

Strategies for promoting learners' motivations by the medium of teachers in English as a second language: A pilot approach in Benin secondary schools

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Abstract

Motivation takes a core position in a language classroom. It drives students' interest and attention to the learning process. Motivated learners are willing to take action and feel responsible for what they learn. The present study conducted in "LMB" secondary school (North Benin) has aimed to analyze qualitatively the motivational strategies applied by teachers in ESL/L2 teaching and learning contexts. The sample surveyed consisted of ten English teachers and ten pedagogical groups of first-year learners. A qualitative approach through interviews and questionnaires was used. Discourse analysis was deployed as an information processing technique. The findings have revealed that teachers motivate learners at three levels: creating the basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, and maintaining and protecting motivation. It was demonstrated that a teacher's self-brand and his attitudes toward learners are very important for motivating learners in classes. In addition, teachers utilize various strategies to enhance learners' awareness of the utility of the English language for their future. This study calls on the teachers' responsibility to increase learners' motivation.

Keywords

ESL, motivations, promoting, strategies, teaching and learning.

INTRODUCTION

Motivation is defined as the personal decision to do an action. It is the 'whys' of action and then, the action of learning a language. It is also the reason or reasons for acting or behaving in a particular way. It helps to set a goal and the way to reach it. It energizes human behavior and "gives it direction" [1]. In language teaching learning, motivation plays a pivotal role. It holds is a significant dimension in language learning [2]–[4]. Motivation is the force that keeps

learners going, even when they face barriers or challenges. It charges them with the energy required to fulfil their potential. A child who is motivated is committed, energetic, and innovative: they see the value in what they are learning, and are determined to achieve their goals.

However, getting students motivated in the classroom has become more and more challenging. There are some problems and issues



that hold learners' motivation back in a learning situation. These difficulties concern teaching strategies, the materials used in the classroom, and the learners' personal willingness as well. Saito et al. [5], have raised the concerns of how content is taught and how students are learning. Furthermore, motivational strategies employed by teachers in the language classroom are still fairly dated and not relevant to a changing society [6]. Students are reluctant to take action and contribute to their process of knowledge construction. Sometimes, learners find the classroom activity annoying and uninteresting. Teachers do not use appropriate methods to engage learners in their learning process. This has a direct impact on the entire process of learning [7]. In language classrooms, the consequences are severe. Learners study the language solely for exam purposes and are not prepared to use it in real life or for communication in society.

With regard to all these consequences, changes are needed in teaching methods and activity design. This paper explores motivation strategies used in ESL classroom and the ways they are developed in teaching and consequently in learning contexts.

The field of motivation in language classroom research gained significant attention in the 1960s, where the most widely accepted understanding has been that learning a foreign language is unlike learning any other subject. This is because it involves imposing elements of another culture into one's own life space and because it is easily influenced by a range of social factors, such as prevailing attitudes toward the language, geo-political considerations, cultural stereotypes.

In other respects, though, the field, just like its counterpart in general and educational psychology, has undergone a number of shifts: in scope, in research perspectives, in its relation to practice, and in its relation with the field of the foreign language in secondary schools of Republic of Benin.

Concept of motivation

The identification of learners' individual differences in the process of teachers' motivation in language classroom resided in the selectivity of intervention techniques that can optimize the teaching. The identification of individual differences is done through the assessment of learners' volitional functions, which is carried out by using the Volitional Components

Inventory (VCI) [8]. The VCI assesses various volitional functions and informs teachers about whether an individual's problem is a deficit in self-motivation or self-relaxation, as well as which micro-component of these or other macro-functions is impaired.

In theory, once the teachers are in possession of this information, they should find it easier to adjust their behavior to meet learners' individual needs and design an individualized intervention program.

Since the effect of regulation motivates teachers to support learners in adapting to English as a foreign language.

Teaching from a goal perspective emphasizes that interventions to address maladaptive motivational orientations toward learning must begin by attending to learners' social and emotional needs. Such assertion tends to support the hypothesis that, in the social environment of the classroom, it is more likely that students will adopt and pursue the goals valued by those who help them meet their social and emotional needs.

However, an alternative type of interventions might begin by paying attention to the quality of instructional activities, as these may affect perceptions of pedagogical caring.

