MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES AMONG HIGHER LEARNING PRACTITIONERS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the motivational strategies of twenty-five practitioners from a higher learning institution in the Southern Region of Malaysia. The Motivational Strategies: Creating The Motivational Conditions questionnaire adapted from Dornyei (2001) was used as the instrument where mean and significance test were used as part of the analysis. Results showed that there is no significant difference between motivational teaching practices among higher learning practitioners with both genders employing diverse motivational strategies in their second language classroom.

Keywords: motivation, strategy, second language, higher learning, learner

1.Introduction

Motivation is a psychological process that affects behavior in language learning and plays a significance role in determining a successful Second Language learning (Moreno, 2010).   In fact in language teaching and learning motivation is highly important since it is one of the indicators used in explaining the achievement factors by either teachers or learners in second language learning. Over the years, several theories regarding extrinsic and intrinsic motivation have been developed by philosophers or researchers. However the question is how educators can apply these theories or strategies effectively in their second language classroom. Hussin, Maarof, D'Cruz (2000) highlighted that many English teachers are having a hard time sustaining learners' interest in learning English. Dornyei (2001) also believed that no matter how capable the teachers are, if they lack instructional skills, they will be having a difficult time motivating students and their teaching will automatically become ineffective.

Most second language learners want to improve their English proficiency due to job enhancement or other career prospects. Urbanovic and Wilkins (2014) stated that 70% of Asian learners in higher education are involved in English programs because they wanted to study abroad since most of the programs offered are using English as the language of instruction. Even though language proficiency can be seen as a positive step forwards in terms of one's career prospect, learning in English has become a crucial problem for learners whose mother tongue is not English (Coleman, 2006). If learners are having difficulties with the language, they may not be able to perform well in their studies (Hughes, 2008) Thus, it might indirectly affect their motivation as it is one of the most important aspects in second language teaching and learning (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005). Lile (2002) emphasized that educators play the most important role in helping learners to become intrinsically motivated towards their learning while Bantjes (1994), stressed how anxiety level, learning environment and learning materials can affect the attitude of the learners towards their learning.

Dornyei and Csizer (1998) and Cheng and Dornyei (2007) believed that motivational strategies have a significant role in language learning. Noorizah, Idris, Rosmiah and Teo (2010) agreed that lack of exposure and feedback in the classroom could be part of the reason why learners are less motivated in language learning classroom. According to Saedah, Zainun and Tunku (1996), teachers could provide motivational strategies to learners by maintaining good relationship or having good rapport with them. However, teachers need to be extra careful as to avoid the input given to the learners as not to spoil them. One of the ways that teachers could use to motivate learners is by using motivational feedback in the language classroom. Motivational feedback is feedback that is used to motivate the learners rather than just giving the answers or information in the classroom (Pintrich and Schunk, 1996).

2. Motivational strategies and motivating learners

According to Guilloteux and Dornyei (2007), motivational strategies can be defined as pedagogical techniques that are used by teachers to reduce and maintain learner motivation. They further added that motivational strategies are strategies that are purposely used by the learners to administer their own self-motivation in learning. In Malaysia, a study done by Kamarul, Mohamed, Nik and Zamri (2009) concerning motivational strategies among secondary religious school learners found that learning strategies has significant effect on the language learning motivation. They believe that teachers have a role to play and could do something in order to help the students' learning. Generally, teachers' awareness of their function

and their effect on the learners' motivation with the strategies used should be accentuated. Teachers should know the factors that influence the learners' motivation as teachers are responsible for developing learners' motivation by using appropriate learning strategies. Teachers' roles are limited not only to imparting knowledge but also to guide learners in an environment conducive for learning. Saedah, Zainun and Tunku (1996) specified that teachers who motivate are teachers who always try to improve their quality of teaching and learning instruction rather than simply being technically effective teachers.

A study conducted by Jantmary and Melor (2014) found that undergraduate learners in Malaysia agreed that English is important not only for career prospects but also for their career development. While in college, being proficient in the language could help them complete their assignments easily and to carry out their research without much difficulty. Another study conducted by Souriyavongsa, Rany, Mohamad and Leong (2013) discovered that, one of the factors that caused learners in National University of Laos to obtain low results in English was due to their language educators who were not well trained in using the Lao language in English teaching instruction. Hence, these educators were not able to attract the interest of their learners to perform well in second language classroom. On the other hand, a study conducted by Mohamed and Normala (2006) stated that English practitioners do not encourage two-way interaction in exchanging meaning even though they knew that it is a crucial element in second language learning. This is further emphasized by Qasoha (2006) who believed that second language educators or practitioners have the tendency to demotivate their learners in learning a second language based on their unsuitable teaching styles and negative personal traits. Thus, if this happens such things as loss of class control, nervousness and the usage of scolding words could affect the learners' performance in second language classes (Gopala et al, 2014). There, motivation is seen as significance since it affects the learners' performance. From the overview given, it can be concluded that educator or practitioner attributes affect the proficiency of their learners.

