REVIEW ARTICLE

MOTIVATION IN EFL CLASS ROOMS - AFFECTIVE FACTORS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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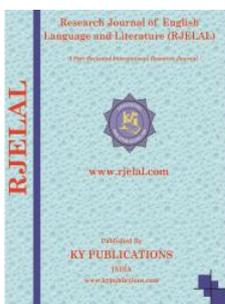
ABSTRACT

Students' success in learning a foreign language in general and English in particular can be affected by numerous factors, in which motivation is an important element that should not be neglected. Lack of motivation in language learning leads to students' frustration in English classrooms and affects their learning performance and outcomes. The aim of this paper is to review and discuss different types of motivation and factors affecting students' motivation in ELF classrooms. Once the factors have been identified, some solutions are recommended to both teachers and students in order to stimulate students' motivation in learning English.

Keywords: motivation, motivating factors, English learning, EFL classrooms

1. Introduction

Motivation is widely believed to play an important role in the success of language learners since it "provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the L2 and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process" (Dörnyei, 1998b, p.117), and "without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals" (Dörnyei, 1998b, p.117). The importance of motivation in EFL learning is also emphasized by Ur (1996) who believes that motivation makes teaching and learning easier and more pleasant because a motivated learner is "willing and even eager to invest effort in learning activities and to progress" (p. 274). Owning a crucial role in second language learning, motivation has become an interesting topic for many researchers over the past decades (Gardner, 1985; Crookes and Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994, 1998b, 2001; Williams and Burden, 1997; Noels, 2001; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011, etc.).

As English has become more and more important in every aspect of our lives, it is one of the compulsory subjects in most schools and universities in Vietnam and is one of the requirements for graduation. As lecturers of English at a university, the authors realize that although the students have studied English for at least seven yearsprior to entering university, the majority of the students do not demonstrate good results in their final tests. Class observations during years of teaching showed that many students did not follow the lessons eagerly. Apart from very few students who were involved in the classroom activities, many others just remained reticent or did other things like chatting or using their mobiles sneakily. This situation discouraged both teachers and students in the learning process. The purpose of this paper is to review and discuss the factors affecting students' motivation in English learning and propose some solutions to help teachers as well as students improve the situation of English teaching and learning.

2. Motivation in EFL learning

2.1 Definition of motivation

Thanks to its powerful influence on language learning, motivation has become a topic of great concern by many researchers (Gardner, 1985; Crookes and Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994, 1998b, 2001a, 2001b; Noels, 2001; Williams and Burden, 1997; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011). However, it is not easy to find a common definition for motivation although it is a frequently used term in both educational and research contexts (Dörnyei, 1998b). According to Dörnyei (2001a), motivation refers to "the choice of a particular action, the persistence with it, and the effort expended on it" (p. 7). In Williams and Burden's (1997) view, motivation can be defined 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 previous set goal (or goals)" (p. 120). Gardner (1985) also gives a definition of motivation in language learning as "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language" (p. 10). Despite a variety of definitions of motivation, it can be seen that these definitions share some common elements such as goals, effort and desire that push a person to achieve a goal.

2.2 Types of motivation

In the history of motivation research, motivation has been categorized into different types. The first common distinction is made by Gardner and Lambert (1972) who divide motivation into integrative and instrumental motivation and the second distinction is proposed by Deciand Ryan (1985) who distinguish motivation into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

2.2.1 Integrative and instrumental motivation

Gardner and Lambert (1972) make the distinction between two types of motivation: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. According to Brown (2007), integrative motivation refers to the interest in learning the L2 because of a desire to "integrate themselves into the culture of the second language group and become involved in

social interchange in that group", whereas instrumental motivation refers to a desire to learn the L2 to "achieve some practical goals such as furthering a career, reading technical materials, translation, and so forth" (p. 170).