Motivation a force that pushes someone to set and achieve a particular goal. It is an extraordinary energy that impulses an individual to do an action. Oxford and Shearin [9] believe that motivation determines the extent of active, personal involvement in foreign or second language learning. Without sufficient motivation, one cannot undertake and complete difficult tasks. Students with little or no motivation are reluctant to take action in their learning situations. Motivation has been described by Gardner and MacIntyre [10] as a 'complex of factors' including the desire to achieve a goal, effort expended in that direction and reinforcement or satisfaction associated with the act of learning. Dörnyei [11] stated that motivation "energizes" human behavior and "gives it direction". This is similar to Wlodowski [12] who views motivation as "the processes that can (a) arouse and instigate behavior, (b) give direction or purpose to behavior, (c) continue to allow behavior to persist, and (d) lead to choosing or preferring a particular behavior". This definition is close to that by Dörnyei [13] who define motivation as "the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in an individual that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and

evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalized and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out". Researchers distinguish between two kinds of motivation: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation has come to be used to refer to doing a task because it is interesting to a person or that a person finds it enjoyable, whilst the term 'extrinsic motivation' has been applied to situations where students do something because they expect it to bring about an outcome, such as employment or profitmaking [7].

Motivation and ESL learning

Motivation is a crucial aspect of the language learning process [2], [4]. It is generally characterized as a learner's willingness or desire to be engaged in or commit effort to completing a task [14]. In a school context, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are important. Students are likely to take action when they feel interested. Without a desire to learn, students are less likely to cooperate, take responsibility, or fully engage in the language learning process. From that respect, teachers' contribution is highly important. They should create a positive learning atmosphere in the classroom, deploy effective teaching strategies, and use adequate materials to engage learners. That will create in learners the envy to learn.

Studies conducted by Dörnyei [15] and Williams [16] on L2 learner motivation stressed on the urge for a more pragmatic-centered attitude. This means examining the classroom environment and identifying specific learners' motives for being a part of that environment. Dörnyei and Csizér [1] have found ten factors for "motivating language learners" within the classroom environment. These commandments can be summarized as the following: teachers should set an example in terms of behavior, promote a relaxed classroom environment, maintain sound teacher-student relationships, increase learners' self-esteem, make sure that language classes are thought-provoking, personalize the learning process for the learners, promote learner autonomy, present tasks clearly, increase learner goals, and promote the L2 culture [7]. Taking into account those strategies will help to strengthen students' language acquisition. By getting motivation students will be spirited in learning, so they will be motivated to study English well [17].

Research objectives

Motivation plays a core role in teaching learning effectiveness. It is the energy that boosts students' eagerness to learn and succeed in school. In the context of English as a foreign language, more effort is required from students since they are not native speakers. This is not possible without a sufficient amount of motivation. The present research work was carried out to investigate the motivational strategies used by teachers in EFL classrooms.

Research questions

To reach the above set objective, some research questions have arisen: (RQ1) Are there any correlation between the teachers' motivation and learners' motivation?; (RQ2) How do the teachers differentiate motivations from diversity of groups of learners in the same ESL classes?; (RQ3) Is there any adaptation strategies between EFL motivational learning and teachers' individualism perceptions?; (RQ4) Does a teacher's emotional state in ESL classes influence his or her delivery?

RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative and interpretive methods are used in the course of this survey with the teachers' verbalizations of experiences (interviews, answers to open-ended items in questionnaires) and authentic ESL documents (speech message delivery recording, written texts and video-recording of language classes)

Ten EFL teachers and ten pedagogical groups of first forms are involved from "Lycée Mathieu Bouke" (LMB) of the municipality of Parakou in Benin Republic. They have constituted the target population for the study from more than twenty pedagogical groups within the school. The participants to the study were all selected purposively. The teachers are advisors and in-service teachers with more than five years of experience, all over twenty-five years old.

For data collection, interviews and questionnaires were used. An interview was conducted with the teacher to understand the motivational methods applied. The interview and questionnaire lasted 60 minutes. During the interview, the conversation was recorded using a smartphone to ensure accuracy in collecting and analyzing data. An unstructured interview was preferred to facilitate a friendly conversation with the English teacher. Annum [18] describes

unstructured interviews as a less formal type. Although a set of questions is used, the interviewer can freely modify the sequence, change the wording, and sometimes explain or add to them during the interaction. The interview questions focused on the efforts to build learners' motivation in learning English. English was used as the medium of exchange with the teacher.

