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IMPROVING FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING MOTIVATION IN STUDENTS

Abstract. This paper suggests specific methods that can be implemented to improve student motivation at foreign language classes. It begins with a short review of the concept of learner motivation. The particular methods to improve motivation such as inviting a guest speaker, decreasing student anxiety through music and games, designing interesting tasks, using additional resources, applying cooperative learning, setting specific short-term goals and developing friendly relationship with students are discussed.

Keywords: teaching a foreign language; motivation; foreign language classrooms; improving motivation.

Introduction. Motivation is one of the key determining factors in foreign language (FL) achievement. According to Dörnyei [3, p. 274] motivation has been understood as consisting of two constituents, integrative and instrumental motivations. An integrative motivation relates to a positive tendency toward the target language, people and the strong wish to communicate with those people and have common qualities with respected individuals of that group of people. An instrumental motivation, on the other hand, is connected with the prospective achievements of the second language skills, such as getting a better job or a higher salary. Extrinsically motivated learners complete a certain study or task to receive an extrinsic reward such as good grades or they do it to avoid punishment whereas for intrinsically motivated students the rewards are internal which can be the fun and enjoyment of accomplishing an activity. Derived from the research and the results of Dörnyei's study [3, p. 279] a basic framework of second language motivation was proposed which is made up of 3 levels: the language level, the learner level and the learning situation level. According to Dörnyei [3, p. 280] the language level concentrates on directions and intentions which are connected to different features of the second language; the learner level includes various influences and perceptions which form stable personality and the learning situation level consists of intrinsic and extrinsic motives.

Language teachers who work in countries where FL is a required subject may anticipate themselves working with students who are not highly motivated. Students with low motivation are usually not active and unbiased, particularly in grammar explanation lessons. Moreover, they are reserved and remote from the lesson. That is why this paper aims at suggesting the methods such as inviting a guest speaker, decreasing student anxiety through music and games, designing interesting tasks, using additional resources, applying cooperative learning, setting specific short-term goals and developing friendly relationship to increase student incentive to learn English.

According to the past teaching experience, the following strategies have been developed to improve students' motivation to learn a foreign language.

1. Inviting a guest speaker into a language classroom can increase students' motivation. They will be able to practice listening and speaking skills with the native speaker of the target language. Moreover, they listen to the real-life language with the correct form of pronunciation, create and ask questions based on what they have heard from the guest speaker's speech. Before the actual class with the guest speaker a teacher could make an announcement, advertise or display information about the speaker in order to attract students' interest in having a conversation with him/her. A teacher might want to ask all of the students in advance to write questions and discuss them before the meeting. After the meeting students can have a discussion, share their opinions about the guest speaker and express what they have learned from him/her. To make the meeting with the guest speaker more effective a teacher might invite guests who can be related to the topic students are learning, as for example if students are learning about food the guest speaker can be a cook or a chef. Inviting guest speakers is interesting as Nunan [6, p. 36] argues using authentic resources directs to better interest and diversity in the material which learners face in the classroom. This authentic material conveys content to life, and makes learning and using language meaningful and easy.

2. Another strategy for a teacher to promote students' motivation could be the use of music in the classroom. An initiator in second language acquisition on popular songs and pedagogy Murphey [5, p. 761] suggested that songs are helpful in the foreign language classroom because they propose benefits to all language learners at all levels. Before introducing music in the classroom language teachers should make a choice of music with its melody and lyrics which relates to the lesson's specific objective or goal. For example, if the lesson's goal is to teach about human body parts, a teacher can teach an easy nursery song 'Head and Shoulders' or 'Mary had a little lamb' which can decrease students' unease due to its childishness or silliness. An instructor can also make a selection of the songs based on the lesson's topic or the season they have at that particular time of the year. For example, during winter time they can teach songs about Christmas or New Year which provide students with new vocabulary as well as the culture of the specific country. This stress-free musical technique has a positive consequence in language acquisition and cultural understanding. Teachers need to use music in foreign language classrooms because it can offer enjoyable environment which lessens the fear and it lets students be comfortable while participating in classroom activities.

3. As mentioned by Iakovos [4, p. 30] in order to enhance student motivation a teacher can decrease student anxiety by creating a supportive learning atmosphere and implementing anxiety-reducing activities and tasks. Language teachers should investigate useful practices for turning down students' fear and anxiety. They can build this environment with the help of enjoyable games and exercises which can encourage students' motivation by bringing in remarkable feeling of fun into the classroom. Students whose participation are low and sit back in the corners of the classroom before turn out to be excited and involved in classroom activities. This sort of games and exercises lessen students' fear and anxiety because in doing so it integrates amusement and joy. In the game called 'Slide Show' two students (the experts) take a seat in chairs on one side of the class and the other students (the slides) stand on the other side of the class. A teacher takes a suggestion from the audience (the rest of the class) on which 'the slides' make a picture by freezing in some interesting and fun poses. For example, if the suggestion is 'bread' the slides can pretend to be people who are working in bakers

or they can be somebody who is selling the bread to a customer in a shop. The experts have to explain what is happening in the picture. When experts say 'next slide' the slides move on to their next pose. As Iakovos [4, p. 29] mentioned when unmotivated and inactive students' fear and anxiety of learning the target language is reduced, they start to participate in classroom activities and become part of the learning atmosphere.

