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Motivation, attitude, and language learning

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Abstract

Motivation and attitude provide primary impetus to initiate learning language 2 (hereafter L2) and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process. Lack of attention to these factors can lead to inefficiencies in learning L2. The research question lying behind this study is: Is there any effective and efficient relationship between language learning and motivation and attitude? This article intends to achieve a main purpose: to provide an overview of recent advances in research on motivation and attitude to learn L2. It provides some implications for better language learning too. In this paper authors have concentrated on descriptive and analytical approaches in order to clarify the role of attitude and motivation in language learning. Authors have achieved practical and tangible findings and have clarified that designing and implementation of various techniques can change student's attitude positively toward L2 learning. Systematic and academic application of "motivation and attitude" issues in language learning classes is very important and can make language courses more interesting.

*Keywords***:** *Motivation, Attitude and Language Learning*

1. Introduction

Language, especially English, is a significant instrument in the fields including scientific communications, business world, cultural interchanges, political issues etc. It is widely accepted that fluency in the English language is a key to success in life. Motivation, attitudes, and set of beliefs, about learning the language are among the determining factors that can influence efficiency of the students in language classes. Therefore, the instructors and educators should be careful in taking these factors into account. According to (Latchanna & Dagnew, 2009), attitude is accepted as an important concept to understand human behavior and is defined as a mental state that includes beliefs and feelings. Beliefs about language learning is directly associated with success in language classes. According to (Lennartsson, 2008), students' beliefs can be an obstacle if they believe that they cannot learn the new language successfully. Negative attitude and lack of motivation can lead to obstacles in learning a language. But a student's negative attitudes can be changed and turned into positive ones and facilitate getting a positive result. Having positive attitude towards learning a language is a good start to learn a language. The study calls the attention of the teachers to the fact that language learners are not only communicators and problem-solvers, but whole persons

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with hearts, feelings, beliefs, identities. Motivation has a direct effect on learning a language as well. According to Lennartsson (2008), motivation and the will to learn a second language are the factors that were considered much more important than the social ones. By providing positive attitudes among the students we can raise students' motivation. Studies have clarified that less talented students with high level of motivation are among the best language learners. If language learners feel that fluency in language can be useful in the future, they will enhance their motivation and will do their best to achieve this goal within a short time. So, the researchers have tried to concentrate on the importance of attitude and motivation in language learning and also how to raise good sense among the students. Findings of the study will clarify the effects of these two factors in learning language and will provide some practical suggestions and recommendations for the teachers. Based on the results of this study, educators and teachers can apply efficient strategies and techniques in language classes in order to promote positive motivation and attitude among the students to learn language and raise the proficiency of students.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Motivation

Motivation plays a significant role in the process of learning a language. Language teachers cannot effectively teach a language if they do not understand the relationship between motivation and its effect on language acquisition. The core of motivation is what might be called passion, which relates to a person's intrinsic goals and desires. Successful learners know their preferences, their strengths and weaknesses, and effectively utilize strengths and compensate for weaknesses. Successful language learning is linked to the learner's passion. And instructors should find ways to connect to this passion.

Learners need quality instruction, input, interaction, and opportunities for meaningful output, not only to make progress, but also to maintain motivation for language learning. A good teacher, then, must tap into the sources of intrinsic motivation and find ways to connect them with external motivational factors that can be brought to a classroom setting. This is especially significant when English is not seen as important to the students' immediate needs, other than to pass exams. Because learners have different purposes for studying a language, it is important for instructors to identify students' purposes and needs and to develop proper motivational strategies. Students should understand why they need to make an effort, how long they must sustain an activity, how hard they should pursue it, and how motivated they feel toward their pursuits.

Motivation fluctuates, and it is challenging to keep language learners' motivation at a high level all the time. When designing a language course, teachers must take into consideration that each learner has different interests and expectations.

2.1.1. What is meant by the term *motivation*?

The term motivation in a second language learning context is seen according to Gardner (1985) as 'referring to the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity (p.10).' According to the Pocket Oxford English Dictionary, motivation is 1. The reason or reasons behind one's actions or behaviour. 2. Enthusiasm. Hence, the abstract term 'motivation' on its own is rather difficult to define. It is easier and more useful to think in terms of the 'motivated' learner: one who is willing or even eager to invest effort in learning activities and to progress. Here we want to explain two kinds of motivation which are relevant to our study.