Integrative motivation is believed to be an important requirement for successful language learning. Gardner (2001) emphasizes that an integratively motivated learner "is motivated to learn the second language, has a desire or willingness to identify with the other language community, and tends to evaluate the learning situation positively" (p. 6). Finegan (2008) also stresses that integrative motivation typically "underlies successful acquisition of a wide range of vocabulary and a nativelike pronunciation" (p. 520). In a recent study, Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) find that integrativeness appears to be the most important factor contributing to pupils' success. However, studies also reveal that instrumental motivation can effectively influence language learners. The results in Dörnyei's (1990) study show that instrumental motives significantly contribute to motivation in foreign language learning contexts. Furthermore, in their study, Kitjaroonchai and Kitjaroonchai (2012) find that the students have both high integrative and instrumental motivation to learn English and instrumental motivation is found to be slightly prominent. These findings indicate that both integrative and instrumental motivations are essential elements of success in the L2 learning process. Brown (2007) points out that there is no single means of learning a second language and the learners' selection of the forms of motivation depends on particular contexts.

2.2.2 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

Deci and Ryan (1985) classify motivation into two types: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. The first type, intrinsic motivation, refers to doing something because "it is inherently interesting or enjoyable" (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 55). This type of motivation refers to the reasons for L2 learning for the inherent pleasure and interest in the activity and the spontaneous satisfaction associated with it (Noels, 2001). In contrast, extrinsic motivation refers to doing something "to attain

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some separable outcome" (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 60). In other words, students engage in L2 learning because of some rewards from outside and beyond the self such as money, prizes, grades, etc. (Brown, 2007).

Although students may engage in the learning process by both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons (Lemos and Veríssimo, 2014), the importance of intrinsic motivation is strongly emphasized by researchers due to its benefits, especially for long-term retention (Brown, 2007). Noels, Clément, and Pelletier (1999) argue that increased intrinsic motivation is related to "greater interest in course material and higher academic performance" (p. 25). Noels (2001) also stresses that people with intrinsic motivation are likely to have positive feelings toward the learning activities and invest more effort over a long period of time, whereas students who work for extrinsic rewards may have no reasons to go on if those rewards are not available. However, it cannot be denied that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play an important role in L2 learning process.

2.3 Factors influencing motivation in second language learning

Studies show that there are a variety of factors affecting language learners' motivation comprising both internal ones (learner-related factors) such as learner's attitude, self-confidence, self-esteem, anxiety,prior knowledge (background knowledge), experience of success, and external factors such as teachers, learning environment, and learning materials (Gardner, 1985, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986; Schunk, 1991; Crookes and Schmidt, 1991; Brown, 2007; Lunenburg, 2011; Dörnyei andUshioda, 2011, etc.).

2.3.1 Internal factors

There are numerous factors affecting language learners' motivation comprising both internal ones (learner-related factors) such as learner's attitude, goal setting, self-confidence, anxiety, prior knowledge (background knowledge) andexperience of success (Gardner, 1985, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986; Schunk, 1991; Crookes and

Schmidt, 1991; Atchade, 2002; Brown, 2007; Lunenburg, 2011; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011).

Attitude towards English and English speaking community

Attitude is one of the most important factors affecting learners' motivation in L2 learning. Attitude is defined by Gardner (1985) as "an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent" (p. 9). In second language acquisition, Atchade (2002) also defines the term "attitude'' as a set of beliefs that learners hold towards the members of the target language group, the target language culture and in the case of classroom learning, towards their teachers and the learning they are given. Attitude and motivation are believed to be closely related. According to Atchade (2002), learners who possess positive attitudes learn more, and learners who learn well acquire positive attitudes. In the same vein, Brown (2007) believes that second language learners benefit from positive attitudes and that negative attitudes may lead to decreased motivation. This means that if the students' attitudes are positive, the experience with the language will be pleasant and the students will be encouraged to continue, whereas negative attitudes can discourage learners to learn the L2 and success in L2 learning cannot be achieved (Gardner, 1985).

Goal setting

Goal setting is considered by researchers as an important process affecting motivation (Schunk, 1991; Locke & Latham, 2002; Lunenburg, 2011). According to Lunenburg (2011), a goal is defined simply as "what the individual is consciously trying to do" (p. 2). He states that individuals provided with specific, difficult but attainable goals will perform better than those given easy, nonspecific, or no goals. Goals, either set by students or assigned, enhance self-efficacy and promote motivation (Schunk, 1991). Moreover, Schunk (1991) emphasizes that in order to function as motivational factors, goals should include three components: proximity, specificity, and difficulty. In addition, goals should also be accompanied by feedback about progress (Locke and Latham, 2002). It means

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that people need to know how they are doing so that they can adjust the level or direction of their effort or to adjust their performance strategies to match the goal requirements (Locke and Latham, 2002).

