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LEARNING TEACHING OR HOW TO MOTIVATE STUDENTS TO LEARN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

SUMMARY

The role of motivation in education has been described from different perspectives and in various contexts. All researchers underline its complex nature. The answer to the question: "How to get pupils to do what you would like them to do" is not as easy as it might seem. Opposition, apathy, aversion and distraction, in one form or another, are almost always to confront educators in any learning environment. This would indicate that now, possibly more than ever, the ability to motivate creatively is a highly desirable prerequisite for every teacher. Modern school does not create ideal conditions for motivating students. School attendance is obligatory and learning actions are chosen and based on public beliefs what a student needs to be learning. Teachers work with a great number of students who often become frustrated, tired, confused and bored. This article is an attempt to prove that teachers can successfully affect their students' motivation in the process of effective and creative foreign language teaching. If teachers want to achieve their definitive goal of helping students to make the most of their language learning experience, they should employ appropriate and effective motivational strategies.

Key words: motivation, extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, creative foreign language teaching, motivating strategies

STRESZCZENIE

Uczymy się uczyć, czyli jak motywować uczniów do nauki języków obcych

Rola motywacji w procesie nauczania została opisana przez wielu badaczy w różnych kontekstach i z różnych perspektyw. Wszyscy podkreślają złożoną naturę motywacji. Odpowiedź na pytanie jak zmotywować uczniów nie jest prosta. Nauczyciele pracujący w szkołach podstawowych oraz średnich często mają do czynienia z apatią uczniów, rozproszeniem lub brakiem zainteresowania lekcją. To wskazuje, iż obecnie, być może bardziej niż kiedykolwiek, zdolność motywowania twórczego jest wysoce pożądana. Ten artykuł jest próbą udowodnienia, że nauczyciele mogą skutecznie wpłynąć na motywację uczniów do nauki

języków obcych. Autorka przedstawia szereg sprawdzonych strategii motywacyjnych, które pomogą nauczycielom języków obcych skutecznie zmotywować uczniów.

Słowa kluczowe: motywacja, motywacja zewnętrzna/wewnętrzna, kreatywne nauczanie języków obcych, strategie motywacyjne

*There are only three things of importance
to successful learning:
motivation, motivation and motivation...
Any fool can teach students who want to learn¹.*

Motivation plays a significant role in the process of foreign language learning and teaching. Dornyei states that motivation “provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the second language and later the drive force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process”². Jeremy Harmer describes motivation as “some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something”³. Ryan and Deci, in turn, add: “to be motivated means to be moved to do something”⁴. Therefore, motivation constitutes a basic ingredient of the effective learning process.

One of the paramount concerns of many teachers is how to arouse, nurture and maintain motivation in their students. Naturally, the uttermost desire for the teacher is to have an ideal classroom situation. The quintessential aspect of such a setting is to be in the possession of an attentive and interested group of students. Indeed, many students reveal a kind of natural leaning toward some of these qualities and will only require the teacher’s encouragement. The majority, though, may need a little more creativity and ingenuity on the part of their teacher, not to mention his/her patience. Needless to say, the student’s achievement levels, enjoyment and creativity will all suffer from a lack of interest and desire.

Initiating learners’ motivation is highly important but equally essential is to maintain and preserve motivation. Dornyei and Ushioda state that “the natural tendency to lose sight of the goal, to get tired or bored of the activity, and to give way to attractive distractions or competing action tendencies, will result

¹ G. Chambers, *Motivating Language Learners Modern Language in Practice*, Ontario 1999, s. 139.

² Z. Dornyei, *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*, Cambridge 2006, s. 16.

³ J. Harmer, *The Practice of Language Teaching*, London 2001, s. 51.

⁴ R. Ryan, E. Deci, *Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions*, 2000, s. 54, [online], <http://mmrg.pbworks.com/f/Ryan,+Deci+00.pdf>, dostep: 10.06.2017.

in initial motivation gradually petering out"⁵. This would suggest employing appropriate means of retaining this, sometimes, hard-won, motivation.

1. Motivation typology

Traditionally, motivation has been divided into two types: integrative and instrumental. In case of integrative motivation, the main reason for learning a foreign language is mostly practical. This is, for example, manifested in the individual who is not working toward a goal in the form of a physical qualification. As a result, the person's hierarchy of priorities is determined by external forces which the individual finds of a great practical utility. Instrumental motivation, in turn, pushes one to strive toward a definitive objective. This type of motivation is used merely as a tool in some instances, for example, to pass an exam or get an ideal job. This kind of motivation does not involve the student's connection or interest in the subject being undertaken⁶.

