



AFFECT OF MOTIVATION AND DEMOTIVATION FACTORS IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Dr. VENKATA RAMANI. CHALLA

Assistant Professor in English

Department of Basic Sciences and Humanities (BS&H)
Gayatri Vidya Parishad College of Engineering for Women
Madhurawada, Visakhapatnam-48 (A.P)



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ABSTRACT

Teachers stretch their resources to the utmost to achieve the best possible teaching results, however, the process of ESL learning is undeniably complex and depends not only on teacher's effort but also on learner's needs, interest, background and many other factors. Some seem to make quick progress while others struggle to see results. Unfortunately, not all are able to achieve the levels of proficiency they would like. There are many features exerting influence over the learning process. Among the factors affecting language learning, motivation has always had a key role. Many researchers agree that motivation is crucial in learner's success and there is an increasing interest in knowing more about this topic.

This study demonstrates analysis of the three factors that have a strong connection with motivation. In addition, a profound analysis of demotivation in ESL/EFL settings is also discussed since it is highly possible even for motivated ESL/EFL students to face demotivation due to several factors.

Key words: Motivation, Language Learning, ESL/EFL students, Demotivation

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1. INTRODUCTION

Motivation in language learning plays a vital role. It produces effective second-language communicators by planting in the learners the seeds of self-confidence. English instructors practice a number of methods both within and outside the classroom to motivate language learners. According to Hussin, et al. (2001):

Positive self-concept, high self-esteem, positive attitude, understanding of the goals for language learning, continuous active participation in the language-learning process, the relevance of conducive environment could contribute to the success of language learning.

They state that six factors influence motivation in language learning: (i) attitudes, (ii) beliefs about self, (iii) goals, (iv) involvement, (v) environmental support, and (vi) personal attributes. Three specific elements that are strongly believed to build motivation towards language learning are (i) self-confidence, (ii) experiencing success and satisfaction, and (iii) good teacher-learner relationships as well as relationships among learners. In the process of motivation development these three factors correlate to each other. This study demonstrates analysis of the three factors that have a solid connection with motivation.

Profound analysis of demotivation in ESL/EFL settings is as essential as familiarity with the

motivation factors since it is highly possible even for motivated ESL/EFL students to face demotivation due to several factors. In order to sustain students' enthusiasm for acquiring English, instructors must learn how to motivate and also how not to demotivate students. In addition, it is significant for instructors to be familiar with students' intrinsic demotives so that they can prevent students from being effected by possible demotives.

1.1 INVESTIGATION OF THE THREE FACTORS

1.1.1 Self- Confidence

Self-confidence is the most significant factor in language- Learning. It provides learners with the motivation and the energy to become positive about their own learning. It also creates the drive in them to acquire the targeted language, enjoy the learning process, and experience real communication. "At the heart of learning is a persons' belief in his or her ability to accomplish the task" (Atsuta 2003). "In general, successful language learners appear to have higher self-esteem than those who are unsuccessful" (Richard-Amato 2003). Lack of belief in one's ability hinders a learner from achieving that task --- pursuing a targeted language accomplishment. It is widely believed that once student gains self-confidence, it progressively expands in conjugation with experiencing success and satisfaction as well as good relationships. Classroom community also plays an important role in building students' self-confidence. Jones (2006) suggests that it is essential for instructors to "encourage participant to take risks with the target language and push the limits of their proficiencies" (p. 6). Making students understand the necessity of errors during acquiring an L2 is significant in order to provide self-confidence for L2 students.

1.1.2 Experiencing Success and Satisfaction

Experience of success provides students with more power to pursue a new goal. It allows language learners to understand the purpose of trying and have pleasure in communicating with others. Some people might feel successful when they can communicate their thoughts to people; others might feel the sense of success when they complete a challenging task in a targeted language. Some people on the other hand, appreciate compliments from others. Subrahmanian (2001)

suggests that external praise for one's improvement is strongly related to fomenting the sense of success (p. 12). There is a similarity between the experience of success and satisfaction; the experience of success at all times satisfies people in anything besides language -learning. The experience of success comes hand-in-hand with the sense of satisfaction.

