EXPLORE THE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND STUDYING ENGLISH
A CASE STUDY OF FIRST YEAR PEDAGOGICAL STUDENTS
AT VINH UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: Motivation is crucial factor in the success of language learning. A great deal of research has been done so far to explore proper methods to motivate students to study English effectively. Personally, it is our concern that there are a number of difficulties in motivating students to study, especially for teachers of foreign languages in general and for EFL instructors in particular. The purpose of this article is, therefore, to obtain an overview of Vietnamese students' motivations for learning English and teachers' tasks in relation to motivation, to report on the author's experience in real teaching situations at Vinh University, and to present some pedagogical implications. The results are of significant importance since Vinh University is applying CDIO approach in teaching methods and designing curriculum.

I. BACKGROUND

The term "motivation" is understood as "some kind of internal drive that encourages somebody to pursue a course of action" (Harmer 1994, p.3) and as the "extent to which you make choices about (a) goals to pursue and (b) the effort you will devote to that pursuit". (Brown 1994, p. 34).

The matter of motivation has received a great deal of interest of a number of theorists. Different people have examined motivation from different aspects, yet all have one thing in common, which is to recognise the importance of motivation in learning achievement. Ur (1996, p. 274) believed that "learners': motivation makes teaching and learning immeasurably easier and more pleasant as well, as more productive". Meanwhile, Cook (1996, p. 98) suggested that "teacher may have to go along with the students' motivation or at least be sufficiently aware of the students' motivation so that any problem can be smoothed over".

However, motivation, being so diverse, not simple as it may sound. Hence, in order to gain thorough understanding of the matter, theorists have attempted to classify motivation into different types. Brown (1994), Wajnryb (1995) and especially Gardner and Lambert (1972) divided motivation into two categories: instrumental and integrative. According to the theorists, instrumental motivation refers to the wish to learn a language because it will be useful for them in their effort to reach certain instrumental and practical goals, for example to get a job, to read materials, to pass exams or to obtain a. promotion. On the other hand, integrative motivation, is used to talk about the desire to learn a language so that learners can integrate into the target community.

Another distinction is that between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Harmer (1994) stated that extrinsic motivation is concerned with factors outside classroom, which is subtitled as

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integrative motivation, instructional motivation and attitude to the language. On the contrary, intrinsic motivation is associated with what takes place inside classrooms including physical conditions, method and the teacher. Meanwhile, intrinsic motivation is defined by Ur (1996, p. 276) as "the urge to engage in the learning activity for its own sake" and extrinsic motivation is that "derived from external incentives."

Since intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are of vital importance in classrooms and can be influenced to some extent by the teacher, this paper would like to examine students' motivations according to these two categories.

II. STUDENTS' MOTIVATIONS FOR LEARNING ENGLISH

In order to analyse Vietnamese students' motivations for learning English, the subjects are grouped into two types, namely English-specialised students and non-English-specialised students. The reason for the division is that the two groups should have quite different motivations for learning English.

Due to the constraint of time and the scope of the study, the paper is restricted to the information gathered at Vinh University. From the school year 2017-2018 (K58) Vinh University has many changes in curriculum, for example, introducing CDIO-approach training programs and advanced program to promote creative thinking and teamwork skills, and developing students' capacity and quality. In response to the objectives, subject requirements, teachers must constantly apply appropriate teaching methods and especially to encourage, strengthen students' learning motivation in the way that meet academic requirements so that students can develop their learning capacity.

Motivation of English pedagogical students

This group of learners is in general highly motivated because it is their choice to take English as the major. Usually, these students have strong extrinsic motivations. In fact, as future teachers of English, they understand well that English is an indispensable part of the job. In addition, English is important for them in attempting their instrumental goals such as reading materials, newspapers, magazines or listening to radio in order to collect a wide range of information.

Apart from instrumental motivations, students of English have integrative ones. Their reasons can vary from the desire to gain good understanding of the target culture, the chances to communicate and exchange culture and information with other speakers of English to the ability to integrate into the target community.

Also, naturally, the attitude of this group toward the language is in general positive. This can be explained by the fact that these students have good past experience in connection with English learning or simply because they are attracted by the language.

Non - English - specialised students

A large number of students in other departments learn because this is a compulsory subject at school. To them, the motivation is chiefly to pass exams. However, in recent years, there has been an increasing number of students who begin to take English more seriously due to their recognition of the role of English in their future jobs and career

opportunities. The motivations of these students are therefore for instrumental targets.

III. TEACHERS' TASKS AND DIFFICULTIES

Since motivation has a very important part to play in classroom, teachers need to be comprehensively aware of its existence and try to make good use of it and promote it during the lessons in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning of English at school. Firstly, it is necessary that they keep records of students' motivations, classify them and design proper strategies to deal with them. Next, they have to act to exploit motivations for students' effective acquisition of the language. Usually, teachers cannot do a lot to help students with extrinsic motivations because these are formed before they take the course. However, teachers can help them by aiding them to reach their instrumental and integrative goals. Intrinsic motivations, however, are more under the control of the teacher. In fact, it is the teacher's choice to carry out activities that in their opinions are motivating. Moreover, their knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm and their students' success or failure contribute greatly to the achievements of their students.

