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(Review paper)

THE INFLUENCE OF EVALUATION ON STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TO LEARN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: Motivation has inspired a lot of authors to identify its characteristics. It has also inspired students and teachers to learn and teach foreign languages through its different types and provide different results in teaching and learning the language. This is closely connected to how evaluation has the potential to influence students and motivate them to learn a foreign language and how teachers should find easier or more difficult ways of evaluating them, depending on what kind of motivation is involved during the class. This paper deals with the issue of how different evaluation methods provide opportunities for students to meet different motives. The students do that by answering a questionnaire, which is the initial hypothesis of it. The target groups are the third year students from the departments of English language and literature, German language and literature, and Macedonian language and literature at the Faculty of Philology, Goce Delcev University – Stip, 15 from each department. The students answer to 15 questions concerning the different methods they are evaluated by. They provide feedback by answering the questions and they give their opinion about the different types of evaluation methods. The results are used to give us an insight into the influence of different evaluation methods on students' motivation, so that we can see whether they are actually the main reason why students learn or do not learn foreign languages, and to serve as inspiration to teachers to be familiar with which types of evaluation methods decrease or increase the level of motivation while learning a foreign language. As a result, they are able to use those methods in future in order to improve the level of foreign language knowledge the students should possess and gain.

Key words: education, learning, motivation, evaluation, foreign language

1. INTRODUCTION

With all the effort made to motivate students in language learning, it is essential to consolidate the framework of what motivation is and what the factors that affect learning motivation in order to facilitate teaching more effectively are. Robert Gardner and his Canadian colleagues initiated motivation as a research area in 1950s. [1] said that the concept of motivation is concerned with the question “Why does an organism behave as it does?” which means that when we state that an individual is motivated, we infer this on two classes of observations. According to him, these two classes are: the individual displays some goal-directed activity, and that person expends some effort. The conclusion is that the motivation involves four aspects, a goal, effortful behaviour, a desire to attain a goal, and favourable

attitudes toward the activity in question. When it comes to the evaluation and how it motivate students to learn foreign language we must point out that the evaluation in the classroom serves an important role in students motivation by helping them to receive clearly defined goals from the teachers and to take responsibility for their own learning. That will result in heightening the students' success in learning the language.

2. HOW EVALUATION AFFECTS LEARNING THROUGH MOTIVATION

Before we connect these two things, we need to provide an answer to the question what the aim of classroom evaluation is. [2] Robert claims that “the purpose of evaluation may be grading people to decide their suitability or readiness for something (such as a job, or the award of a qualification) or it may be to give feedback on their development.” This means that students should be evaluated to determine whether they are prepared to advance to the next level in the language they learn. [3] Stiggins describes classroom evaluation as “the process of gathering evidence of student learning to inform instructional decisions” (2005, p. 5). He also states that for evaluation to be effectively utilized, accurate information must be acquired and the evaluation should not only reflect student achievement but also enrich student motivation and improve student success [3]. According to him, teachers must discover, accept, and apply this new understanding of classroom assessment to continue to describe achievement and contribute to learning and motivation [3] p. 1. When teachers teach their students how to use the evaluation feedback, they give them to analyse their own work. By involving in analysing their mistakes we help them to think and apply the criteria for meeting learning objectives and to take responsibility for their own learning. Motivation, undoubtedly, plays an important role in understanding the issues faced by learners of a foreign language. A motivated learner is more ready to learn and willing to take on responsibilities throughout the learning process [4]. There is no doubt that if every language learner is motivated, there will be far less problems in this area. However, this is not always the case. Having no or low motivation is a serious problem that many frontline teachers are facing with their students. Even worse, many students are reluctant to take the initiative to learn a language. As teachers of foreign languages, we are most interested in how to motivate our students to learn more and at the same time maintain that motivation by using evaluation to increase it.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study examines how evaluation increases the motivational patterns of Macedonian university-level learners of foreign languages, and probes the possible relationship between evaluation and learners' motivation.

1. How does evaluation influence motivational patterns of Macedonian university students for learning English? Which motivations are stronger?
2. Is there a relationship between evaluation and motivational patterns of Macedonian university students?

4. RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The survey was made on third year Macedonian students from the departments of English, German and Macedonian language and literature at the Faculty of Philology, ‘Goce Delcev’ University in Stip. The focus group consists of 45 students who have already taken five semesters of foreign language classes at this university, but the level and area of the foreign language they study is different according to the content of the subject.

5. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The instrument used for this study was a modified motivational questionnaire adapted to evaluation processes in the classroom. The respondents were asked to rate each of the 15 statements about the reasons for learning a foreign language on the 5-point interval Likert scale.

6. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

An electronic version of the instrument was printed in 45 copies and administered to the foreign language students. According to the written instructions, they were orally informed that their participation is voluntary and that they should provide their own answers and opinions as honestly as they could, so that a real picture about how the evaluation affects their motivation level while studying a foreign language is obtained. Students were given 10 minutes to fill in the questionnaire and produce frank answers, which was crucial for our study. This was done at the beginning of the semester so the teacher could know what to expect from students and see whether any improvements in students' behaviour while learning a foreign language could be achieved. The data analysis was done in correlation to the questionnaires and students' answers. Students' answers were given in percentages and they were presented to the students so they could see their overall motivation level inspired by evaluation while learning a foreign language. The percentages for each question presented the current situation of the students' motivation while learning a foreign language. Some answers might surprise some of the readers of this paper. The students gave their answers from strongly agree to strongly disagree as honestly as they could so we believe the results to be true and honest. We hope that because of this, improvement will come later during their foreign language study. While analysing the results, we will try to find the answers to the question why students behave in a particular manner and we will also try to raise the level of motivation through evaluation. This will hopefully inspire them to see the studying of English language and other foreign languages as a natural and interesting thing, which will be an enormous help in their future work.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evaluated in percentages	SA (strongly agree) E/G/M	A (agree) E/G/M	N (Neither agree nor disagree) E/G/M	D (disagree) E/G/M	SD (strongly disagree) E/G/M
1. They help me relate well in my class.	13.3/20/13.3	66.6/60/60	20/20/26.6	/	/
2. They inspire me to enjoy learning a foreign language because I feel I am good at it.	20/13.3/13.3	46.6/66.6/53.3	26.6/20/26.6	6.6/-/6.6	/
3. They make me feel comfortable speaking in my foreign language class.	13.3/26.6/20	60/46.6/60	20/20/13.3	6.6/6.6/6.6	/

4. I am delighted when my teacher notices how I am processing in learning the foreign language.	33.3/33.3/26.6	53.3/60/60	13.3/6.6/13.3	-/6.6/-	/
5. They make me enjoying learning a foreign language even if it is difficult.	13,3/-/13.3	33.3/53.3/33.3	40/33.3/33.3	13.3/6.6/13.3	/
6. They make me feel that learning is mentally challenging.	-/26.6/13.3	53.3/46.6/46.6	26.6/13.3/26.6	20/13.3/13.3	/
7. They encourage me to watch and understand films/videos, pop music or books/magazines, especially when they are in the foreign language I study.	33.3/46.6/26.6	26.6/20/20	40/20/46.6	-/6.6/6.6	-/6.6/-
8. I can get pleasure from learning a foreign language.	13.3/33.3/6.6	73.3/60/80	13.3/6.6/6.6	-/-/6.6	/
9. They help me to be able to use the foreign language with native speakers.	40/13.3/33.3	46.6/60/53.3	13.3/13.3/13.3	-/13.3/-	/
10. They make me believe that I will pass the final examination.	13.3/6.6/13.3	53.3/60/46.6	26.6/26.6/20	6.6/-/20	-/6.6/-
11. They make me feel the foreign language I learn is an important language in the world.	26.6/26.6/20	46.6/66.6/53.3	20/-/13.3	6.6/-/13.3	-/6.6/-

12. They help me understand the native speakers of that language and their way of life.	26.6/26.6/26.6	53.3/53.3/53.3	20/13.3/13.3	-/-/6.6	-/6.6/-
13. They help me to acquire new ideas and broaden my horizon.	13.3/-/6.6	53.3/53.3/53.3	26.6/33.3/26.6	6.6/13.3/6.6	-/-/6.6
14. They entice my interest in foreign language culture, history or literature and to have self-confidence to understand it.	20/13.3/26.6	53.3/60/53.3	13.3/26.6/13.3	13.3/-/6.6	/
15. They inspire me to learn the language in order to travel to areas where that foreign language is spoken.	46.6/53.3/46.6	33.3/40/26.6	13.3/-/13.3	6.6/6.6/13.3	/
TOTAL					

As given in the table above, the students from the three departments have similar opinions on most of the statements. For example, the first statement ‘They help me relate well in my class.’ has same percentage of strongly agree answers for the students from the English and Macedonian departments, agree answers for the students from the German and Macedonian department, and neither agree nor disagree answers for the students from the English and German departments. In the answers given about this statement, the level of agreeability is rather high. As we can notice, most of the statements have high agreeability answers except statements 7 and 15 where more than 40 percent of the students strongly agree, which means that here evaluation has the highest impact on learning a language. Statements number 1, 4, 8, 12, 13, and 14 have the highest agreeability level that is over 53.3 percent and here students think that evaluation mostly helps them in relating well during class and getting pleasure in learning the language. For statements 12 and 13, ‘They help me understand the native speakers of that language and their way of life.’ and ‘They help me to acquire new ideas and broaden my horizon..’ the students from all three departments have the same percentage in the agreeability level - 53.3%, which is a satisfactory conclusion. As for statements number 5 and 7, the level of doubt is the highest here, which means that students are not sure whether evaluation helps them to enjoy learning a foreign language even if it is difficult, or it is watching films/videos, pop music or books/ magazines, especially when they are in the foreign language they study. In statement 6 the students have the highest percentages in the answer disagree which means that they do not agree with the statement that evaluation

methods help them feel that learning is mentally challenging. Strongly disagree answers were given by students from the German and Macedonian department; the students from the German department strongly disagree with statements 7, 10, 11 and 12, and the students from the Macedonian department only gave a strongly disagree answer to statement 13.

8. CONCLUSION

Like many other subjects, second language represents a material that must be learned, understood, or memorized in order to pass the exam, please the teacher, make parents proud and happy, satisfy some inner curiosity, and many other feelings and states. This study aimed at understanding the extent to which evaluation affects foreign language learning at Macedonian institutions of higher learning. In conclusion, the results indicated a moderate level of how evaluation influenced motivating students to learn foreign languages. Foreign language learning is a complex process. Affective factors are interrelated and may in part be a result of environments at both micro and macro levels: classroom environment and policymaking. Classrooms should be places where motivation can be boosted rather than weakened as a result of evaluation. Policymaking should promote positive attitudes of learners towards foreign language learning so as to reduce the debilitating effect of evaluation and to instil genuine interest and motivation.

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