2.1.2. Integrative Motivation

Motivation has been identified as the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language (Crookes and Schmidt 1991). It is thought that students who are most successful when learning a target language are those who like the people that speak the language, admire the culture and have a desire to become familiar with or even integrate into the society in which the language is used (Falk 1978). This form of motivation is known as integrative motivation. When someone becomes a resident in a new community that uses the target language in its social interactions, integrative motivation is a key component in assisting the learner to develop some level of proficiency in the language. It becomes a necessity, in order to operate socially in the community and become one of its members. It is also theorised that "integrative motivation typically underlies successful acquisition of a wide range of registers and a native like pronunciation" (Finegan 1999, p.568).

In an EFL setting such as Iran it is important to consider the actual meaning of the term "integrative". As Benson (1991) suggests, a more appropriate approach to the concept of integrative motivation in the EFL context would be the idea that it represents the desire of the individual to become bilingual, while at the same time becoming bicultural. This occurs through the addition of another language and culture to the learner's own cultural identity. As Iran is fairly a monocultural society, opportunities to use the target (L2) language in daily verbal exchanges are relatively restricted. There is also limited potential for integrating into the target language community.

2.1.3. Instrumental Motivation

In contrast to integrative motivation is the form of motivation referred to as instrumental motivation. This is generally characterised by the desire to obtain something practical or concrete from the study of a second language (Hudson 2000). With instrumental motivation the purpose of language acquisition is more utilitarian, such as meeting the requirements for school or university graduation, applying for a job, requesting higher pay based on language ability, reading technical material, translation work or achieving higher social status. Instrumental motivation is often characteristic of second language acquisition, where little or no social integration of the learner into a community using the target language takes place, or in some instances is even desired.

2.1.4. Integrative vs Instrumental Motivation

While both integrative and instrumental motivations are essential elements of success, it is integrative motivation which has been found to sustain long-term success when learning a second language (Taylor, Meynard and Rheault 1977; Ellis 1997; Crookes et al 1991). In some of the early research conducted by Gardner and Lambert integrative motivation was viewed as being of more importance in a formal learning environment than instrumental motivation (Ellis 1997). In later studies, integrative motivation has continued to be emphasised, although now the importance of instrumental motivation is also stressed. However, it is important to note that instrumental motivation has only been acknowledged as a significant factor in some research, whereas integrative motivation is continually linked to successful second language acquisition. It has been found that generally students select instrumental reasons more frequently than integrative reasons for the study of language. Those who do support an integrative approach to language study are usually more highly motivated and overall more successful in language learning.

One area where instrumental motivation can prove to be successful is in the situation where the learner is provided with no opportunity to use the target language and therefore, no chance to interact with members of the target group. Lukmani (1972) found that an instrumental orientation was more important than an integrative orientation in non-westernized female learners of L2 English in Bombay. The social situation helps to determine both what kind of orientation learners have and what kind is most important for language learning. Braj Kachru (1977, cited in Brown 2000) also points out that in India, where English has become an international language, it is not uncommon for second language learners to be successful with instrumental purposes being the underlying reason for study.

Brown (2000) makes the point that both integrative and instrumental motivations are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Learners rarely select one form of motivation when learning a second language, but rather a combination of both orientations. He cites the example of international students residing in the United States, learning English for academic purposes while at the same time wishing to become integrated with the people and culture of the country.

Motivation is an important factor in L2 achievement. For this reason it is important to identify both the type and combination of motivation that assists in the successful acquisition of a second language. At the same time it is

necessary to view motivation as one of a number of variables in an intricate model of interrelated individual and situational factors which are unique to each language learner.

2.2. Attitude

To the most readers the word attitude in the paper is probably associated with the student. After all it is the student's good or poor attitude that makes life easy or difficult in the foreign language classroom. The teacher reading this study also assumes that the attitude in the question are probably of the unfavourable kind , otherwise there would be no problem to present and no solutions to offer . If this is, the typical reaction of foreign language teachers to the matter in this study, it reveals two attitudes they hold commonly as a group:1. It is the student's attitude that is the crucial factor in language learning, and 2. This factor is ignored unless it presents a problem. Some years ago we thought that the future of foreign language instruction was assured. And in fact enrolment increased; we were thriving. By the mid-sixties disquieting feeling began to emerge on the pages of all foreign language journals. Something was amiss. Something had been overlooked, an important factor that we are only now beginning to investigate: attitudes.

