

MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES IN CLASSROOM OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

Motivation is one of the most important factors required for effective foreign language teaching. Nowadays, faced with the pandemic and the fast development of new technology, with the new hybrid teaching form of the combination of online and offline teaching, the universities are innovating their teaching methods and strategies to give more motivation in the classroom, stimulate the students' learning enthusiasm and improve the teaching efficiency. In this article, considering the new situation that university teaching is faced with, we formulate a list of methods of motivational teaching strategies for foreign language teaching in universities, such as promote students' autonomy, collaborative group working mode, create a pleasant classroom climate, enrich the class with foreign country's culture and values, make the learning tasks stimulating and integrate in the teaching new information technology. We also realize an empirical experiment to apply these strategies in the Spanish teaching classrooms for Chinese students in the University in order to discuss the application method and its results. We also elaborate questionnaire among the students to find out their learning results with these strategies.

Keywords: *Foreign language teaching, motivational strategies of teaching, university teaching, students' autonomy.*

1. Introduction

Motivation is the driving force which initiates, directs, and energises goal-oriented behaviors. It has long been considered as an important factor to better the classroom teaching and learning. As to the teaching of second language, which is a highly interactive and interdisciplinary course that needs largely to make the class teaching more effective, more attractive and more practical. That is to say, the second language teaching should use different methods to focus the students' attention on the words and grammar learning in class, stimulate them to practice actively, relate the linguistic knowledge with other disciplines and informations to form a complete integrated system of foreign language, and reduce the negative influences of the mother language to commit less errors possible in their use of the foreign language. Considering the features of the second language discipline, as well as the new situation that this kind of teaching faces nowadays, the language teaching profession meets profound motivational challenges. On the one hand, with the new changes mentioned, the popular motivational strategies and methods appear to be obsolete and monotonous, so there's a pressing need for new reforms and innovation in the teaching strategies. On the other hand, the universities raise standards and respond to curricular innovations and new society needs for foreign languages talents, and the students are less likely to accept of a submissive role in class and expect to entertain and learn efficiently at the same time, and all these factors force the teachers to provide learners with new motives for learning (Gallagher-Brett 2004).

2. Motivational strategies in classroom of second language teaching

The importance of motivational strategies in second language (L2) teaching has been well recognised in research, and it often ranks high among the decisive factors that bring success in the attainment of the second language (Dörnyei, 1998). In recent years, the second language teaching has met with new situation, and thus causing new needs for the creation and application of innovational motivational strategies. Hence, in the present article, we base on the theory of Dörnyei (2001) and formulates a list of innovational motivational strategies, taking into account of the new changes and new demands for foreign language teaching.

2.1. Dörnyei's taxonomy of motivational strategies

Dörnyei & Ushioda (2011: 103) define motivational strategy as instructional techniques deployed “to consciously generate and enhance student motivation, as well as maintain ongoing motivated behaviour and protect it from distracting and/or competing action tendencies”. The “10 Commandments for Motivating Language Learners” formulated by Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) represented groups of teaching techniques which Hungarian teachers claimed to use to motivate their pupils, namely set a personal example with your own behavior; create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom; present the tasks properly; develop a good relationship with the learners; increase the learners’ linguistic self-confidence; make the language classes interesting; promote learner autonomy; personalize the learning process; increase the goal-oriented learning; familiarize learners with the target language culture.

Later, Dörnyei (2001) expanded the list into a full taxonomy of 102 motivational strategies, grouped into 35 main strategies which can be used in language classrooms and can be grouped into four consecutive phases: (1) creating basic motivational components; (2) generating initial motivation; (3) maintaining and protecting motivation; and (4) encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation.

2.2. Motivational strategies in the new teaching situation

However, as we have mentioned, nowadays appeared many new circumstances that changed the needs and the situation of second language teaching. First of all, due to the pandemic, there’s an increasing need for hybrid teaching and online teaching. Secondly, with the development of information technology, the application of technology in second language classroom is more and more popular. Thirdly, in China the interdisciplinary integration is proposed widely in the higher education. Hence for the second language teaching, teachers are looking for ways of integrating other disciplines in the classroom teaching in order to make the education more integral. Moreover, it’s also necessary to stimulate the enthusiasm of the students to get the autonomy to learn.