Self-confidence

Self-confidence is one of the major motivational components in foreign language learning. In Dörnyei's (2001b) view, self-confidence refers to the belief that one has the ability to produce results, accomplish goals or perform tasks competently. Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1994) also define self-confidence in L2 using as the combination of "low anxious affect and high self-perceptions of L2 competence" (p. 422) and learners' self-confidence will develop when the contact with members of L2 community is frequent and pleasant. Self-confidence is considered a significant factor in language learners' performance because students who lack confidence are usually found to be "extremely fearful and timid, reluctant to express their opinions and even unable to utter a complete meaningful sentence in class" (Ni, 2012, p. 1509). Rubio (2007) also states that confident foreign language learners often perform well and most likely believe themselves to be capable learners whereas learners with low self-confidence "suffer from uncertainty, insecurity, fear and, social distance" (p. 7).

Language anxiety

Language anxiety has been found to affect learning motivation. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) define language anxiety as "the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning (p. 284). According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), language anxiety comprises three components. The first one, communication apprehension, refers to the frustration and apprehension generated by the fear of inability to express oneself or to comprehend another person. The second one, test anxiety, is a kind of anxiety stemming from the fear of failure on test performance. The third component, fear of negative evaluation, refers to the apprehension about others' negative evaluations (p. 127-128). In

order to describe the influence of anxiety on foreign language acquisition, Scovel (1978) draws two types of anxiety, namely, facilitating and debilitating anxiety. Facilitating anxiety motivates the learner to adopt the new learning task while debilitating anxiety stimulates the learner to adopt avoidance behavior (Scovel, 1978). However, although a certain level of anxiety may be beneficial, too much anxiety can lead to a debilitating affect. Research findings show the negative effect of anxiety on L2 learning motivation (e.g. Liu and Huang, 2011; Liu, 2012). The results from Liu's (2012) study among EFL undergraduates in Taiwan reveal that learners with higher levels of anxiety in the language classroom tend to have lower motivation and become less autonomous in language learning. Zheng (2008) also asserts learners with higher language anxiety tend to "avoid interpersonal communication" and attain "low levels of academic achievement" than less anxious learners (p. 5).

Prior knowledge (Background knowledge)

In the literature, the term 'prior knowledge' is often used interchangeably with 'background knowledge' (Campbell and Campbell, 2009). Prior knowledge can be defined as "all knowledge learners have when entering a learning environment that is potentially relevant for acquiring new knowledge" (Biemans and Simons, p. 158). Prior knowledge is important since it acts as mental hooks for the lodging of new information and is the basic building block of content and skill knowledge (Campbell and Campbell, 2009). Students who have a great deal of background knowledge in a given subject area are likely to learn new information readily and quite well (Marzano, 2004), whereas a lack of prior knowledge prevents students from acquiring new knowledge and causes an excess cognitive load on their working memory (Dochy, Rijdt, and Dyck, 2002). Luu (2011) also stresses that students with good past learning knowledge can study better at present than students with lost background knowledge.

Experience of success

Harmer (2007) stresses that "nothing motivates like success" and "nothing demotivates like continual failure", and the longer the students'

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success continues, the more likely they are to stay motivated to learn (p. 101). This judgment is in the same vein with Littlejohn (2008) who believes that "feelings of success fuel motivation" (p. 219). Furthermore, Ebata (2008) also emphasizes that experience of success will provide students with more power and willingness to pursue a new goal. In Ur's (1996) view, learners who have succeeded in past tasks will be more willing to engage with the next one, more confident in their chances of succeeding, and more likely to preserve in their efforts. Luu (2012) also acknowledges the importance of students' previous learning experiences to their present and future learning outcomes, arguing that students who were successful in their past learning tend to be successful in their learning in the present.

2.3.2 External factors

Apart from the internal factors that come from inside the learners, researchers (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011; MacIntyre, 1999; Crookes and Schmidt, 1991) show that students' motivation are also affected by a number of external factors which come from outside the learners such as teachers, learning environment in which the students are studying, and materials which are used in the learning process.