Questionnaire sheets were designed and handed out to the learners to collect their data. Open-ended questions were used so as to have more précised and concise answers. The information gathered related to learners' views on their perception of the English language and the strategies used by teachers to motivate them in language learning. Questionnaires were distributed to the students' respondents. Each questionnaire contains 11 items. Supplementary data were also collected and are also necessary for the validity of the main data. Before asking students to fill out the questionnaire, the researcher provided a brief explanation about it. This was done to ensure that the respondents could easily understand the problems presented in each item of the questionnaire. Then 30 minutes were given to them to fill instantly the questionnaires.

A qualitative approach was used to process the data, which involved content and discourse analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results were presented based on the quality of information provided by learners and teachers. The research design conceived stands to enquire into learners' attitudes toward the class, the teacher and the learning goals and to assess their engagement in ESL at their early learning in secondary school.

Data from the interview

The basis was here the assumptions drawn from teachers' instructional practices and the difference they make when it appears to to promote the younger learners' motivations in ESL classes. Those motivations contribute inevitably to teachers teaching motivational experiences and strategies. Consequently, the design included the means of investigating teachers' motivational and general practices as well as their learners' perceptions of the teaching goals.

To that end, possible relationships between ESL teachers' motivational teaching practices, learners' current motivational state to classes and their behavior were characterized and identified. Additionally, the comparison of different extreme groups of learners, identified along several motivation and instruction-related dimensions, is described to aid in decision-making.

In other words, the analysis of the teacher's answers has revealed that students' motivation is good and they also have the desire to move forward. Because they are more aware of the importance of the English language in their lives, especially since it has become essential for their future. Based on the teacher's response above, the students are motivated to learn English. They perceived that the learners have a strong desire to learn English. She further added that English can lead to a bright future for the students. In response to the question, "What are the things that can motivate students?" the teacher replied that the first factor is the teacher's model. When learners see their teacher's eagerness through good preparation, effective English application, and the ability to demonstrate the functions or benefits of learning English, they are motivated. They added that starting with games, interesting topics, or activities that maintain momentum can effectively capture learners' attention and motivate them to learn English. She emphasized that the teacher's personality is crucial for motivating students. When the teacher is well-prepared, the teaching and learning process becomes active and engaging. If the teacher explains the benefits of learning English, the learners are motivated to study it. For her students' motivation depends on the quality and the competence of the teacher. They assumed that usually if the learners are asked why they like this subject, they answer because they like the teacher. Otherwise, the class is boring learners will not be interested. For them, teachers should apply strategies such as games, offering rewards to students, or praising the best performers to capture learners' attention in the course.

It is clearly stated that the teacher plays a crucial role in learners' motivation. In creating an effective situational strategy, the teacher must inspire students to love the subject. The teacher should broaden learners' perspectives on learning English and explain how important it is for their future.

Regarding the motivation strategies to be applied in the classroom, the teacher responded that educators must first broaden learners' mindsets by reducing dogmatism; second, set clear goals; and finally, demonstrate the real importance of what they have learned in their daily lives.

For her, the true objective of learning English as a motivational tool helped students envision what they need to achieve their future goals. Consequently, the students felt they were not wasting time, energy, or effort when learning English.

It is also asserted that stimulating students to think critically at the beginning of the class is a good practice to motivate them. To start the lesson, the teachers have the warming up activity. Sometimes, teachers conduct activities like a 'hot seat' or a review of what was covered in the previous class. This helps learners start lessons with a critical mindset, making them more motivated to learn. She added that another way to initiate learners' motivation is to create a fun moment at the beginning of class, which can make them interested in learning.

To maintain and protect motivation in the classroom, they found that teachers invite successful L2 speakers from similar backgrounds to the students to speak to the class and boost their motivation. Another effort made in relation to this problem is by setting up the learning contract at the beginning of the semester. They are a set of rules and principles that learners should follow and obey every day. This compels for instance the learners to complete their homework and not to miss class. Thus, all of the students remain motivated to achieve their learning goals throughout the study term.

Moreover, the teacher seems to believe that creating a cohesive classroom is an important factor in increasing student motivation. She pointed out the benefits of creating a cohesive classroom. It promotes cooperation between students during group work activities. Besides motivating learners to study English, a cohesive classroom also fosters a spirit of competition among peers to achieve the best results.

To the question about how to motivate a demotivated classroom, she answers that the teachers should be more creative. They must make all their effort to stimulate students' envy to participate in classroom activities. For example, use innovative strategies such as songs, videos, and audio that are critical to bring them

alive to learn. The teacher can also give appreciation like scores, chocolate, and candy.