According to Lile (2002), "A student will find it difficult to perform in a stressful environment" (p. 34) and "the lessons must be very simple, yet interesting, with a lot of changes from a writing exercise, to a speaking, listening, back to writing, and so on." Nunan (1999) states: "Students need to be able to use the skills taught in the classroom to do things other than those that they had been specifically taught."

This implies that in order for the learners to experience success and become satisfied, it is essential for instructors to create a relaxing learning environment so that the students can perform successfully. Moreover, a language class needs to contain a variety of materials and activities focusing on all necessary skills. The class can be made more challenging and effective by encouraging students to practice all these skills. This practice, in return helps the student to develop a holistic personality.

1.1.3 Good Relationships among Learners and between Teacher and Students

According to Hussin et al. (2001): "Teachers need to find creative ways to teach the language and increase the student's motivation to learn the language and to eventually appreciate the language."

There are a number of methods that English instructors can use to motivate students in class and instructors should flexibly employ the most suitable method for a class. Furthermore, Kabilan (2000) indicated, "Teachers should develop a mutual relationship with their learners." For this the teacher need to understand the students who are from different backgrounds, have different interests, future goals, aims for English learning and, most importantly, different personalities. Once they understand them better, teachers are able to apply specific teaching and communicating strategies tailored to each student, thereby creating a trusting

relationship between a teacher and student. Once the relationship develops, the classroom will become comfortable and enjoyable enough for students to learn positively from the teacher without any hesitation.

What occurs in the language classrooms must be extended beyond the walls of the classroom so that a link is created between what is learned in the classrooms with what occurs outside of the classrooms (p. 88).

Languages cannot be learned merely in classrooms. Learning a language requires communication in real-life situations. Thus, students need to acquire an array of communication skills that they can use with various kinds of people. It is essential that they learn not only how to communicate in the target language but also the background, history, and culture that defines it.

According to Nunan (1999):

Students who remain silent in group of ten or more will contribute actively to discussions when the size of the group is reduced to five or three. Type of communicative task can also influence students' willingness to speak.

Richard-Amato (2003):

In classrooms in which mutual respect is lacking, differing values can lead to conflicts between student and teacher, and between student and peer (p. 66).

The classroom size and the size of group are to be carefully considered. Language learners tend to feel frightened to make a speech in front of a big group. Thus, teachers need to aid students who need support and encourage them to understand that no one can be as perfect as native speakers. In addition, teachers are required to teach all students the importance of having respect for one another in a classroom so that each of them can actively participate in lesson.

1.2 DEMOTIVATION FACTORS IN ESL/EFL LEARNERS

In the education field, demotivation hinders people from pursuing their goals. It plays the bad-guy role in English education, leading great deal of students to give up. Furthermore, it is easy for highly motivated EFL/ESL students to become demotivated, puzzling instructors who have been

teaching passionately with proven methods. According to Trang and Baldauf Jr. (2007):

Research has shown that motivation is crucial for L2 learning because it directly influences how much effort students make, 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 reserve and maintain L2 skills after language study is over (p. 102).

Believing it that motivation plays vital role in L2 education, the analysis of demotivation process is considered as important as motivation in order to keep motivating L2 students.

Various factors cause demotivation amongst new language learners. According to Trang and Baldauf Jr., there are two groups of demotives: (i) internal attributions and (ii) external attributions. The internal attributions include students' attitudes towards English, their experiences of failure or lack of success, and the incidents related to their self-esteem; the external attributions contain teacher-related factors, the learning environment, and other external factors. Since we, language instructors have a direct influence on the students' external demotive attribution; it is incredibly significant for us to be aware of the external attributions.

Furthermore, according to Gorham and Millette (1997):

The behavior of the teacher influences the behavior of the student, subsequently affecting learning outcomes. Student motivation is affected by a variety of factors, some of which are directly influenced by what a teacher does (how the teacher structures the course and how he or she behaves in class) and some of which are largely beyond the teacher's control (expectancies and attitudes students bring with them to the class) (p. 101).

