Self-Efficacy of the Learners: On the Road to English Language Learning

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Poor student achievement is often attributed to a lack of motivation and rewards. Students with learning disabilities are very often unmotivated because school is one failure after another to them. Teachers are having a hard time assessing what could be the aid for language learning. This study used the descriptive-survey research method. It is arranged to gather information about the present existing condition. The participants of this study consisted of 40 grade nine students from Mariveles National High School-Sisiman II S.Y. 2016-2017. The questionnaire was divided into five parts—(A) Self Efficacy, (B) Intrinsic Motivation, (C) English Learning Value, (D) Performance Goal, and (E) Achievement Goal. Based on this study's findings, some relevant and useful motivational learning implications are recommended for enhancement and improvement of the students' motivation. Relevant language improvement programs and activities are also discussed in accordance with the students' language difficulties as communicated in the open-ended questions to increase their motivation in English language learning.

Keywords: motivation, English language, language learning, academic achievement

Introduction

Motivation is defined as the extent ones strive to acquire the language because of the desire to do so and the satisfaction derived from it (Gardner, 1985). Motivation is considered significant in its role in language learning success. Along this line of thoughts, students' motivation towards English language learning can, to a certain degree, influence their learning results. It is worth investigating how students become successful or failed in learning English because it might affect their motivation and the way they learn the language. Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) stated that the learner's enthusiasm, commitment, and persistence are the key determinants of success or failure.

Child is the center of teaching-learning process, who is regarded as a unique individual, different from every other child, but with certain common beliefs and interest. Thus, the teacher must consider the interest of each learner before and during instruction. Accordingly, interests and goals have been identified as two important motivational constructs that influence students' engagement and achievement in learning (Chen, 2001; Chen & Ennis, 2004; Chen & Shen, 2004; Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000). This states that motivation can encourage interest on student engagement and learning. Achievement goals have been reported to have a weak influence in predicting both performance and motivation outcome. Interest, on the other hand, has been found

to play a key role in influencing student learning behaviour and intention to participate in the future (Chen, 2001; Solmon, 1996; Xiang, Chen, & Bruene, 2005).

Educators have long acknowledged the importance of promoting children's interest since Dewey's (1913) groundbreaking work on the role of interest in learning. Interest also has been found to play an energizing role in cognitive functioning (Hidi & Anderson, 1992; Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Piaget, Brown, Kaegi, & Rosenzweig, 1981). Additionally, Hidi and Renninger (2006) asserted that "The level of a person's interest has repeatedly been found to be a powerful influence on learning" (p. 111). The powerful influence of interest "emerged as the most important intrinsic motivation construct for predicting future intention…" (Dewey, 1913, p. 193).

Hence, high student achievement comes from students who are motivated and poor student achievement is often attributed to a lack of motivation and rewards. Students with learning disabilities are very often unmotivated because school is one failure after another to them.

Student motivation has a great contribution in every aspect of school life, from attendance, to academic performance, to extra-curricular activities. Promoting the greatest student motivation possible is extremely important for every teacher in grades K-12, especially in today's educational climate, where schools are continuously under pressure to improve test scores, responsibility, and accountability.

Taken collectively, the literature on interest-based motivation indicates that interest might have a strong and prolonged effect on interest-based motivation and in predicting future intention (Alexander, Jetton, & Kulikowich, 1995; Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000).

Even though interest has been recognized as an important variable for learning, teachers still do not have a clear understanding of their potential role in helping students develop interest. Teachers also tend to think that students either have or do not have interest, and may not recognize that they could potentially stimulate and enhance the growth and development of students' academic interest particularly for those students who are unmotivated and disengaged in learning (Ennis et al., 1997; Lipstein & Renninger, 2006). Given this notion, the purpose of this study is to identify students' motivation towards English language learning.