Furthermore, to encourage learners' self-motivation, she confesses that as a teacher, she helps learners think about their future professional lives and emphasizes how important language skills can be for achieving their dreams. She added that she helps create an attractive vision of students' L2 learning. The teacher can share their own success stories and tell learners about the benefits they have gained from the English language. By doing so, students will develop long-term objectives and remain focused on achieving them.

Data from questionnaires

The data from the questionnaires with learners indicate three major aspects shown by teachers in creating motivation in EFL learners. They are first attractive teacher, the second is to be role models and the third is to have appropriate behaviors. In fact, few of them mention that they want to imitate their teachers' characters because they consider them as their role models. Also, the results show that the majority of the learners said that they are motivated by their teachers' behaviors. They witness that their teachers have the motivation to teach, showing their understanding for students' circumstances, showing their readiness to explain any points students might not understand, being strict but flexible, and being a great help to them. Moreover, the way of conducting classes is not boring and well delivered. Therefore, the students keep paying attention to every motivation that their teachers give. The respondents attested that their teacher practices a lot of jokes but keeps serious as far as learning is concerned.

The teacher also motivates learners with something that makes sense and it makes learners think it is useful for their future. In addition, the teachers motivate learners without coercion. Teachers are always positive about the benefits of the language. The motivation given by their teacher makes them more confident in their ability according to the students. They give students an easy way to understand the materials. She shares the advantages of learning English, the motivation given by their teacher makes them more confident in their ability, the way she looks at students, her firmness and her expression are always energetic even though she has taught for a longer time. She never says "I am tired". It is

seen that the learners feel comfortable to learn with the teacher.

Another aspect is creating a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom. All the students said they love English class when the learning environment is pleasant and joyful. It makes them feel comfortable and find English language easy to learn.

The last thing is giving some quizzes to students. As matter of fact, the students asserted that the teacher split them into groups during classroom activities. Score are given the best group that answered correctly to the quizzes. These practices help learners to work in cohesion and cooperation.

Discussion of findings

The results from the interview and questionnaire revealed that the teacher is a crucial factor in building students' motivation in EFL and ESL classrooms.

In creating the basic motivational condition, teachers give strong talk to the students about the importance of English for the future. This strategy fosters learners' decision to set goals for their lives. According to Kong [19] students' goals influence their motivation and effort in English learning. With learning goals, learners study purposefully and throw great effort into English learning. It is also supported by Dörnyei [20] who said that the learner's future self-image is not perceived as being comfortably certain to be reached, that is, to be within his or her grasp. The learner must believe that the strong capability will not happen automatically, without a marked increase in expended effort. It means that delivery from teachers to learners about the importance of the English language in view of the future can stimulate learners' motivation to learn English. Han [21] observed that project-based learning encourages learners' motivation in classes.

The teacher also opens the learners' mindset about learning English. Therefore, the learners will think that they are not wasting time, power, and thinking to learn English. Besides that, the teacher argues that the teacher has to make his/her students like him first; the teacher's attitude is a source of motivation creating a fun classroom atmosphere. As mentioned by Dörnyei [20] from an internal point of view, there is also a broad spectrum of reasons for doing things: we can be motivated by the love of money or power, the love of people, and the world around us. In

other words, making learners love their teacher is one of the efforts to motivate learners to learn.

The learner's answer to the questionnaire proved that the teacher becomes the role model in motivation and they are motivated by the teacher. According to Dörnyei [20] friendly and supportive behavior by the teacher is infectious, and learners are likely to follow it. It is effective and functional to apply various and interesting activities with moderate challenge to attract the students to arouse their curiosity in English learning in view of intrinsic motivation, arousal and the characteristics of language learning. Dörnyei [22] suggests that for some language learners, the initial motivation to learn a language does not come from internally or externally generated self-images, but rather from successful engagement with the actual language learning process. The students are willing to participate in English learning by combining it with recreation, realizing that learning English can be interesting and fun through their involvement, which is key to maintaining motivation throughout the lesson. Filgona et al. [23] indicated that highly motivated learners are likely to learn readily, and make any class fun to teach, while unmotivated learners may likely learn very little and generally make teaching painful and frustrating.

A cohesive learner group with appropriate group norms is one of the efforts applied by the teacher in motivating students. It is supported by students' answers that they enjoy in every way their teacher's motivational strategies, such as making learner groups, giving and discussing interesting topics or projects, and socializing the benefits of learning English.