4. An instructor can make language activities and tasks more interesting for the students by changing and adapting them to enhance student motivation. According to Alderman [1, p. 45] tasks and activities are the most important educational variables which engage students in learning. Sometimes language teachers have to use activities which are demanded by the department or syllabus. Teachers should raise students' involvement in the classroom by creating challenging and various activities and adjusting them to students' interests because as Alderman [1, p. 46] stated challenging tasks have a positive influence on motivation and create better student participation. They can adapt prescribed activities and tasks for example by adding crosswords, puzzles; finding hidden information, taking risks, using imagination, involving self experience, engaging in meaningful language or including interaction with peers. An interest increases motivation. He stated that interesting text or task activity is very vital motivationally for students because it impacts on their persistence and language acquisition. To inspire interest or pleasure for doing tasks and activities teachers need to remind students the importance of skills and information for their everyday life and for their academic study.

5. Besides adapting tasks to students' interests instructors of foreign languages can use additional resources which enable students to develop their incentive in learning the target language [5, p. 771]. Finding additional resources in FL contexts might be unproblematic but it may take time and effort in exploring resources which enrich the classroom and motivate students in these contexts. He stated that audio and visual devices are important tools which can improve intrinsically limited language classroom. Realia and technology are useful resources which can be used in the classroom with no trouble. They can be used in accordance with the topic of the lesson such as introducing currency, music, pictures, newspapers, food and other. They are all interesting and motivating for students in relation to the specific topic. He continues on saying that computers also give a chance to access almost anything teachers need through Internet besides audiovisual resources, video, CDs and television. With the help of computers students can communicate with other students and native speakers all over the world through e-mail or chat. As can be seen it is very valuable to use additional resources to enrich the classroom and increase student motivation.

6. According to Alderman [1, p. 152] the social interactions influence motivation both positively and negatively. He carries on saying that social context influences classroom engagement and academic attempt. For the language teacher one of the major concerns is to create a classroom atmosphere where students support each other and cooperate with each other for learning. A vital issue in cooperative learning is the grouping structure in the classroom because it will have an effect on students' interaction, their friendship and influence on each other's participation in learning process. There are three types of goal structures that work in a classroom, cooperative, competitive and individualistic [1, p. 153]. And each type of goal structure affects student motivation differently. Competitive structure increases negative motivational outcome by highlighting the ability in participation consequently setting apart winners and losers [1, p. 153]. Johnson, Maruyama, Johnson, Nelson & Skon [as cited in 1, 187] argued

that while individualistic structure does not clearly encourage peer interaction for learning, cooperative learning structure helps each student to make an attempt toward a common goal which facilitates other students' learning. As Berndt & Keefe [as cited in 1, 188] noted cooperative learning helps classroom environment by supporting friendship formation among classmates; encouraging students to help each other rather than competing and providing students with time and opportunity to interact with each other. Cooperative learning influences on student motivation the following way, it affects positively on student achievement, increases student self-esteem and raises student control. As Slavin [as cited in 1, 188] stated that the most important motivational effect of cooperative learning is the impact on student self-esteem. He continues saying that cooperative learning affects a student's feeling of being liked by his/her peers and a feeling of academic skill. For language teachers the most important thing is to create effective groups which work successfully apart from the type of structure. In these cooperative groups each student has a responsibility for the fulfillment of the group goal and as Alderman [1] said all the duties are shared among the group members and they work cooperatively bearing in mind that all of the members can achieve their task because group success depends on every individual member's attempt.

Another important thing to remember when implementing cooperative learning is the composition of the groups. According to Alderman [1] cooperative learning groups are structured heterogeneously in which gender, ability and ethnicity are mixed together. Students in cooperative groups should also be reorganized from time to time. Instructors should occasionally rotate groups so that students can work with as many of their classmates as possible. The motivational problem arises when the groups are organized incongruously according to their ability as for example students with high attainment can be given a higher status while students who are not successful can be given lower status. In this situation the latter students may talk less and as a result may be ignored by other members of the group. Alderman [1] suggested teaching students norm of group participation by practicing models such as expressing your own thoughts, giving everyone an opportunity to talk, asking others for their ideas and giving explanations for your own ideas. Overall, efficient use of cooperative learning is an important constituent in creating an environment where students support and help each other.