In order to effectively maintain student motivation, special care should be applied to the course structure. Motivating student behavior as well is

essential for L2 instructors although there is limit of our capability to sustain student's motivation. An interesting research was conducted by Trang and Baldauf Jr. (op.cit.), which concludes:

Among teacher-related factors, teaching method had the highest frequency in demotivating students (26%), followed by teacher behavior (7%), teacher competence (4%), and grading and assesment (1%). Out of 88 demotivated students, 59 had, to a greater or lesser extent, been affected by demotivation through teaching method (p.87).

Gorham and Millette (op. cit) also hypothesize:

Motivation is related to the perceived challenge of a task. When individuals perceive themselves as capable of accomplishing a task, they are more likely to perceive the task as rewarding and remain motivated to accomplish it. If the task is perceived beyond the individual's capabilities (suboptimal challenge), dissatisfaction increases, there is a greater sense that goals or expectations were not fulfilled, and motivation decreases (p.139).

In this regard, Jones (op. cit.) asserts:

By far the greatest source of demotivation is teachers personality (e.g. lack of commitment to the students or teaching, excessive criticism, and belligerent or condescending attitude), and teaching style (e.g. repetitive, monotonous, insufficient or unclear instructions or explanations, lack of enthusiasm, and inferior use of materials or equipment). Other sources of demotivation were inadequate school facilities, reduced self-confidence, negative attitude towards second language (L2), the compulsory nature of L2, interference of another foreign language being studied, negative attitude towards L2 community, attitudes of group members, and course book (p. 221).

Another appealing viewpoint is created by Peacock (2001):

Matching teaching and learning style improves learning, attitudes, behavior, and

motivation. Matching teaching style with learning style gives all learners an equal chance in the classroom and builds student self-awareness.

The consensus is that when student and teacher styles are better matched, students are likely to work harder both in and outside the classroom and also to benefit much more from their EFL classes (p. 222).

It is strongly believed that students need to feel both relaxed and sure about what occurs in the classroom to be motivated to study second language in and outside the classroom. Even though it is challenging for the instructors to cater their teaching styles, it is necessary. It is also essential to carefully plan the tasks in the materials paying special attention to their interests, back-grounds, and language levels to stir up their motivation. Borrowing Jones's (op.cit.) words:

Extrinsic motivation had limitations, especially with more mature learners, and that one of our biggest challenges and responsibilities as language teachers is to find or design material that is intrinsically motivating.

1.3 CONQUERING DEMOTIVATION

Can demotivated students be remotivated to learn L2? According to Trang and Baldauf Jr. (op.cit.), the answer is YES. They report:

Most of the factors that helped students overcome their demotivation concerned internal factors (71%) rather than external factors (29%). Five internal factors that significantly contributed to students' overcoming demotivation were: an awareness of the importance of English (27%), personal reasons (16%), self-improvement (12%), self-determination (12%), and positive attitude towards English (4%).

It is understood that the L2 learners need to come up with their own ways to motivate themselves again after demotivation to learn L2, which the instructors cannot completely control. Nevertheless, we can get involved with the other 29%, which are

external motivating factors. According to Trang and Baldauf Jr. (ibid):

“External factors included positive changes in teacher behavior (6%), teaching method (7%), learning conditions (9%), and external encouragement (7%)” (p. 187).

This brightens our teaching world since the above four factors are within our control. Specifically, it is unproblematic to change the behaviors and students’ learning conditions and encourage them to keep studying a target language. Furthermore, it is not as difficult as we expect to change teaching methods.

1.4 CONCLUSION

Motivation is crucial in language learning. It makes language learners positive about their own learning. It also creates the drive in them to acquire the targeted language, enjoy the learning process, and experience real communication. Moreover, three factors- self-confidence, experiencing success and satisfaction, and good teacher-learner relationships as well as relationships between learners- play essential role in developing language learners’ motivation. And also, in order to maintain motivation, the L2 instructors are to be familiar with demotivation factors- both internal and external attributions. They have a direct relation with students’ external attributions. Fortunately, it is possible for once-demotivated students to overcome their obstacles in motivation.

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