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### **Is motivation an “internal drive” in achieving foreign languages ?**

People are frequently eager to study foreign languages, especially English (which has become the international language of communication), for various reasons: for pleasure, because they are interested in the studying of Shakespeare’s work, or because they need to communicate with people living in foreign countries, in order to share their customs and traditions or professional experience. Culture and civilization are two major reasons in approaching English or any foreign language, in general. It is considered to be a sign of education. The school curriculum is usually the first timid step in learning English; this activity may be achieved either in a positive or negative manner by the students. English definitely offers a great opportunity for advancement in the people’s professional careers. In case you work or study in an English-speaking country, you need to learn English to survive and to efficiently communicate with the natives not only in the domains of activity you are interested in but also in adjacent fields. Studying English implies specific purposes. Thus, we have: English for Science and Technology, English for Occupational Purposes and English for Academic Purposes. People choose one type of English or another, according to their interest and need. Some of them focus on speaking and listening, while others on reading and writing, depending on their priorities.

Sometimes we are simply curious to learn the language of our favorite music and films. Therefore, we do it just for fun! Or, if we are fond of traveling, we must have an idea about at least one international language.

Our success or failure in studying English depends on a mixture of factors. One of them is motivation. Motivation, defined as the impetus to create and sustain intentions and goal-seeking acts (Ames & Ames, 1989), is important because it determines the extent of the learner's active involvement and attitude toward learning.

What is the nature of motivation? Many theorists and researchers have found that it is important to recognize the construct of motivation not as a single entity but as a multi-factorial one. Oxford and Shearin (1994) analyzed a total of 12 motivational theories or models, including those from socio-psychology, cognitive development, and socio-cultural

psychology, and identified six factors that impact motivation in language learning:

- ♣ attitudes (i.e., sentiments toward the learning community and the target language)
- ♣ beliefs about self (i.e., expectancies about one's attitudes to succeed, self-efficacy, and anxiety)
- ♣ goals (perceived clarity and relevance of learning goals as reasons for learning)
- ♣ involvement (i.e., extent to which the learner actively and consciously participates in the language learning process)
- ♣ environmental support (i.e., extent of teacher and peer support, and the integration of cultural and outside-of-class support into learning experience)
- ♣ personal attributes (i.e., aptitude, age, sex, and previous language learning experience).

Those who really want to learn English will succeed whatever the circumstances in which they study. Our success as far as learning English is concerned, is provided by our motivation, which is a kind of *internal drive* that encourages us to follow a course of action. We will be strongly motivated by this goal, which is attractive enough in order to make us reaching for it. Motivated language learners perceive goals of various types. Strongly motivated students have long-term goals, such as to get a good or better job at some future date. Short-term goals refer to shorter period of time, such as passing a revision test or a yearly examination and provide the only motivation the students feel. Motivation is of two kinds: extrinsic and intrinsic, the first deals with the factors outside the classroom, and the second with the activities taking place inside the classroom. In case the students study English because they have an idea of something which they wish to achieve, we speak about an *integrative* and *instrumental motivation*. (notions introduced by Gardner and Lambert, 1972). In the context of language learning, *instrumental motivation* refers to the learner's desire to learn a language for utilitarian purposes (such as employment or travel), whereas *integrative motivation* refers to the desire to learn a language to integrate successfully into the target language community. In later research studies, Crookes and Schmidt (1991), and Gardner and Tremblay (1994) explored four other motivational orientations: reason for learning, desire to attain the learning goal, positive attitude toward the learning situation, and effortful behavior.

For the type of *integrative motivation* students need to be attracted by the culture of the target language community, and they want either to integrate themselves into that culture or to simply know as much as possible about the target language community. The *instrumental motivation* describes a situation in which students believe that mastery of the target language will be instrumental in getting them a better job or status. Thus, English is an instrument in reaching such a goal. The intrinsic motivation plays an important role in most students' success or failure as English language learners. In case the students bring no extrinsic motivation to the classroom, they could feel negatively about learning the language, and for them it is quite vital what happens inside the classroom. The intrinsic motivation can be affected by some factors such as method, teacher, success and physical conditions.

Which are the instructional strategies to enhance student motivation? Research studies have shown that language acquisition is the result of an inter-play between cognitive mechanism and environmental conditions (Spolsky, 1985; Sivert & Egbert, 1995). Understanding and creating optimal language learning environments becomes a primary concern of the language teacher. Teachers can observe circumstances under which learners acquire language and can make adjustments toward creating optimal learning conditions. In designing learning activities, the language teacher should remember that because language learning focuses on both the accuracy and appropriateness of application in various contexts of use, learners must be given opportunities to participate as language users in multiple contexts. These opportunities will result in learners' heightened motivation and awareness of the intricacies of language use.

Some teaching strategies that can be used to foster motivation and provide better transfer opportunities of language skills include the following:

- ❖ encourage learners to take ownership in learning
- ❖ have learners take ownership of the learning assignment by letting them identify and decide for themselves relevant learning goals; this will motivate them to apply what they have learned to attain these learning goals
- ❖ promote intentional cognition or mindfulness to learning in various contexts; learners must be able to practice language in multiple contexts in order to bridge domains and foster active abstraction of concepts learned (Bransford, et al. 1990); this will help learners

recognize the relevance and transferability of different learning skills or knowledge.

- increase authenticity of learning tasks and goals

- learners should recognize a real need to accomplish learning goals that are relevant and holistic (rather than task-specific); this prepares them for the complexities of real-world tasks that require them to use language skills and knowledge that have to be continually transferred.

- providing our learners with the motivation to learn is one of the best steps we can take to facilitate learning success; this is best conveyed by Bruner: "The best way to create interest in a subject is to render it worth knowing, which means to make the knowledge gained usable in one's thinking beyond the situation in which learning has occurred." (1960, p.31).

### **Conclusions:**

There are various reasons for learning a language. A strongly motivated student is in a far better position as a learner than a student who is not motivated. Teachers should create a positive attitude to the language and its speakers, to support and encourage the students. There is no reason to be critical and to adopt a destructive attitude toward the students, because their extrinsic motivation may be influenced in a negative way.

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