What is an attitude? How is it formed? Can it be changed? And how can we change it if it is unfavourable? The range of individual preferences, beliefs, values, or attitudes is staggering. There are many reasons why this is true. Breer and Loccke(1967,cited in Smith 1971) have attempted a fairly complete enumeration: A complete explanation , of the wide variety in individual attitudes, would presumably include references to family socialization, peer group influence, specific events in the individual's past, sources of anxiety, basic strivings, mechanisms of defence, education, income, occupation, mass media, class affiliation, residence, religion, and host of personal variables including intelligence, age, sex, interests, and aptitudes. Let us now look at a specific definition of attitude. I offer this one of Smith's (1971) perspective: An attitude is a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or a situation, predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner. An attitude is relatively enduring because it is learned, it can be unlearned. Because it is learned, it can be taught. Liking a foreign language can be learned. No student is born liking or disliking it. If the student enter to the class with fairly neutral attitudes about the language, or even positive ones, and has a personality structure which will permit him to have an openness and willingness to perceive and respond, his attitudes about language and language learning will be strongly influenced by the situation itself. Attitudes develop within a frame of reference. Attitudes are situational and can therefore be generalized. Language, teacher, class, book and homework are within the frame of reference of learning and within the situation of school. A student who doesn't like learning and school, teachers and homework can walk into foreign language classroom and quickly generalize his dislikes. Therefore, good attitudes and feelings are needed to raise the efficiency of the students in language learning classes.

2.3. Differences between attitude and motivation

At this point, we must talk about two initial distinctions: the literature on attitudes and that of motivation that are sometimes close, so we need to be clear how attitude and motivation differ as concepts. An attitude is a set of beliefs and motivation is a reason for doing something. This can be confused because a set of beliefs can be a reason for doing it. So you may be motivated to learn English because your attitude towards English culture, or towards your teacher. It is a common belief that you will not learn English if you dislike the English teacher. There is, however, a small amount of research which suggests that learners can in fact distinguish the messenger from the message. The second distinction is one made in much of motivation literature. It is between integrative and instrumental motivation. The former is related to the desire to learn more about a culture, its language and people – to integrate more within the target language society. The latter relates to achieving some other goals. So if you learn English because you will get a better job if you speak this language, then your motivation is instrumental. The literature on motivation states that persons who are instrumentally motivated are more successful in acquiring the second language.

3. Method

As it is mentioned in the abstract researchers have applied descriptive and analytical approaches in order to make the role of attitude and motivation in language learning clear - which are deeply rooted in Educational Psychology. This is done through the materials gathered from books, world-known journals, websites, and the researchers' ex**p**eriences as university lecturers.

4. Results and Discussion

The results obtained from this study has clarified that motivation and attitude have great roles in raising proficiency and efficiency of the students in language learning. The author of a classic study of successful language learning (Naiman et al., 1978) came to the conclusion that the most successful learners are not necessarily those to whom a language comes very easily; they are those who display certain typical characteristics, most of them clearly associated with motivation: positive task orientation, ego involvement, need for achievement, high aspirations, goal orientation, perseverance, tolerance of ambiguity. Therefore, from the information brought here it is clear that the underlying motivation and good attitude to study the language are largely instrumental. The implication of the study is that neglect of attitude and motivational factors can trouble students in language learning. The studies have shown that even brilliant and talented students with low attitude and motivation have achieved little progress. So the teachers and educators should handle the techniques and strategies applied in their classes in a way that can immerse students in language learning. The study done on the basis of many papers, journals, websites, teaching experiences etc. have shown that in learning a language there are many factors than the students that play outstanding roles and should be considered in language classes. Among the factors like teachers' and students' role , society , syllabus, etc. motivation and attitude are very important in language learning which are discussed extensively in this study.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

According to the findings of the study, we come to this conclusion that other than the talents of language learners there are other factors- motivation and attitude – that can influence the efficiency of learners. Findings of the study provides answer to the research question (Is there any effective and efficient relationship between language learning and motivation and attitude?) raised in the beginning of the study. It shows that there is a direct relationship between the efficiency of the students in language classes, and motivation and attitude. The study recommends some strategies for the teachers which can be very effective to increase language learners' external motivation and to create good attitude among the students toward the language learning. Some of them include:

5.1. Create a Friendly Atmosphere in the Classroom

Develop a friendly climate in which all students feel recognized and valued. Many students feel more comfortable participating in classroom activities after they know their teacher and their peers. Creating a safe and comfortable environment where everyone feels like a part of the whole is one of the most significant factors in encouraging motivation and good attitude. Doing so may take time as students adjust themselves to a new setting.
At the beginning of the school year, you can provide students with a bright and colourful classroom with pictures and projects completed by the previous year's students. This gives students the impression that learning the target language will be easy and enjoyable. It also gives students a chance to learn from what is present in the environment. Pair and group activities can be used from the very outset, reducing the pressure of teacher–student interaction and allowing students to feel recognized by their peers. The feeling of becoming a part of the whole is one of the strongest motivational factors at the beginning of a school year.
One ice-breaker that you could use to start this process is the *nickname activity*. Students can invent and write down a nickname (or use a nickname they already have). Arranged in a circle, each student has to stand up and explain his or her nickname. Along with introducing themselves, this fun activity gives students a chance to create a friendly and flexible classroom atmosphere.

5.2. Encourage Students to Personalize the Classroom Environment

 Providing students with a learner-centred, low-anxiety classroom environment has a great impact on language acquisition. Personalizing the environment can relax the students and enhance the friendly atmosphere, which will increase their desire and attitude to learn and develop their language skills. Students who feel safe and comfortable will feel more secure taking chances; they will display greater motivation to read aloud in class or write an essay without the fear of being criticized.

5.3. Create Situations in Which Students Will Feel a Sense of Accomplishment

 A sense of accomplishment is a great factor in motivating students. Be sure to give positive feedback and reinforcement. Doing so can increase students' satisfaction and encourage positive self-evaluation. A student who feels a sense of accomplishment will have a better attitude to direct his or her own studies and learning outcomes. Positive as well as negative comments influence motivation and attitude, but research consistently indicates that students are more affected by positive feedback and success. Praise builds students' self-confidence, competence, and self-esteem.
However, giving positive feedback should not be mistaken for correcting mistakes without giving explanations. Some teachers correct students' mistakes without really explaining the reason for doing so. It is very important for teachers to point out the good aspects of a student's work and to provide a clear explanation of his or her mistakes. Students value the teacher's ideas when they feel that their good work is appreciated, and this encourages them to start evaluating themselves for further studies.

5.4. Encourage Students to Set Their Own Short-Term Goals

 Language learners can achieve success by setting their own goals and by directing their studies toward their own expectations. Students can help themselves achieve their goals by determining their own language needs and by defining why they want to learn the language. Having goals and expectations leads to increased motivation, which in turn, leads to a higher level of language competence. We as teachers should encourage students to have specific short-term goals such as communicating with English speakers or reading books in English. No matter what these goals are, we should help students set and pursue them.

5.5. Provide Pair and Group Activities to Develop Students' Confidence

 Students learn by doing, making, writing, designing, creating, and solving. Passivity decreases students' motivation and curiosity and leads to low attitude toward language learning. Students' enthusiasm, involvement, and willingness to participate affect the quality of class discussion as an opportunity for learning. Small-group activities and pair work boost students' self-confidence and are excellent sources of motivation. Group work can give quiet students a chance to express their ideas and feelings on a topic because they find it easier to speak to groups of three or four than to an entire class. Once students have spoken in small groups, they usually become less reluctant to speak to the class as a whole. Group activities allow students not only to express their ideas but also to work cooperatively, which increases class cohesion and thus motivation.

5.6. Connect Language Learning to Students' Interests Outside of Class

 In today's high-tech learning environment, it would be unfair to limit students to traditional methods. Encouraging students to relate their classroom experience to outside interests and activities makes developing language skills more relevant. For example, computer-assisted language learning could be linked to playing computer games, or to computer programs that the students are interested in using. Listening to English language songs, watching English language films or videos, and reading English language Web sites can lead students to broaden their perspective on their language acquisition process.
Motivational teaching strategies such as these can easily increase positive attitude and language learners' motivation levels. The idea that student motivation is a personality trait and that students are either motivated or unmotivated is incorrect. Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot achieve their

long-term goals. As instructors, we may be the most important factor in influencing our students' motivation, which is a key element in the language acquisition process.

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