Teachers

Research shows that teacher-related factors are among the most determinant factors of L2 learners' motivation. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) consider teachers as key social figures who affect the motivational quality of the learning process in a positive or negative way. They state that teachers' motivational effectiveness is determined by the interplay of several broad factors such as teachers' personality, attitudes, enthusiasm, distance or immediacy, professional knowledge/ skills, and classroom management style. Moreover, the use of particular teaching strategies including modeling, task-presentation, and feedback also has an important influence on students' motivation to learn (Dörnyei, 1994). Harmer (2007) also emphasizes the importance of teachers' care and enthusiasm to students' motivation. In his view, when the teachers have little interest in the students, they will have

little incentive to remain motivated. On the contrary, they are more likely to retain an interest in what is going on if the teachers caring and helpful. Miller (2012) discusses ten characteristics of a good teacher which she later separates into four areas, namely, affective characteristics (e.g. enthusiasm, encouragement, humor, etc.), specific teaching skills, classroom management techniques, and academic knowledge. Besides, teachers-related factors such as feedback, rewards, praise, and punishments are claimed to be relevant factors that impact L2 learners' motivation (Williams and Burden, 1997).

Learning environment

Learning environment involves a variety of factors such as classroom atmosphere and physical conditions. Lumsden (1994) states that classroom atmosphere is an important factor influencing intrinsic motivation. If students experience the classroom as a caring and supportive place where there is a sense of belonging and everyone is valued and respected, they will tend to participate more fully in the process of learning. In addition, MacIntyre (1999) emphasizes that a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere will create motivation since it encourages students to express their opinions and thinking. On the contrary, a tense classroom climate causes students' anxiety which undermine learning effectiveness and L2 motivation. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) also add that learner involvement will be highest in a psychologically safe classroom climate in which students are encouraged to express their opinions and in which they feel that they are protected from ridicule and embarrassment.

Learning materials

Crookes and Schmidt (1991) state that learning materials, regarding both format and content, are among the important factors generating students' interest in language learning. Textbooks using varied typographical layouts, color illustrations, photographs, and often page formats borrowed from the world of journalism, together with interesting contents with regard to age and culture, help to enhance students' interest (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991). Sun (2010) emphasizes that

teaching materials have an important role in attracting students' interests in language learning. In his research about the influence of teaching materials on learners' motivation, Sun (2010) finds that students' motivation is influenced by a variety of factors such as topics, the level of difficulty, the relevance of materials to their background knowledge, and the usefulness of the materials to their life. Crawford (2002) also asserts that effective teaching materials providing with cultural and linguistic input and a rich selection of integrated activities not only address the need of L2 learners but also keep students motivated in L2 learning.

2.4 Conclusion and recommendations

2.4.1 Conclusion

Studies reveal that there are different kinds of motivation (integrative and instrumental, intrinsic and extrinsic) and numerous factors affecting students' motivation in learning English. These factors include internal factors (attitude towards English and English speaking community, goal setting, self-confidence, language anxiety, prior knowledge, experience of success) and external factors (teachers, learning environment, learning materials). These factors can affect students' motivation in a positive or negative way. In order to help students become more motivated in learning English, there need to be efforts from both teachers and students.

2.4.2 Recommendations

2.4.2.1 Recommendations to the teachers

Motivating students is an important part of the teacher's job. Althoughit can be a difficult task, the results from it are worth trying. The study will be more enjoyable if the students are excited to learn and participate in the classroom activities. As teachers are one of the factors affecting students' motivation in English classrooms, some suggestions are made to the teachers so that they can improve the teaching and learning situation.

Creating a pleasant and relaxing atmosphere in the classroom

Studies show that student anxiety is one of the most potent factors that undermine learning

effectiveness and L2 motivation (e.g. MacIntyre, 2002; Liu, 2012). In other words, the fear of making mistakes or losing face with friends when speaking a foreign language can provoke anxiety among language learners. According to Dörnyei (2001a), the safe and supportive environment of the classroom is made up of a number of different components such as the teacher's rapport with the students, the students' relationship with each other, and the norm of tolerance. Teachers should create a safe classroom climate in which students can express their opinions and feel that they are protected from ridicule and embarrassment. Besides, teachers also use humor as a tool to create a relaxing learning atmosphere. Young (1990), in a study involving university and high school students, found that teachers who used humor and created a friendly, supportive, and relaxing classroom atmosphere that encouraged risk-taking were helpful in reducing language anxiety and facilitating learning.