According to Harmer, intrinsic motivation is often described as the inner power pushing an individual to want to 'be'⁷. This is well illustrated by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe who said, "before you can do something, you must first become something"⁸. In other words, students must be convinced that they have a solid 'why' for doing something. An intrinsically motivated student will ask and answer a series of questions – what is the benefit? What is the cost (in terms of effort and exertion)?, How will I enjoy the experience and its result? Internal motives involve personal ambitions, life plans, professional reasons and other practical reasons. Edward Deci describes intrinsic motivation as follows: "Intrinsically motivated activities are ones for which there is not apparent reward except the activity itself. People seem to engage in the activities for their own sake and because they lead to an extrinsic reward. Intrinsically motivated behaviours are aimed at bringing about certain internally rewarding consequences, namely, feelings of competence and self-determination"⁹.

⁵ Z. Dornyei, E. Ushioda, *Teaching and Researching: Motivation*, London 2011, s. 118.

⁶ J. Harmer, *How to Teach English*, London 1998, s. 8–9.

⁷ *Ibidem*, s. 10.

⁸ J. von Goethe, <http://quotationsbook.com/quote/563/>

⁹ E. Deci, *Intrinsic Motivation*, New York 1975, s. 23.

2. Motivation versus FLT

Motivational differences are especially important in the context of foreign language learning. It goes without saying that the learner of any language faces considerable challenges. Not only does he/she discover the beauty and benefits of the acquired language, but he/she has to gradually overcome the issues that arise with regards to learning L2 pronunciation, intonation, grammar and content. Mistakes are inevitable in this painstaking process. Thus, it is little wonder that language anxiety has been recognized as an effective “factor hindering L2 learning achievement”¹⁰. According to motivation researchers, the solution is straightforward: “We need to create a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere”¹¹. Michael Lewis and Jimmy Hill argue that “if students feel under tremendous pressure, or tenseness, even if performing the relatively simple required tasks, one will probably have that information slip out of their mind soon after. The powers of retention being insufficiently aroused, fail to function. Learning is a medium-to-long-term process, and we really retain language which we understand and feel involved with, while we are ‘open’”¹².

3. Motivation strategies

Therefore, a primary condition for a motivated foreign language classroom is creating a safe environment wherein the student can concentrate on the content of the lesson. This becomes possible if the teacher generates a relaxed and conducive atmosphere in the classroom where a response is invited persuasively rather than demanded. To be motivated to learn, students need both ample opportunities and steady encouragement and support of their learning efforts. Such motivation is unlikely to evolve and develop in a chaotic classroom, it is vital that teachers organise and manage the classroom as an effective learning environment¹³.

A safe classroom environment results in visible outcomes. Dornyei argues that within a safe and personality sensitive classroom, the norm of tolerance is fostered and developed¹⁴. The student, generally, and the sensitive one, partic-

¹⁰ S. Krashen, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, 2009, [online], http://www.sdkrashen.com/content/books/principles_and_practice.pdf, dostep: 10.06.2017.

¹¹ Z. Dornyei, *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*, Cambridge 2001, s. 40.

¹² M. Lewis, J. Hill, *Practical techniques for Language Teaching*, Cambridge 1992, s. 20.

¹³ T. Good, J. Brophy, *Looking in Classroom*, New York 1994, s. 215.

¹⁴ Z. Dornyei, *Motivational Strategies...*, op. cit., s. 40–41.

ularly, feels comfortable and encouraged to participate in activities. The fear of embarrassment and correction through criticism vanishes. The teacher should make it clear that mistakes are a natural element of the successful foreign language learning process. The use of humour may be of a high value to create a friendly setting. The main point about including humour in the learning process is to engender a relaxed attitude which results in motivation awakening and students' participation. It is simply the message that, yes, learning is of serious importance, but we can have fun while we are going about our work. If students can recognise that the teacher has a ready dose of playfulness and amiability, they are more likely to be responsive not only to the educator, but to each other. After all, we should be aware that the classroom is not only a psychological but also a physical environment.

Another very important ability that educators should master is listening. For instance, Malcolm X claimed that "there's an art to listening well. I listen closely to the sound of a man's voice when he's speaking. I can hear sincerity"¹⁵. Wlodkowski states that listening capability and focusing on students is the "single most powerful transaction that occurs between ourselves and another person that tells that individual that we accept him as a human being. The way we listen tells learners more than anything else how much consideration we are really giving them"¹⁶ In addition, it is argued that students need to feel inspired by and plugged into the fact that teachers' personal attention is directed towards them and that he/she is interested in their affairs and, above all, worries¹⁷. This can be achieved via simple gestures which can shift personal attention and influence students' perception in some way by, for example:

- welcoming students;
- remembering their names (accurately and with correct pronunciations);
- smiling;
- knowing something personal and unique about each pupil and occasionally mentioning it to them;
- being interested in their lives outside the school context;
- including personal topics and examples about students in discussing content matters¹⁸.