Faced with the new teaching situation, we apply in the second language teaching classroom a series of new motivational strategies: promote students’ autonomy, collaborative group working mode, create a pleasant classroom climate, enrich the class with foreign country’s culture and values, make the learning tasks stimulating, integrate in the class information technology. The detailed information of applying the strategies are as follows.

Promote students’ autonomy. In this aspect, teachers can organize a series of autonomy-supporting teaching practices. To begin with, flipped classroom is a very popular practice in the second language learning, for the student-centered mode allows students to take responsibility of their learning and realize the learning at their own pace with more flexibility. In the session of grammatical exercises after the new content dictation, the teacher can design exercise games, invite the students to teach the exercises and make oral speeches or tell stories, role play, group discussion, etc. Another important method to promote students’ autonomy is to distribute questionnaires between the students, to collect information about their personal learning needs and the difficulties they meet with, with which teachers can have a direct channel of communication with the students about their personal thinking and requirements, thus realizing individualized teaching and differentiated teaching. Moreover, self-evaluation with the guidance of the teacher is also an effective method of realizing the autonomous learning. After each session of learning, the teachers design self-evaluation forms for the students to fill, including their performance of the learning, the domain of the knowledge, the plan for the next session, the gains and weaknesses. The self-evaluation makes the students responsible for their learning, aware of the distance between their expectations and their true level of the second language, get to know their strong and weak point, and thus having sufficient motivation and confidence to progress. (Li, 2016:81)

Collaborative group working mode. This mode is an effective way to enhance the exchanges between students, to capacitate them with the ability of communicating and cooperating with others, and to erase their interest of deep learning. Let’s take for example the teaching of a Spanish text “El caballo de Troya” (Trojan horse) to the Spanish major college students. There’s a variety of group activities that teachers could organize. Before entering in the explication of the new Spanish text, the teacher can ask students to discuss in groups, recall the main plot of the Greece story, and narrate it in Spanish with the assistance of the new vocabulary of this lesson. Another option is to ask the students to prepare for the new lesson in groups. The teacher gives each group a preparation list with all the tasks, such as organizing example sentences, summarizing grammar usage, marking the key points of the text, and reflexing about the meaning of the article. The students can divide the tasks between the group members and prepare with group work. After learning the linguistic knowledge of the text, the teacher can organize different groups of students to perform the story “The Trojan Horse”, which gives full play to their subjective abilities, designing lines and actions, and modifying the plot. In other cases, teachers can also assign tasks like group discussion, debate, group project, etc. Collaborative group working mode ensures

the participation of the students in the active learning and in the classroom, and also stimulates different senses and attention to learn the new knowledge.

The creation of a pleasant classroom climate. It is the guarantee of an effective and pleasant learning. To create a supportive climate, the appropriate teacher behavior and the good relationship between the teachers and the students are indispensable. According to Dörnyei and Csizér (1998), teacher's own behaviors are considered to be the single most important motivational tool. Furthermore, the results also expose that this "tool" is one of the most under-utilised motivational resources in the teacher's classroom practice. Needless to say, the teachers' emotional state, dedication and passion to the teaching, their availability to communicate with the students and to offer them the help and care that they need are important factors that can motivate or demotivate the students in their learning. There's research that shows that student perception of teacher happiness is positively linked with students' overall attitude and motivation towards learning, as well as students' attitude towards the teacher. (Moskowitz, S. & Dewaele, J:2021) So it's significant that during the class, the teachers can use various method to project enthusiasm and set good personal example of the positive attitudes and interest in the subject of second language learning.