Thus, this study is interested in investigating the higher learning practitioners' preference in using motivational teaching practice in second language learning. At the end of this article the types of strategies used by English practitioners in class and factors that contributes to the strategies used will be discussed.

3. Methodology
3.1 Respondents, Instrument and Analysis
The respondents of the study were 25 practitioners in one of the higher learning institutions in the southern region of Malaysia. This study utilizes the Motivational Strategies questionnaire that is adapted from Dornyei's (2001). The questionnaire was made up of two sections. Section A was designed for personal information of the respondents while Section B consisted of 35 motivational macro-strategies which represented four components of motivational teaching practice in second language classroom. The component of motivational teaching practice using a 5 point Likert Scale ranging from 1-Never, 2-Rarely, 3-Sometimes, 4-Often, 5-Always as shown in Table 3. The descriptive statistical analysis used in this study are mean and significant test to determine the significance results.

4. Results

Table 1: Distribution of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	6	24
Female	19	76
Total	25	100

Table 2: Mean Scores and Level

Mean	Level of Frequency
1.00-2.33	Low
2.34-3.67	Moderate
3.68-5.00	High

Table 3: Components of Motivational Strategies, Mean Score and Significance Test

No	Components of Motivational Teaching Practice in Second Language Classroom	Total Item	Mean Male	Female	Overall Mean	Sig (2-tailed)
1	Creating the basic motivational conditions	8	3.88	**3.76**	**3.82**	**.455**
2	Generating initial motivation	8	4.08	**4.19**	**4.13**	**.513**
3	Maintaining and protecting motivation	14	4.36	**4.25**	**4.30**	**.332**
4	Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation	**5**	**3.93**	**4.15**	**4.04**	**.561**

Table 4: The Sig. (2-tailed) value

Sig. (2-tailed) value	Remarks
If sig (2-tailed) value is greater than .05	No statistically significant difference between two samples
If sig. (2-tailed) value is less than or equal to .05	There is a statistically significant difference between two samples

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 The motivational strategies used by higher learning practitioners

Based on the sig. (2-tailed) value in Table 3 and 4, it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant difference between components of motivational teaching practice between male and female higher learning practitioners. This is because the sig. (2-tailed) is above .05. Thus both genders employed the same components as their first motivational strategies being used in their second language classes which is maintaining and protecting motivation, followed by generating initial motivation, encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation and lastly creating the basic motivational conditions (refer to Table 3). These results indicated that both genders gave similar motivational strategies and learners are engaged in learning regardless of teachers' gender. This is may be due to the students' motivation to be engaged in classroom no matter who the teachers are. This is consistent with a study conducted by Martin and Marsh (2005) where the students did not have gender bias in showing their participation in classroom because they were more concerned with the capabilities of the teachers in teaching and learning process. This was also supported by Yemisi's (2013) study that showed male and female teachers have no difference in motivational strategies. Even though learners of second language in this study came from different courses, either engineering based or non-engineering based background, their goals and exposure on campus are similar in nature. Therefore, since learners' motivational expectations are parallel, the input given by the practitioners are almost the same regardless of the gender teaching practitioners. As suggested by Dornyei (2001), there are some techniques or motivation strategies in classroom especially for second language teachers to promote since motivation is a powerful force that could affect language learning and the results of this study are consistent with that suggestion.

5.1.2 Maintaining and protecting motivation

Dornyei (2001) also emphasized that motivation that has been generated by students should be maintained and protected throughout teaching and learning session so that motivation could be actively nurtured in order for it to not easily fade away. One way to avoid it is by providing regular encouragement to the learners. The results of this study also showed evidence that the teaching practitioners involved in this study strengthened the learners' confidence by providing encouragement (refer to Table 3) as positive persuasive expression that is given to the learners can achieve certain goals and ways to improve their self-esteem. The teaching practitioners believed that by giving encouragement the learners could raise their confidence in learning the second language and providing them with some support to reduce their anxiety by highlighting instead what they are capable of achieving. This result indicated that teaching practitioners are on the correct path as long as they maintained what they are doing with the learners.

This is because motivation should be actively nurtured and maintained so that the motivation does not fade away. One of the strategies that the practitioners used in this study is building the learners' confidence by providing regular encouragement.   This strategy is consistent with Dornyei (2001) definition of encouragement. Dornyei indicated that positive persuasive is an expression that is given to someone so that learners can achieve certain goals and indirectly improve learner's self-esteem. Thus the results of this study showed that the practitioners' had incorporated this strategy in order to encourage and raise the confidence level of the learners. Therefore, by giving them some support they believe it could help the learners to realize what they are capable of doing.

