivation level is significantly different. Therefore, the teachers always try to find ways to motivate them to learn English better.

2. The role of motivation in language learning

There has been an immense consensus among many scholars and researchers that motivation is seen as the critical determinant associated with learners' L2 achievement. Gardner and Lambert (1959) found that aptitude and motivation were the two factors most strongly associated with learners' L2 achievement. Subsequently, in Gardner's Socio educational model of second language acquisition, he hypothesized that L2 learners with positive attitudes toward the target culture and people will learn the target language more effectively than those who do not have such positive

attitudes. Furthermore, motivation is regarded as the core proponent of students' involvement in language learning. Dornyei (2009) in a book "motivation and a vision of knowing second language" emphasized the importance of motivation to the students' participation in the classroom lesson as follows "Indeed, motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate second/foreign (L2) learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process". Motivation in his concept devises a great force not only to foster learners' temporary interest but also uphold that passion till the boring lesson.

Regarding motivation in the teaching-learning process, it is stated that students will work longer, harder and with more vigor and intensity when they are motivated. Bernaus (1995, 11-20) after investigating the role of motivation in foreign language learning has found that "motivation accounts for 48.5% of students' English proficiency" and concluded that motivation is the main factor affecting students' foreign language acquisition, followed by socio-cultural factor. He also emphasized that the motivational factors are more important than other factors in favoring students' English achievement.

Littlewood (1998:53) also states that in second language learning, motivation is the crucial force which determines whether a learner embarks on a task at all, how much energy he devotes to it, and how long he perseveres. Another role of motivation is to promote the choice of strategies to become successful in academic activities. The use of specific learning strategies and techniques while studying a second language leads to success.

3. Some suggestions to enhance students' motivation in learning English at AOF

3.1. Variety of activities and tasks

A variety of activities and tasks are recommended by many students in the questionnaires. Students will be more interested if they learn new and interesting things in the lesson. Brown (2001) stated that “instead of providing learners with all the necessary things to learn, the teacher gives them opportunities to make choices in activities, topics and discussions”. It is undeniable that choosing topics relevant to students are necessary but more important than that the teachers need to provide new things and activities in each lesson. In fact, students will feel demotivated in the class if the topics and activities are boring or the teacher always uses these activities repeatedly. When students become bored with doing the same things, a wonderful technique no longer looks very good. In reality, the technique is still good, but variety is required to keep students’ attention. Therefore, the teachers need to provide a variety of tasks and activities to avoid boredom in the lessons. Learners will be more interested and motivated if they can share and talk about what they are familiar with or what they are interested in, so topics and questions given should be close to students’ favorite. Some jokes and appropriate funny stories will also make the class more interesting and exciting. Various effective activities are individual presentation, pair-work, group work, role-play, friendly competitions between teams and funny games. Each of these activities has its strong points, so the teacher should try to use them as suitable and effective as possible.

Some useful activities for communication improvement suggested are:

- Information gap: In this type of activity, one group has half of the information required to complete the task and the other group has the other half (or pairs of students). The two groups need to exchange information to complete the task. This type of activity will challenge students and they are expected to become more active and positive.

- Opinion gap: An extremely important point when selecting speaking activities is choosing topics. A good topic must be interesting and relevant to the students. It is useless to ask a group of male students who are interested in sports and computers to talk about fashion. Similarly, a group that is really interested in fashion might not be interested in football. With the opinion gap activity, students are asked to express their own opinions, thoughts, and feelings in pairs, groups or with the whole class.

- Role-play: Role plays create a contextual learning environment. Instead of just memorizing isolated words or phrases, students learn how language functions in real-life communicative situations. This contextual understanding makes it easier for them to transfer their language skills to authentic, everyday interactions outside the classroom. Role plays can be highly motivating for language learners. They add an element of fun and creativity to language classes, making learning enjoyable. When students are motivated, they are more likely to participate actively, practise more, and make progress in their language skills. Regular practice with role plays can lead to improved speaking fluency. Students become more comfortable expressing themselves spontaneously in the target language, which is invaluable in real-world conversations.