Enrich the class with foreign country's culture and values. This strategy is a special motivational strategy for foreign language teaching. As is known, teaching a language can be seen as imposing elements of another culture into the students' own. In other words, language learning is a deeply social event that requires the incorporation of a wide range of elements of the culture. In order to learn a second language, students need to develop a corresponding identity. For example, for the students specialized in Filology of Spanish, they need to create in their mind a linguistic system of Spanish language, and at the same time, integrate the Spanish culture in their identity. They need to familiarize the politics, society, economy, culture, the interpersonal relationship, as well as the customs of the Spanish speaking countries. Hence, one of the objectives of the class is to enrich the teaching with the foreign country's culture and values, and in the meantime, the integration of these elements can surely improve the overall linguistic level of the students, and make the class more vivid and attractive. The teachers can do this in various ways, for instance, record short videos introducing foreign festivals, customs, tourism, gastronomy, and play them in the class or as a flipped class material; design cultural theme explanation according to the content of different texts and invite students to present the cultural theme in class with powerpoint; share reading materials, news, TV programs, conferences with students to let them appreciate vividly the foreign culture; integrate the foreign cultures and values in the class exercises, namely brainstorm discussion, collection of information about foreign cultures, group presentation.

Make the learning tasks stimulating. This aspect mainly consists in selecting tasks which require mental or body involvement from each participant, as well as creating specific roles and personalized assignments for everybody. (Dörnyei, 2001:78). As a matter of fact, the way the tasks are designed and presented can make a huge difference in how students perceive and approach them. Therefore, when designing and presenting a task, the teachers need to think about the following questions: what's the purpose and objective of the task? What may be the students' expectation for the task? What are the difficulties that the students may encounter in doing the task? In which way can the teacher present the task to make it more attractive and accessible? Let's take an example of a classroom task to analysis the motivational strategies that can be applied to make the tasks more stimulating.

After learning the Spanish text entitled "Hacer compras" (Go shopping), the teacher asks the students to collaborate in groups and make up their own dialogues occurred in the scene of shopping. To begin with, the teacher may present the task explaining the objective of the task, which is to practice the new words and expressions in going shopping, and help the students to express in Spanish how to select goods, consult prices, realize payment etc. The explanation of the objective can orient the students in their practice and guide them to relate the dialogue with the new knowledge learned in the text. (Gershon, 2019:110) Secondly, the teacher can offer some advice for making up the dialogue, trying to stimulate their interest and promote their divergent thinking: "There are different kinds of stores that we may purchase in our daily life, like clothes stores, book store, supermarkets. You may go shopping alone, with your friends or with your family. During the shopping, many things may occur, you may discuss the things to buy with your friends, you may choose between different things and select your favourite one. Use your imagination and make up a dialogue showing one of your experiences of going shopping." The possible difficulty of this task is the unknown words of the things to purchase, so the teacher can offer them guidance and consult during their preparation. During the presentation of the dialogue, the teacher plays the role of guide, creating a positive classroom climate for appreciating the dialogue and organizing exchanges and comments after the dialogue. The teacher can offer advice and corrections for the dialogue after it's finished.

Integrating in the class information technology. With the development of information and communications technology, this motivational strategy is more and more widely and frequently used in the second language classroom. The application of the information technology can manifest in the following aspects. To begin with, the integration of information technology permits a diversity of innovational methods of teaching and learning, like the blended learning, the use of interactive multimedia learning materials, the Moodle class, the learning zone in blog, and mini class, internet platforms, as well as other technology of teaching tools. (Zhu, Xu&Han, 2021) Moreover, the use of new technology also means a reform in the teaching philosophy. It makes the education more personalized, for that the Moodle class and mini class allow the students to organize their learning according to their language level and learning needs; the online learning platforms permit the communication and tuition with the teacher at any time. The language teaching also transforms from teacher-centered into students-centered, focusing on the learning needs, the active participation, the multi-task design and the knowledge structure and language level of the students.

Moreover, the integration of technology also expands the time and space of the classroom of second language teaching. Before class, the teacher can share preparation tasks, mini-class and other materials with students and distribute questionnaires to analysis the learning needs and learning difficulties. During class, teacher can dictate the class with the assistance of the intelligent classroom, and organize activities like Bingo, pictionary, matching game, watch videos or movies. After class, students can do the homework and discuss with classmates online, while teachers can correct students' work and tutor the students with their questions and problems.