¹⁵ X. Malcolm, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X as told to Alex Haley*, New York 1965, s. 460.

¹⁶ R. Wlodkowski, *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn*, London 1996, s. 28.

¹⁷ Z. Dornyei, *Motivational Strategies...*, op. cit., s. 38.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

Furthermore, Michael Lewis and Jimmy Hill highlight that maintaining eye contact is the best accessory a person can have¹⁹. Standing and having the eyes constantly moving over the class is bound to breed a sense of community and connection. Teachers' eyes help students' concentration. What is more, they can be used instead of hands to point out whether something is right or wrong, to encourage students to answer a question and to show the teacher's interest. Using one's eyes effectively will help to avoid unnecessary language. It is especially significant to remember that the best way to check whether students understand what have been said, or what they have read or heard, is the tutor's eyes to look at theirs. Any incomprehension or confusion will show in their eyes long before they tell that there is a problem.

4. Culture in the FL classroom

Undoubtedly, the role of culture is not to be forgotten while discussing the ways to enhance students' motivation. Languages are inextricably bound to the social and cultural contexts of the target language community and this means students' positive engagement with the L2 culture and speakers. In addition, open-mindedness and cosmopolitanism are conducive to the learning process. Dornyei mentions the following approaches that can be used in and around the classroom setting to make the L2 'real', to champion integrative values and to raise cross-cultural cognisance²⁰. This can be done by familiarising learners with both interesting and relevant aspects of the L2 culture, such as:

- bringing various cultural products (e.g. magazines, music, television recordings and videos);
- supplementing the course book with authentic materials;
- encouraging learners to discover interesting information about the countries where L2 is spoken;
- arranging discussions with L2 speakers and inviting guests who speak L2;
- organising school excursions or exchange programmes to the L2 community;
- locating L2 speaking pen-friends for your students and concurrently drawing their attention to the usefulness of the internet 'chat rooms'²¹.

¹⁹ M. Lewis, J. Hill, *Practical techniques...*, op. cit., s. 41.

²⁰ Z. Dornyei, *Motivational Strategies...*, op. cit., s. 54–55.

²¹ Ibidem.

Dornyei goes further by suggesting the following: "Find out what your students' goals are and what topics they want to learn about, then build these into your curriculum as much as possible"²². This corresponds with Dornyei and Ushioda's belief: "Educators think students do not care, while the students tell us they do care about learning, but are not getting what they need"²³. If a student sees and feels little or no attachment to what is being taught, the consequences are less than ideal. If "the class goal" reigns supreme, having been wrought through spending "longs hours preparing sizeable documents detailing the general aims and objectives of each course...", the student invariably suffers. His/her attention will be turned to more relevant and down-to-earth matters such as "love, personal image or social standing than the mastery of school subjects"²⁴. Zoltan Dornyei has attempted to paint a picture of the utopian classroom through finding "materials relevant to the learners"²⁵. He suggests going about it through several methods:

- conducting interviews and one-to-one tête-à-têtes;
- group discourses and idea-generating sessions (e.g. about events, places, or people that the students find appealing);
- essay writing assignments;
- questionnaires with open questions (e.g. 'What's the alternative if you did not attend school tomorrow, what would you like to do most?', 'What are your cares about how people live in...?', etc.);
- questionnaires in which learners are asked to complete example sentences (e.g. 'Something I want to do more often is..', 'I am afraid of...', 'I think people should...' , etc.).

Although the idea of trying to ascertain the students' goals is noble, there remains the following: "Teachers are under enormous pressure to 'cover' the curriculum, state mandates, district policies, and especially standardised tests have forced many teachers to rush through the required content, despite substantial evidence that doing so results in a lack of student motivation, interest, and long-term learning. Clearly, there is not enough time in the school day or year to adequately address all the required topics. In the meantime, new content is constantly added while the student in class is steadily being reduced"²⁶. Therefore, the teacher is, in some way, trapped between the proverbial 'rock and a hard place'. His attempt to connect the students' needs and desires (which

²² Ibidem, s. 63.

²³ Z. Dornyei, E. Ushioda, *Teaching and Researching...*, op. cit., s. 116.

²⁴ Z. Dornyei, *Motivational Strategies...*, op. cit., s. 61.

²⁵ Ibidem, s. 65.

²⁶ Z. Dornyei, *Motivational Strategies...*, op. cit., s. 64.

would ideally manifest in group engagement) and the 'ready-made curriculum' (which includes exam-focused teaching) seems to be extremely difficult at every stage.