Creating a variety of learning activities

Repetition of lessons without various activities causes boredom among students and affects their demotivation in learning English. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers should stimulate students' English learning by providing them with a variety of activities instead of focusing on grammar, vocabulary, and reading texts all the time. Kong (2009) emphasizes that it is effective and functional to apply various and interesting activities with moderate challenge to attract students to arouse their curiosity and enhance learning motivation. Activities such as discussions, presentations, role plays, etc. will be motivating since they provide students with chances to speak English and exchange their ideas and knowledge. Moreover, game-like activities such as crosswords, puzzles, traps avoiding, hidden information findings etc. will help students not be fed up with the same activities they have to do every day.

Making learning stimulating and enjoyable

Findings in many studies show that teachers' boring ways of conveying knowledge and boring classroom atmosphere are among the factors demotivating students in learning English. Therefore, it is teachers' duty to make learning more

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stimulating and enjoyable for the students. Dörnyei (2001a) states that students are usually willing to spend time learning and pursuing activities that they enjoy**.** However, according to Brophy (2004) the problem is that most schools' curricular topics and learning activities are selected primarily on the basis of what society believes students need to learn, not on the basis of what students would choose if given the opportunity to do so. If teachers just present and follow what is available in the textbook, the students may get bored. In order to motivate students, he suggests that "whenever instructional goals can be accomplished using a variety of examples or activities, incorporate content that students find interesting or activities that they find enjoyable" (Brophy, 2004, p. 225-226). Teachers can do this by connecting the lesson contents with things that they already find interesting. For example, including people or events that are currently prominent in the news or the youth culturecan make learning more attractive and exciting.

Giving students more chances to speak English

It is a fact that lack of chances to speak English is one of the factors negatively affecting the students' motivation. It should be noticed that the purpose of most of the students when studying nowadays is for communication; therefore, grammar and vocabulary-based teaching and lack of chances to speak English can easily make students get bored and tired. Brophy (1987) stresses that most students prefer activities that allow them to respond actively by interacting with the teacher or with one another. He suggests that teachers should provide students with opportunities to participate in projects, role-playing, simulations, educational games, and creative applications of what is being learned. Moreover, teachers can plan activities that permit students to work together in pairs or groups to tutor each one another, discuss issues, or find out solutions to the problems, or to work as team preparing for a competition, or produce some group products. Dörnyei (2001a) also asserts that creating learning situations in which students are required to be active participants such as giving them specific roles or personalized assignments is another way of making learning more motivating and enjoyable.

Promoting leaner autonomy

According to Dickinson (1995), autonomous learners become more highly motivated and autonomy leads to better, more effective work. In order to encourage learner autonomy among learners, Dörnyei (2001a) provides some key issues include allowing students real choices, sharing responsibility with the students for organizing their learning process and giving them positions of genuine authority, and encouraging students' contributions, peer teaching and project work. In that way, students are required to organize themselves, to decide on the most appropriate course of action to accomplish their duties. Besides, teachers should also encourage students to use media as a means of improving their knowledge; encourage them to go to English language teaching websites, listen to English songs, watch English movies on television, etc. Moreover, encouraging students to chat with foreigners in English on forums is also a good way to help them improve their language proficiency.

2.4.2 Recommendations to the students

Students need to be aware of the importance of English and the increasing demand of using English in the social life as well as in their future career in order to try to master as many English skills as possible. Students should set their own goals for learning English and choose effective learning methods to achieve their goals. For students who lose their background knowledge, they should try to self-study more and ask their teachers or friends for help. Besides, they should participate actively in the classroom activities in order to be become more confident in using English. Students are also advised to revise their lessons carefully before the exams so that they can get good marks as since experience of success (demonstrated by high scores) areamong the factors motivating students in learning English.

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