The practitioners also employed the strategy of making learning stimulating and enjoyable for the learner by increasing the attractiveness of the task. Even though there are many challenges in second language learning, the demand for practitioners to be creative by varying the tasks in classroom are something that had been utilized by the practitioners through the results of this study. They had adopted the strategy of increasing the attractiveness of the tasks to motivate the learners in their second language classroom. To sustain the motivation of the learners', they had provided tasks that were interactive and meaningful for the learners. They revised the assigned task regularly as the learning styles of the learners varied according to which courses they were enrolled in. These varied, multiple and interesting tasks help to motivate the learners in learning second language.

The results of this study also indicated that the practitioners utilized goal setting methods in their classrooms. As suggested by Brophy (2004) goal setting is very important in second language learning because setting up achievable goals helped the learners to be more engaged in the classroom task. Most of the practitioners in this study implied that the goal set up for the classes was centralized based on what the learners expected to achieve at the end of their courses and what they think they can achieve. This is also similar with what Zimmerman (1990) proposed when setting up appropriate goals. The purpose of setting up goal is to motivate learners to apply appropriate strategies to achieve their individual goals.

Further findings showed that practitioners also use the strategy of building their learners' confidence in their learning abilities by teaching the students various learner strategies. It is assumed that some second language learners are a little bit oblivious to what are the best ways to learn English. Wong (2005) mentioned that second language learners in Malaysia lack learning strategies to help them gain proficiency in English, thus, affecting their performance and motivation. He further added that lack of these learning strategies will

hinder learners from solving problems that they encounter in learning. Hence, the findings showed that higher learning practitioners in this study did expose their learners to different kinds of learning strategies such as reading English books, listening to English songs, regularly speaking in English and practicing using English writing such as blogging in their classrooms. These practitioners also use the strategy of making the learning stimulating and enjoyable by enlisting the learners as active task participants. This is consistent with what Kuo, Yu and Hsiao (2015) considered as the language learning process. They mentioned that language learning proses is complex, comprehensible and should be a meaningful activity to the learners. This denotes that learning activity is an active process that involved both learners and educators. Thus, by increasing the amount of learners' involvement in the learning activities, it should inevitably increase learners' motivation. Consequently, this strategy should prevent learners from becoming bored, distracted or busy playing with their mobile throughout their classroom lesson. The result of this study is similar to a study by Thang (2009a). Thang investigated learners' autonomy in some of the tertiary education institutions in Malaysia and found that even though the learners showed passiveness and were prone to teacher-centered approach, they were in some ways able and willing to digest the information given and changed to a more independent position whenever applicable.

5.1.3 Generating initial motivation

Teachers are highly regarded people responsible not only for igniting and generating positive attitudes toward language learning but also to generate initial motivation among their learners to draw their interest in the classroom which had been done by the practitioners based on the findings of this study (refer to Table 3). Most of them used the strategy of raising the learners' interest in the second language learning process in their classroom as shown by the results. This is again consistent with what has been proposed by Dornyei (1994) in his second language motivation framework about the course-specific motivational components where the course should be designed in order to be able to attract the learners' interest. Thus, following this suggestion, the practitioners in this study try to raise learners' interest to make sure that they are always excited about the course and very much involved in the classroom activities as learners' interest in anticipating the language learning activity is closely related to their intrinsic interest. To increase intrinsic interest in learners, the practitioners were also seen as trying to increase the attractiveness of the classroom activities by providing current or latest learning input. This is again consistent with what Dornyei (2001) said. He believed that teachers need to work on learners' motivation since learners might not be internally motivated.

In addition, to generate the initial motivation, most of the higher learning practitioners in this study use the strategy of increasing goal-orientation by formulating explicit class goals accepted by the learners. Even though they always have the challenge of dealing with different kinds of learners with different kinds of goals, the results showed that the practitioners do perform real tasks that accommodate all kinds of goals in order to meet and help the learners achieve each individual dreams. They also promote integrative values by encouraging positive and open-minded disposition towards the second language learning. This strategy is more towards providing the learners with the culture of the second language and familiarizing the learners with foreign values such as exposing them to different kinds of reading materials, movies related to foreign cultures or even music to expose them to the English speaking culture.

6. Conclusion

In second language classroom, motivation is regarded as a powerful dynamic for second language learners that could affect learning. Teachers are presumed to play a vital part in helping learners in increasing their motivation. Thus, varied and frequent combination of motivational strategies in language classroom may contribute to highly motivated learners. To sum up, most of the language practitioners in this study employed wide-ranging components of motivational teaching practice with diverse motivational strategies in their language classroom to encourage and stimulate their learners.

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