To learn a second language can be very hard and difficult. It takes time and you really have to study in order to develop. However, there are many reasons to learn a second language, for instance to be able to communicate with foreigners and to understand other languages, but also to be able to get more work opportunities depending on your language knowledge. To know more languages always looks good on your CV when you apply for a job. It could be argued that people who study a second language (L2) often learn it because they have to do it in school, but people also sometimes need languages for other reasons, for example work opportunities or simply because they want to understand foreigners. The term L2 is typically used about languages that you learn in a natural environment, either because you want to be able to cope with everything in a new country to which you have moved, or because you think you will do better if you learn the language of, say, the most powerful minority in the country or region in which you happen to live (Saville-Troike, 2006, p. 4). Students differ in their motivation towards learning a second language and they display many different attitudes towards learning a second language. A student that has negative attitudes towards learning a language could be changed and turn those negative attitudes into positive ones and get a positive result. This will be further discussed below. The essay will also discuss whether or not it is true that social factors such as age, gender, social class, and ethnic identity have roles to play in language learning. According to Ellis (1994, pp.

202-204), studies have shown that younger students learn better than older ones and that women are better learners than men. This essay will discuss whether and to what extent any advantages or disadvantages based on these social factors matter while learning second languages. For future teachers of English, it could be interesting to see to what extent different social factors matter while learning a second language. Furthermore, also how much students' motivation and attitudes differ from student to student while learning second languages.

English Language Learning and Motivation

Social cognitive theorists define motivation as a strong personal interest in a particular subject or activity. Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2002) explored this idea further and suggested that student motivation is based on four key elements of theory from the social cognitive perspective: academic self-efficacy, attributions, intrinsic motivation, and achievement goals.

One of the key elements in the social cognitive theory is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to one's perception of his/her ability to do a task or activity. In terms of academic motivation, self-efficacy refers to an individual about his or her ability to perform well in a particular context or academic domain. If the students have high self-efficacy, they believe they are capable of communicating with others (e.g. classmates) in English.

Adaptive attributions, which focus on attempts to understand why events occur, are also an important aspect of motivation according to Linnenbrink and Pintrich. In general, attribution theory suggests that when a success or failure occurs, students analyze the situation to determine the perceived causes of success and failure. For example, the student in English class may eventually know the value of writing letters, delivering speech and predicting outcomes in their daily lives. That is why, when a student gains success in his/her learning, he/she will realize the value of it.

Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2002), like Harter (1974; 1981) and Deci and Ryan (1991), recognized intrinsic motivation as a key element in academic motivation. Linnenbrink and Pintrich continued to describe intrinsic motivation as the desire to engage in an activity for its own sake based on Deci and Ryan (1991). In order to be intrinsically motivated, a student must have an interest in the domain. It is evident when a student is engaged in his/her hobbies. For instance, playing songs which are relevant to the topic in class can stimulate the mind of the students who love music.

When they are intrinsically motivated, students can have an achievement goal where they intend to accomplish something to satisfy their innate needs for improving their own competence (Deci & Ryan, 1991), and they believe this kind of participation will help them achieve valuable goals (Atkinson & Birch, 1978). If the students' goal towards task is for performance, they will be concerned more with performing better than their peers and impressing their teachers (Brophy 1998; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

These thoughts concerning English language learning and motivation constitute the conceptual framework in designing a questionnaire for students' motivation towards English language learning.

Methodology

This study used the descriptive-survey research method. It is arranged to gather information about the present existing condition. The researcher chose to employ this method in order to formulate balanced and healthy conclusions from the respondents.

Respondents of the Study

The participants of this study consisted of 40 grade nine students from Mariveles National High School-Sisiman II S.Y. 2016-2017. Only one classroom/section participated in the study.

Data Collection

To collect the data, the researcher used five-point Likert-type scales. Items on the scale are anchored at 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = no option, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire used to identify the students' motivation towards English language learning was based on the questionnaire used in research report "The development of a questionnaire to measure students' motivation towards science learning (SMTSL)" by Hsiao-Lin Tuan, Chi-Chin Chin, and Shyang-Horng Shieh of Taiwan. The questionnaire was being modified to suit with the intended learning area which is English.

The questionnaire was divided into five parts—(A) Self Efficacy, (B) Intrinsic Motivation, (C) English Learning Value, (D) Performance Goal, and (E) Achievement Goal.