7. When learning a foreign language students need to set specific goals because learning a new language is challenging and it takes a long time [2, p. 83]. During this long process students may lose their initial incentive for accomplishing their long term goal. Thus, setting short-term goals can provide them with additional motivation to support the long-term goal. According to Dörnyei [2, p. 84] short-term goals help students to evaluate their own performance and show them their progress. Setting the sub-goals should not be limited to tests or exams rather they should energize students. For example, students can strengthen themselves after learning five new words a day or finishing reading a book at a certain time. Goal setting theory has been used in organizations to raise employee's motivation but it was not used as much as it could be in education. Oxford and Shearin [as cited in 2, 82] have supported this concept by saying goal setting encourages language learning motivation and it was really sad that teachers and students spend very little time on goal setting for language learning. Dörnyei [2, p. 83] carried out an interesting research in which three groups were given different goals, general, distant and specific to work through sets of materials. The results showed that the group with the specific goal completed 74 percent of the material while the group

with distant goal finished 55 percent and the group with general goal accomplished 53 percent. In order to set goals students can divide tasks or assignments into small parts, allocate deadlines to them and check their own progress. He stated that goals need to be clear and specific, measurable, challenging and difficult; goals should have a deadline; long-term goals should be set together with short-term goals and instructors should give feedback to increase students' aptitude and confidence. The goal setting can also be used with unmotivated students who do not have general goals with language learning as Alison [as cited in 2, 84] stated teachers can create an instant goal for these students to motivate them. For example, they can try to beat the other classmate or win the game.

8. Teacher-student relationship and classroom atmosphere are the factors which influence students' attitude towards the target language [6, p. 25]. Students see their teacher as a role model and they admire him/her. That is why they can motivate their students to learn FL by being enthusiastic, joyful and truthful. Instead of constant criticism or correction teachers should show their care and support for their students in order to motivate them. Learners would like their teachers to be someone who is friendly, kind, and reliable [6, p. 29]. Furthermore, teachers use verbal (e.g. humour in the classroom) and non-verbal behaviour (e.g. positive gestures). It impacts positively on student motivation and decreases their anxiety [6, p. 29]. In addition they need to give all students adequate time in spite of their performance. Teachers should not create expectations for students derived from their gender, ethnicity or parents' background [6, p. 30]. One of the main concerns for the teacher is to tell students that they are all expected to be successful despite their past failures because the past failures can be one of the key reasons why students are low motivated and not be confident in themselves. Even though praise expresses 'positive teacher affect' [6, p. 30] it needs to be in proportion with student language performance. Criticism intends to explain students that they can do better and it should exclude personal criticism or sarcasm. These principles help teachers to develop a friendly relationship with their students and have a huge impact on increasing positive attitudes towards learning a foreign language.

Conclusion. The paper aimed at giving suggestions on how to motivate students in countries where English is a required subject. According to Dörnyei [3] motivation is one of the main determinants of FL achievement. The detailed information on the main constituents such as integrative and instrumental, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation proposed by Dörnyei [3] were stated in the introduction.

The paper suggested a list of methods to motivate foreign language learners such as inviting a guest speaker to the classroom to give students an opportunity to practice the target language with a native speaker; playing music and language games in order to decrease students' anxiety, make learning enjoyable and create stress-free learning atmosphere; designing and adapting tasks which are interesting, challenging and varied to promote students' engagement; using additional resources to enrich the typical and intrinsically limited classroom settings; engaging students in cooperative learning to enhance students' self-esteem, interact and support each other; setting short-term goals to encourage language learning motivation and lastly developing a friendly relationship with students to promote positive attitudes among students towards learning FL.

These specific motivational strategies can to some extent increase students' motivation to learn FL. In the context of my teaching at the Mongolian University of Science and Technology inviting a guest speaker, using additional materials, designing interesting tasks and applying cooperative learning have been the most effective ones out of

these strategies. However, it is worth noting here that the above mentioned strategies are not strict rules rather they are suggestions which may work with one teacher better than the other and apart from these strategies there are plenty more strategies which can foster student motivation to acquire the target language.

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ПОВЫШЕНИЕ МОТИВАЦИИ СТУДЕНТОВ НА УРОКАХ ИНОСТРАННОГО ЯЗЫКА

Аннотация. В статье предлагаются методы, которые могут быть использованы для повышения мотивации студентов на занятиях иностранного языка. Статья начинается с краткого обзора концепции мотивации. Конкретные методы, такие как приглашение иностранного спикера, уменьшение беспокойства учащихся с помощью музыки и игр, разработка дополнительных ресурсов, применение совместного обучения, постановка конкретных краткосрочных целей и развитие дружеских отношений со студентами, используются для повышения мотивации студентов.

Ключевые слова: обучение иностранному языку; мотивация; уроки иностранных языков; повышение мотивации.