

UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS' MOTIVATION

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Students' motivation is one of the most important issues in an efficient learning process. It has a strong impact on students' success or failure. There is a considerable amount of research on motivation within the field of language learning. However, the best-known analysis was conducted by two Canadian social psychologists, Gardner and Lambert (1972), who identified two key motivations for language learners: instrumental and integrative motivation [1].

Instrumental motivation means motivation because of an external need, i.e. something that the learner needs to do. For example, they may need to communicate in the foreign language in their job, or they may need to pass an exam. These are described as external needs because the need comes from outside, rather than from the learner himself/herself. The language is simply a tool or instrument that enables the learner satisfy that need.

In contrast, integrative motivation comes from within the learner. It comes from the learner's desire to integrate to some extent with other people who speak the same language (or the same variety of a language). Therefore, where instrumental motivation comes from an external need, integrative motivation comes from an internal want.

Integrative and instrumental types of motivation were further distinguished according to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. First, a student's personal, natural interest in a subject, called "intrinsic satisfaction," influences their natural affinity for learning more about the materials covered in a class. Second, the teacher's perceived expertise, the prestige of the school, and/or the future impact on employment prospects, called "extrinsic reward," defines for the student how much he/she is likely to benefit from learning English. Finally, when students are successful in a given task – whether this be a simple activity, a test or the overall course – they combine satisfaction with reward and are likely to be more motivated to continue the learning process.

The best form of motivation appears to be intrinsic motivation, i.e. motivation to perform a task because it is fun or satisfying for its own sake, not because of what it might lead to in terms of reward or punishment.

Research into intrinsic motivation has identified three aspects of intrinsic motivation: mastery, purpose and autonomy.

Mastery. The tasks that we find most engaging are those that are just difficult enough to challenge us, but not too difficult for us to achieve. It is extremely satisfying and motivating to overcome a series of progressively harder challenges.

Purpose. We need to know what we are trying to achieve. This goes well beyond traditional objectives like making money, meeting deadlines and getting good grades; it is all about who we want to be in life, and how we want to be in life.

Autonomy. If you give people the chance to decide for themselves what they do, when they do it, who they do it with and how they do it, they will be highly motivated and will produce superior results.

The best way to impact student's motivation based on intrinsic satisfaction is games: we play games because they are enjoyable. In language teaching, this discovery has led to the recent growth of gamification – a technique of applying the principles of games to non-game contexts. There are countless ways of gamifying everyday activities, but the three most common are:

- Some sort of point system – a way of competing against yourself and against others
- A social element – sharing your experience with others
- Fun – the experience has to be enjoyable.

Every teacher should find out what motivates their students most and should adjust the teaching strategies and techniques accordingly.

References:

1. Gardner, R.C. & Lambert, W.E.(1972).Attitudes and motivation in second language learning .Roley ,Mass: New Bury House.

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