Dörnyei [20] states that there are numerous strategies to make classes interesting; for example, tasks that offer some challenge, contain interesting topics, or include novel, intriguing, exotic, humorous, or fantasy elements are always welcomed by learners. On the other hand, preparing materials that are not boring for students is a good effort to make students to be keen on learning English. Dörnyei [20] asserted that students are more motivated to pursue tasks when they feel some sort of ownership. This can be achieved by teachers' allowing them to make real choices about as many aspects of the learning process as possible, handing over various leadership or teaching roles, and adopting the role of facilitator. Based on the interview results, it is shown that in making groups in the classroom, the teacher chooses the leader who is the smartest

student in each group. Furthermore, the questionnaire result shows that every student wants to be a leader so they become enthusiastic to compete with friends in learning English. Dörnyei [20] said that group dynamics is highly relevant in education, including language education. Warsah et al. [24] concluded that group-based methods and techniques are very important in a classroom environment where students are responsible for each other's learning activities, produce outcomes in line with common goals, aid each other in the learning process and provide mutual feedback.

An awareness of the principles of group dynamics can make classroom events less threatening to teachers and can help them develop more efficient methods of classroom management and thus consciously facilitate the development of creative, well-balanced, and cohesive groups. All this, of course, has a significant motivational impact. In initial the students' motivation at the beginning of class, the teacher pushes the learners to think critically. Therefore, in the group, every learner thinks critically to answer every question given by the teacher. When learners provide the correct answers, the teacher will add to the group score. Therefore, based on the questionnaire result, student said that if one student gets the low score in a group. It will be affected for the group score and other members of one group will get angry him/her, no matter want or not, the other group members who have the high score have to teach the student who gets the low score until he or she can increase her/him score.

It means that every student has the responsibility for his or her own self and for the group. It stimulates learners' motivation to learn more and more. Dörnyei [20] states in a cooperative classroom, students can be competitive. Students work in small groups in which each member shares responsibility for the out-come and is equally rewarded. This is the most crucial and most general factor in fostering inter-member relationships; it involves the students' sharing genuine information with each other. Dörnyei [20] mentions games in which small groups compete with each other within a class can produce a powerful type of cooperation; people will unite in an effort to win. Nevertheless, when members spend a considerable amount of time and effort contributing to the group goals, this increases their commitment toward these goals and,

subsequently, to the group. Besides fostering strong motivation to learn English, the teacher believes this strategy also instills a competitive spirit in students to earn rewards. The teacher provides rewards such as scores, chocolates, and candies, and based on the students' answers, she also offers smiles as a form of encouragement.

Dörnyei [20] said that rewards might involve the joy of performing the activities, approval of the goals, success in achieving these goals, and personal benefits (such as grades or prizes). Otherwise, teachers should always predict every effort of learners by giving scores to the students so that the learners will continue to compete to get value by becoming more active in learning. Dörnyei [20] states that one of the most & motivating factors for learners is to have to learn something that has no apparent relevance to their lives. The teachers focus more on inviting successful external L2 speakers as a motivational factor to maintain students' motivation. Therefore, the students are guided by seniors who are fluent in English. There are desires from learners to dreaming to be like the seniors. Their motivation seems to be influenced, in the main, by social processes of learning.

The social outcomes of learning also seem to affect their motivation in a positive way. All motivational efforts are based in the present moment. Learners are also more motivated by receiving greater recognition for their present successes. In the learners' view, every motivation provided by the teacher serves as proof, such as the examples set by champions, and is accompanied by efforts to educate students to be their best. This means that the teacher gives contextual examples to motivate learners and strives to help students achieve their dreams through learning English. Based on the learners' view, the teacher encourages students to engage in self-study and use information and communication technologies (ICTs) in language learning, such as listening to music and watching videos.

CONCLUSION

The present study has explored the motivational methods applied by teachers in ESL classrooms at LMB secondary schools. The result has displayed that teachers' efforts in motivating learners are at three levels: creating the basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation and maintaining and protecting

motivation. All these strategies lie on the teachers' abilities and skills. They include the teacher's self-brand, his love of his love, his friendship and attitudes toward learners when they have concerns. Meanwhile, the study also

revealed that the use of ICTs such as videos, audios; and creating a fun classroom atmosphere by playing games, giving presents and scores as well make learners motivated in language learning.

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