

LIMBI ȘI LITERATURI STRĂINE

MOTIVATION AS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN EFFECTIVE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Motivation is a powerful factor in learning the language. According to the cognitive theory, students learn when they actively think about what they learn. Motivation is defined as the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language; it is a kind of internal energy which drives a person to do something in order to achieve something. Brown divided motivation into global motivation, situational motivation and task motivation:

(1) global; a general orientation for learning; as regards the foreign language, it describes the desire to learn a foreign language;

(2) situational; relates to the situation in which learning takes place, and to the desire to learn a foreign language in the classroom and in a natural environment;

(3) task motivation which relates to the desire to perform specific tasks during the training process.

In his opinion, these three types of motivation exist simultaneously in the process of foreign language learning, but with different intensity [2, p.147].

Task motivation represents the learning motivation, the impetus which encourages the student step by step to succeed in learning the foreign language, as a result of which the feedback occurs. The success in learning a language intensifies the motivation. The success achieved in fluent speaking in a foreign language and the satisfaction received from communication motivates the student to improve the skills and competencies further. The development of learning motivation entirely depends on the teacher's skills, on his or her ability to select successfully the tasks and material, on his or her linguistic and methodological competencies, on his or her personality traits. The successful combination of the above-mentioned components will certainly facilitate the development of the learning motivation, as the motive should lie inside the learning activities. This is accomplished by the aspiration of the teacher to make the learning process as

interesting as possible for the student, which will bring moral satisfaction and pleasure.

In order to make the language learning process a more motivating experience teachers need to put a great deal of thought into developing programs which maintain student interest and have obtainable short term goals. At university level this may include, as suggested by Berwick et al. [1], any number of foreign exchange programs with other universities, overseas "homestay" programs, or any other activities which may help to motivate students to improve their target language proficiency. Teachers need to create interesting lessons in which the students attention is gained. This can sometimes be accomplished by the use of teaching strategies which are not often called upon by other teachers in mainstream subject areas. Encouraging students to become more active participants in a lesson can sometimes assist them to see a purpose for improving their communication skills in the target language. Successful communication using the target language should result in students feeling some sense of accomplishment. Research in the area suggests L2 achievement strongly affects learner motivation.

The use of an interesting text can also help to increase the motivation level of students in the classroom. Many Moldovan textbooks often contain material which fails to capture the interest of students due to the heavy emphasis on vocabulary and grammar. Many foreign texts, however, which have been designed for EFL, often contain topics which can create a great deal of classroom interaction and help to motivate students to develop their language skills. It is important for the teacher to take advantage of such discussion topics and help students to realise that, even though they may see no need to become proficient in a foreign language, the study of another language and culture can only enhance their perception and understanding of other cultures.

No matter what the underlying motivation to study a foreign language, what cannot be disputed is the fact that motivation is an important variable when examining successful second language acquisition.

The teacher's attitude towards the students is of major importance as he or she should take into account the individual features of each student. According to Brown [2, p.153], good teachers succeed "because they give optimal attention to linguistic goals and to the personhood of their students". The prompt praise and criticism of the

students' progress are important, too. The students should not be praised or criticised for their results, but for their efforts which are oriented towards the open acceptance of the challenge, hard work, and development of their skills, which always lead to fruitful results.

The positive or negative influence of the group of students on the progress of each student belongs to the affective factors. From our own experience, we know that the general progress of the group often depends on the selection of students in the group. This phenomenon is called group or classroom dynamics. Gene Stanford argues that 'group dynamics examines the way people behave in groups and attempts to understand the factors that make the group more effective. It looks at different styles of leadership and patterns of influence, and the process by which decisions are made in a group, at the norms – that is, ideas of what is appropriate behaviour or appropriate procedures – in the group, at the pattern of communication in the group, and at factors such as openness and cohesiveness.' Further, Gene Stanford points out the factors which are required for a group to be effective – 'the members understand and accept one another; communication is open; members take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour; members cooperate; processes for making decisions have been established; members are able to confront problems openly and resolve their conflicts constructively; thus, effective classroom groups are productive working units' [4, p.25]. Specific elements of group dynamics are the nature of the interaction among students in the group, their mutual expectations, the degree of mutual attractiveness and respect for each other, the principles of forming the groups.

A key aspect of group dynamics is represented by the nature of communication in the group. In every classroom, instructional activities are aimed at accomplishing goals and are conducted under a goal structure. A learning goal is a desired future state of demonstrating competence or mastery in the subject area being studied. David Johnson in his book *Learning together and alone: Cooperative, competitive, and individualistic learning* identifies three different groups, depending on the goal structure, which, in its turn, will specify the ways in which students will interact with each other and the teacher during the lesson. The goals may be oriented towards cooperative, competitive or individualistic efforts. Ideally, the students will learn how to cooperate with others, how to compete and have fun and

enjoy themselves, and how to work individually and independently. It is the teacher who decides upon goal structure which will be implemented within each lesson; however, the most important goal structure to be pursued in most learning situations is cooperation [5, p.11]. In groups with such goals, the students are aware of the relationship between the achievement of their goals and how other students in the group successfully reach their goals.

References:

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