For example: the teacher chooses a real-life scenario – interviewing for a job (Unit 8 – Intelligent Business – pre-intermediate level), assign roles to students (applicant – interviewer), have students prepare and then act out the scenario. Afterward, he/she will give feedback on pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency.

- Group work: Implementing group work brings a multitude of advantages that transcend traditional learning methods. It allows students to become active participants in their learning. Through discussion, students can articulate their ideas, refine concepts and develop interpersonal and communication skills. Educational research also points to the benefits of problem-based and team-based learning in motivating students. These approaches encourage students to engage deeply with content, apply knowledge in practical scenarios, and learn from other students through a shared educational journey. Positive group experiences are linked to greater engagement and satisfaction among students, which can lead to improved university instruction and overall academic success.

- Presentations: Presentations are a great way to have students practise all language areas (vocabulary, grammar, fluency and pronunciation) and skills (speaking, reading, writing and listening). They also build confidence, and presenting is a skill that most people will need in the world of work. I find that students who are good presenters are better communicators all round, since they are able to structure and express their ideas clearly.

For example: Group work & presentations

- + Ask students to imagine they are launching a new product or service.
- + In pairs or small groups, students create a short presentation to “sell” the product to the class.
- + Encourage them to use business-related vocabulary (e.g., target market, unique selling point, price strategy).
- + After the presentations, the class can ask questions or give feedback.

3.2. Games

Games ignite a spark of curiosity and fuel the flames of motivation, making learning an exhilarating adventure rather than a mundane task. The competitive element adds an extra layer of excitement, pushing students to excel while creating a vibrant, interactive classroom atmosphere. By tapping into the natural human inclination for play and competition, game-based learning transforms the educational experience, making it more engaging, memorable, and effective.

3.3. Creating a friendly and positive learning environment for students

The atmosphere of learning and practicing the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing must take place in a friendly manner, avoiding too much distance in the interaction between teachers and students and between students and students. Teachers must create a friendly atmosphere so that students can overcome the feeling of being shy when practicing speaking and being afraid of saying the wrong thing. The specific methods are:

- Arouse students’ interest in learning English. There may be some students who are not interested in this subject for some reason. In this case, teachers should let students know the importance and impact of English on daily life and how it is necessary in the future for their lives, jobs, and careers. It is a useful means of bringing children closer to culture, progress and advanced science and technology around the world because it is the international language.

- Build a supportive teacher-student relationship: the teachers should take time to learn and use students’ names to build rapport and show that you value them as individuals. Encourage students to ask questions, share ideas, and express any concerns. Ensure they feel comfortable speaking without fear of judgment. Offer praise and constructive feedback, focusing on progress rather than mistakes.

- Let students share their own knowledge: Students will be less interested if they think teachers only lecture without thinking about their students’ thoughts. Teachers should ask students about their

own thoughts about the issue they are studying, then they will be excited to speak and will have the feeling of being cared about and from there they will be more confident and interested in sharing with their teacher and classmates.

- Encourage students to discuss the topic being studied in class: Students raise their own problems and discuss them under the guidance and direction of teachers. If possible, teachers organize seminars in English, invite alumni and students with achievements in English competitions and those who have achieved much success in life and career with English. This is a living witness for motivating students to learn English.

- Establish a positive classroom culture: create a culture where making mistakes is seen as part of the learning process, not as a failure. Share stories of your own language learning challenges to normalize the experience.

- Incorporate music, videos, podcasts, and games alongside textbooks to keep the learning dynamic and interesting.

4. Conclusion

In second language teaching, motivation plays a crucial role in students’ language achievement so it is advisable for the teachers to apply motivational teaching methods by adding more games and using a variety of activities in the lessons and to create a friendly and positive learning environment to motivate their students to learn English. Hopefully, these suggestions in this article could be a great help for teachers in teaching vocabulary.

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