In reality, many teachers realise the importance of motivation and are eager to exploit it in their lessons, yet obstacles might be too great for them to overcome. One of the tough problems is big class size. Actually, with about 40 or more students in one class, it is almost impossible for the teacher to cover all students and to give them enough opportunities and time to take part in activities. What is more, the physical conditions in classrooms are not at all favorable for a language class. The arrangement of tables and the space available cause difficulties when pair work and group work are performed. In addition, facilities in classes remain poor; cassette-players, video-recorders and overhead projectors are not always available for use. Also, since the curriculum is fixed and the syllabus is basically grammar-translation-based, teachers find it extremely difficult or even discouraging to attempt new tries. In addition, time constraints both inside classrooms and at home prevent teachers from having interesting and productive lessons as they wish.

IV. THE AUTHOR'S EXPERIENCE

In our effort to motivate students in the learning of English, We have tried out different ways. Of course the performance is not always smooth due to the limitation of time and facilities. However, the results are quite rewarding.

First of all, it is our preference to begin my teaching at any class by asking students to write about their strong points and weaknesses, their past experience with the English language, their short-term and long-term goals and needs, their present worries and their expectations from the coming course. The activity can be informally done either at home or during breaks, in written form or orally, in English or Vietnamese. From the data collected, We understand well what is expected and what can be done to satisfy students' needs. The next stage involves the preparation of activities suggested and tries them out in class. As a result, students have the feeling that their voice

is seriously taken into consideration and become more open when asked for evaluation.

The second thing is related to the methodology applied in class. As a supporter of the learner-centered approach, I always encourage students to take an active role in the learning process. My view is "show, not tell". Usually, I spend some amount of time training students learning strategies which they can use to find out grammatical rules for themselves, to analyze their English proficiency levels and their motivations for learning English, I have different requirements for different groups of learners. For students of English, activities tend to be more demanding, which asks them to spend time on research or preparation outside class. As regards students whose major is not English, more emphasis is given on the participation in activities inside class.

Another area of the teaching of English that I pay special attention to is to make each lesson a new experience to students. In order to do this, I usually have to spend a considerable amount of time thinking of original and new warm-ups and varieties of activities to be carried out during the lessons. The warmers can be games, songs or situations right in the class. In addition, when choosing activities, I give priority to those that students show interest in. The topics and situations are usually taken from the textbooks but then edited and redesigned to suit each class.

What I am also concerned about is students' success and failure in language learning. Therefore, I am serious with the feedback activity. I learn from my experience that if students are given proper praise and encouragement when they gain some success, they would be

very motivated. As for failure, teachers' subtle care and assistance can really touch students' hearts and give them more courage to go on.

V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Motivation has been recognized as an important factor in the success of language learning. Although motivations are various and the level of motivation differs from student to student, most students when attending an English class should have some kind of motivation. This can be intrinsic or extrinsic or both. It is the teacher's task to identify students' motivations and exploit them in the teaching process with the consideration of activities in class, their attitude, expertise and knowledge. In order to fullfil the tasks, teachers have to face a variety of difficulties, including the limited time and facilities, the rigid syllabus and curriculum, the crowded classes and the unfavorable teaching environment.

In the light of the analysing of teachers' tasks and problems and from my own experience, the following implications are made.

First of all, teachers need to have an overview of students' motivations so that they can design proper activities or take suitable measures to help students. This task can be challenging, yet can be made easy by doing a survey, at the beginning of the course and asking for frequent feedback and evaluation during the course.

Secondly, in order to enhance students' intrinsic motivations, teachers can provide students with the materials of their interest such as articles about hot news in Vietnam and in the World, about the culture of the target

community; or about their professional areas.

In term of intrinsic motivations, teachers can design activities based on students' interest to stimulate them. In addition, activities need to be diversified and adjusted so that they are not too easy or too difficult to certain students. Also, it is important that teachers be sensitive to the feelings of students and thus have proper attitudes towards their success or failure and offer help in time.

In general, teachers should "be aware of the reservations and pre-conceptions of their students. What they think of the teachers and what they think of the course heavily affect their success. This is what teachers can influence than the learners' more deep-seated motivations" (Cook 1996, p. 99).

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TÓM TẮT

KHÁM PHÁ ĐỘNG LỰC HỌC TIẾNG ANH ĐỐI VỚI SINH VIÊN NĂM THỨ NHẤT NGÀNH SƯ PHẠM TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC VINH

Hứng thú đóng một vai trò quan trọng đối với sự thành công của việc học ngoại ngữ, nó được các nhà ngôn ngữ học và tâm lý học quan tâm rất nhiều, từ những góc độ khác nhau. Mặt khác, thực tiễn giảng dạy cho thấy, tạo ra hứng thú cho sinh viên là một điều rất khó khăn đối với giáo viên ngoại ngữ nói chung và giáo viên tiếng Anh nói riêng. Do vậy, trong bài báo này, chúng tôi xin điểm qua một số quan điểm về vai trò của hứng thú của một số nhà nghiên cứu, chia sẻ một số kinh nghiệm cá nhân và đề xuất một số gợi ý nhằm giúp giáo viên tạo ra sự hứng thú cho sinh viên năm thứ nhất ngành sư phạm Tiếng Anh tại Trường Đại học Vinh. Kết quả của nghiên có ý nghĩa thực sự quan trọng trong bối cảnh Trường Đại học Vinh đang áp dụng phương pháp giảng dạy theo hướng tiếp cận CDIO.