	Strongly disagree (n)	%	Disagree (n)	%	No option (n)	%	Agree (n)	%	Strongly agree (n)	%
1. Whether the English content is difficult or easy, I am sure that I can understand it.	2	5	12	30	4	10	19	47.5	3	7.5
2. I am not confident about understanding difficult English concepts.	4	10	13	32.5	5	12.5	14	35	4	10
3. I am sure that I can do well on English tests.	2	5	13	32.5	2	5	18	45	5	12.5
4. No matter how much effort I put in, I cannot learn English.	10	25	22	55	6	15	2	5	0	0
5. When English activities are too difficult, I give up or only do the easy parts.	8	20	13	32.5	4	10	15	37.5	0	0
6. During English activities, I prefer to ask other people for the answer rather than think for myself.	13	32.5	10	25	10	25	7	17.5	0	0
7. When I find the English content difficult, I do not try to learn it.	14	35	14	35	12	30	0	0	0	0

	Strongly disagree (n)	%	Disagree (n)	%	No option (n)	%	Agree (n)	%	Strongly agree (n)	%
1. I enjoy doing games and tasks in English in class.	3	7.5	9	22.5	3	7.5	22	55	3	7.5
2. I enjoy communicating with my classmates in English in class.	3	7.5	8	20	7	17.5	19	47.5	1	2.5
3. I want to be able to read English books and magazines with ease.	0	0	12	30	12	30	11	27.5	5	12.5
4. I want to be able to understand English movies and TV programs.	0	0	15	37.5	6	15	15	37.5	4	10
5. I enjoy singing English songs in class.	3	7.5	5	12.5	8	20	19	47.5	5	12.5

	Strongly disagree (n)	%	Disagree (n)	%	No option (n)	%	Agree (n)	%	Strongly agree (n)	%
1. I think that learning English is important because I can use it in my daily life.	2	5	3	7.5	0	0	18	45	17	42.5
2. I think that learning English is important because it stimulates my thinking.	1	2.5	3	7.5	2	5	29	72.5	5	12.5
3. In English, I think that it is important to learn to communicate with others.	0	0	1	2.5	8	20	22	55	9	22.5
4. In English, I think it is important to participate in oral activities.	2	5	0	0	5	12.5	26	65	7	17.5
5. It is important to have the opportunity to satisfy my own needs when learning English.	1	2.5	8	20	10	25	20	50	1	2.5

	Strongly disagree (n)	%	Disagree (n)	%	No option (n)	%	Agree (n)	%	Strongly agree (n)	%
1. I participate in English class to get a good grade.	0	0	4	10	2	5	22	55	12	30
2. I participate in English class to perform better than other students.	1	2.5	5	12.5	9	22.5	20	50	5	12.5
3. I participate in English class so that other students think that I'm smart.	2	5	16	40	16	40	6	15	0	0
4. I participate in English class so that the teacher pays attention to me.	9	22.5	10	25	10	25	10	25	1	2.5

	Strongly disagree (n)	%	Disagree (n)	%	No option (n)	%	Agree (n)	%	Strongly agree (n)	%
1. During English class, I feel most fulfilled when I attain a good score in a test.	1	2.5	6	15	6	15	22	55	5	12.5
2. I feel most fulfilled when I feel confident about the content in an English subject.	0	0	16	40	9	22.5	13	32.5	2	5
3. During English class, I feel most fulfilled when I am able to speak in front of many.	5	12.5	10	25	8	20	13	32.5	4	10
4. During English class, I feel most fulfilled when the teacher accepts my ideas.	1	2.5	4	10	8	20	25	62.5	2	5
5. During English class, I feel most fulfilled when other students accept my ideas.	3	7.5	3	7.5	7	17.5	24	60	3	7.5

The data were analyzed by means of frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, and standard deviation. The main findings show that the students are relatively "highly" motivated and found to be slightly more "instrumentally" motivated to learn English. This reveals that instrumental motivation is a significant factor among this group of students learning English. Based on this study's findings, some relevant and useful

motivational learning implications are recommended for enhancement and improvement of the students' motivation. Relevant language improvement programs and activities are also discussed in accordance with the students' language difficulties as communicated in the open-ended questions to increase their motivation in English language learning.

Conclusions

This study has shown that motivation is an essential part of language learning. It has been evaluated that students are capable of learning the English language upon assisted with extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Teachers must find ways on how to deal with students concerning the self-efficacy, and providing proper motivation that is applicable to students having individual differences. Instrumental motivation is a significant factor that has been relevant to the given respondents. Teachers must be fully equipped to the needs of students in order to give a purposeful motivation that would promote English language learning achievement.

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