Maehr and Midgley present three steps to make learning stimulating and enjoyable²⁷. Firstly, they suggest finding an 'intrinsic value' of learning through decreasing 'extrinsic' encouragement and creating a program that interests all students and provokes their active involvement. Secondly, teachers should help students to participate in learning and school making decisions by means of creating numerous occasions to bring out their latent independence, sense of responsibility and management skills. Finally, the teacher's responsibility is to ensure that each student has an opportunity to be recognized, praised and acknowledged – this will serve as priceless fuel for ensuring participation. Praise which is tactfully and shrewdly utilised is an absolute creative power.

Moreover, interesting tasks have been described as a great element of motivation. It is up to teachers if they make tasks challenging and achievable since the teachers' manner of presenting tasks can be motivating or demotivating. Also explaining the purpose of the task is significant. Scheidecker and Freeman argue that "every new unit, every venue of instruction, should be preceded by a justification of its presence"²⁸. The students are our clients and should be an integral part not only of the instructional process but to a degree it is presence. Informed clients are much more likely to join the successful completion of the project voluntarily than disenfranchised students who have been asked to trust the system. Arousing pupils' anticipation of the task results in increasing "the students' expectations of something interesting and important to come"²⁹. This is achieved by:

- presenting activities with apparent emotional intensity and enthusiasm;
- soliciting pupils for active participation by asking questions (e.g. 'What is going to be covered?', 'How long will a listening passage take?', etc.);
- pointing out challenging or important aspects of the L2 content to be learned;
- adding a twist to routine activities (e.g. asking them to do a grammar drill very fast or through whispering).

²⁷ M. Maehr, C. Midgley, *Enhancing Students Motivation: A School Approach*, 1991, s. 410, [online], http://www.unco.edu/cebs/psychology/kevinpugh/motivation_project/resources/maehr_midgley91.pdf, dostęp: 10.06.2017.

²⁸ D. Scheidecker, W. Freeman, *Becoming a Legendary Teacher: To Instruct and Inspire*, London 2009, s. 239.

²⁹ Z. Dornyei, *Motivational Strategies...*, op. cit., s. 80.

The teacher can also offer suitable scenarios for doing the task. Raymond Wlodkowski encourages teachers to “work with the learner at the beginning of difficult tasks. It is amazing what can be lifted and moved with just a little help. Sometimes a learner might have a momentary confusion or not know what to do next. Our proximity and minimal assistance can be just enough for the learner to find the right direction, continue involvement, and gain the initial confidence to proceed with learning”³⁰. Therefore, it is necessary, to let the students lean on the instructor and have their confidence rest upon their (teacher’s) shoulders, until the student’s own self-esteem and motivation grow to accelerate his/her learning.

Rader argues that goal-setting can be utilized to reinforce students’ motivation. The author claims that “theories of self-esteem and motivation as well as research on resilience, emphasize the importance of reinforcing the belief that students have some control over what is occurring in their lives”³¹. Goal-setting can be equally expedient in after school life. Furthermore, making students realize how advantageous and serviceable goal-setting is can help them expand not only their academic goals, but also will result in developing skills like problem-solving or decision-making. Rader hints at how prosperous goal-setting can be made:

- choosing a specific goal;
- deciding when your goal will be achieved;
- developing a plan to execute your goal;
- visualizing yourself accomplishing your goal;
- working assiduously and never giving up;
- practising regular self-evaluating³².

To sum up, motivational strategies are indispensable when creating a friendly learning environment in every foreign language classroom. The right level of motivation will help both the student and the teacher to set achievable learning goals and create encouraging atmosphere, which is bound to result in great results.

³⁰ R. Wlodkowski, *Enhancing Adult Motivation...*, op. cit., s. 92.

³¹ L. Rader, *Goal Setting for Students and Teachers Six Steps to Success*, 2005, s. 123–127, [online], http://ajhs.auburn.cnyric.org/teachers/Jonathan_Roberts/Calendar2/S01DD241301DD2475.0/Goal%20Setting.pdf, dostęp: 10.06.2017.

³² Ibidem.

Conclusion

Although all educators agree that motivation is of paramount importance, its practical maintenance in the foreign language classroom is an undeniable challenge. Nonetheless, both the teacher and students must be aware of the correlation between the level of motivation and learning outcomes. There is a great variety of motivational strategies to be implemented in the teaching process. Above all, the key role in sustaining motivation is building learners' confidence and self-esteem. Students will not be able to climb the ladder of progression if they are obstructed and hindered by doubts about their abilities. Teachers can encourage pupils' self-confidence in miscellaneous ways. Rather than concentrating on what they cannot do, teachers should show them positive aspects of their learning and let them trust that each and every student does contribute to the whole class. Each of the strategies discussed in this article has some advantage. No single approach can be identified so as to sufficiently provide the absolute means of motivating the pupil. The teacher will benefit immensely from taking into consideration the mere fact that students are different and thus varied motivational strategies may need to be adapted accordingly. It is significant that educators should be cognisant of their conduct and performance because their actions can and will motivate or demotivate the students they teach.

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