3. Effects of the motivational strategies

With the purpose of verifying the effectiveness of the motivational strategies designed for the second language teaching classroom, we conduct an experiment with 20 Chinese college students who select the Spanish course in 2021-2022 Spring semester. With the application of these strategies, we notice that the students have the following improvements in their study.

Firstly, the use of information technology and the design of a variety of activities can satisfy the students' diversified needs of learning. In a survey distributed among the students about the efficiency of the class teaching mode, 59% of the students think that interactive exercises and scene stimulation is most efficient for the Spanish learning in the classroom, 18% maintain that they prefer the traditional mode in which the teachers dictate and explain the content to the students, 10% think the workshop mode is more beneficial, 13% think that autonomous learning is more effective, for that the students can have more opportunities for presenting, discussing, and thinking in class. Besides, 72% of the surveyed students think that information technology plays an important role in the assistance of classroom teaching and learning, for the reason that it offers them vivid videos and pictures to learn the cultural and linguistic knowledge, help them to consolidate the knowledge learned and widen their horizon. Concerning the question of the learning result of using the technology to enlance the time before, during and after the class, 60% of the students think the combination of online and offline study is very effective, because in this way they can make use of all the fragments of time to learn, make good preparation before the class, make full use of the time in the classroom and also maintain the contact with the teacher and students after the class for further practices and discussions.

Secondly, there's more interest and dedication of students in the second language learning. Before applying the motivational strategies in the classroom, in one semester the absence rate registered is 4 times. After employing the mentioned strategies, during 2021-2022 Spring semester, full attendance of the class is registered. Moreover, there also appears to be a more active and pleasant classroom atmosphere, for that the students are more willing to participate in various classroom activities, exchange ideas with classmates and teachers, and finish all the homework carefully.

Thirdly, an improvement of the students' domain of the linguistic knowledge is observed. Students' performance in classroom for answering questions, realizing group work and doing exercises are more satisfied. There's also a notable improvement in the final exam. In 2020-2021 Autumn semester, the highest score registered is 95 points, and the lowest score is 65 points. Meanwhile, in 2021-2022 Spring semester, the highest score registered is 94 points and the lowest score, 73 points. From these statistics we can see that the students whose Spanish level is not good has advanced notably in the final exam and the overall level of the students has increased.

Last but not least, we also find that with the application of the new motivational strategies, the integral abilities of the students are also improved. They have better communicating skills and a more fluent speaking ability, which enable them to present in the class and participate in the intercultural events or participate exchange programs abroad and communicate with foreigners without obstacles; more solid knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, which has clear demonstration in the improvement of the exam

scores; knowing how to realize group work and cooperating with others; a wide domain of Spanish speaking countries' cultures and values permit our students participate in the foreign language singing competition; a grasp of computer skills, that enables them to realize attractive powerpoint presentation, search information in internet, use learning assistance tools like e-dictionaries and electronic database.

4. Conclusion

In recent years, due to a series of changes in the society and technology, there're growing needs of reform and innovation in the motivational strategies in the second language teaching classroom. Second language teaching needs to find new ways to implement hybrid teaching, combine online and offline learning, make full use of the new information and communications technology and fulfill the expectations for a higher level of interaction and innovation of curricular design from the institutions and the students. Thus, faced with the new situation, based on the theory of motivational strategies of Dörnyei (2001), we formulate a new list of motivational strategies applied in the second language teaching classroom: promote students' autonomy, collaborative group working mode, create a pleasant classroom climate, enrich the class with foreign country's culture and values, make the learning tasks stimulating, integrate in the class information technology. Later, we observe the learning result of the Chinese college students who choose the Spanish course during one semester through surveys and comparative studies, and discover that the implementation of the strategies implemented have notables benefits and satisfying effects. the use of information technology and the design of a variety of activities can satisfy the students' diversified needs of learning. With the new motivational strategies, students have more interest and dedication in the second language learning, have an obvious improvement in the domain of the linguistic knowledge, and form integral abilities as a foreign language talent.

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