

CHAPTER V: MOTIVATION

1. DEFINITION

At its most basic level, motivation is some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something. It is noteworthy that motivation is among the important psychological factors leading to success or failure in learning a language and those learners need to be motivated to be successful. Empirical studies indicate that highly motivated pupils learn faster and better than the ones who find the study of language distasteful.

2. THEORIES OF MOTIVATION

Various theories of motivation have been proposed over the course of decades of research, among them three different perspectives emerge:

1. From a behaviourist perspective, motivation is quite simply the anticipation of reward. Skinner, Pavlov, and Thorndike put motivation at the centre of their theories of human behaviour. In a behavioural view, performance in tasks – and motivation to do so – is likely to be at the mercy of external forces: parents, teachers, peers, educational requirements, job specifications, and so forth (Brown, 2007).
2. In cognitive terms, motivation places much more emphasis on the individual's decisions, 'the choice people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect' (Keller, 1983, p.389). Some cognitive psychologists see underlying needs or drives as the compelling force behind our decisions. Ausubel (1968, pp. 368-379), identifies six types of needs: the need for exploration, the need for manipulation, for movement and activity, for stimulation, for new knowledge, and finally for ego enhancement.
3. A constructivist view of motivation places even further emphasis on social contexts as well as individual personal choices (Williams & Burden, 1997, p.120). That is each person is motivated differently, and will therefore act on his or her environment in ways that are unique (Brown, 2007).

Marion Williams and Richard Burden suggest that motivation is a 'state of cognitive arousal' which provokes a 'decision to act' as a result of which there is 'sustained intellectual

and / previously set goal' (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 120). They go on to point out that the strength of that motivation will depend on how much value the individual places on the outcome he or she wishes to achieve.

3. MOTIVATION TYPES

In discussions of motivation, an accepted distinction is made between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. The former is caused by outside factors, for example, the need to pass an exam, the hope of financial reward, or the possibility of future travel. The latter, by contrast, comes from within the individual. Thus a person might be motivated by the enjoyment of the learning itself or by a desire to make himself feel better. Deci (1975), quoted in Brown says that:

Intrinsically motivated activities are those for which there is more apparent reward except the activity itself. People seem to engage in the activities for their own sake and not because they lead to an extrinsic reward.....intrinsically motivated behaviours are aimed at bringing about certain internally rewarding consequences namely, feelings of competence and self-motivation. (2000, p. 164)

Yule (2006) identifies two types of motivation for language learning; these are: 'instrumental', where the learners' goals are linked to utilitarian values such as achievement or vocational advantage; and 'integrative', where the learners' attitudes to the target language community extend to wishing to become accepted as members. The two concepts are a more specific restatement of the notions of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. He says:

Many learners have an instrumental motivation. That is, they want to learn the second language in order to achieve some other goal, such as completing a school graduation requirement or being able to read scientific publications, but not really for any social purpose. In contrast, those learners with an integrative motivation want to learn the second language for a social purpose, in order to take part in the social life of a community using the language and to become an accepted member of that community. (Yule 2006, pp. 167-168)

Learners are said to be *integratively motivated* if they intend to integrate themselves with not only the people who speak that language but with its culture as well. In other words, the learners' attitudes to the target language community extend to become accepted as members. Learners are said to be instrumentally motivated if they feel the desire to learn a language to

achieve a specific goal such as gaining social prestige, meeting an educational or business requirement, searching for a career... etc.

4. EFFECTS ON STUDENTS' MOTIVATION: EXPECTANCY X VALUE

As we have explained in this chapter, motivation is affected by several factors, including reinforcement for behavior, but especially also students' goals, interests, and sense of self-efficacy and self-determination. The factors combine to create two general sources of motivation:

- 1) students' expectation of success and;
- 2) the value that students place on a goal.

Viewing motivation in this way is often called **the expectancy-value model of motivation** (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002; Wigfield, Tonk, & Eccles, 2004), and sometimes written with a **multiplicative formula: expectancy x value = motivation**. The relationship between expectation and value is "multiplicative" rather than additive because in order to be motivated, it is necessary for a person to have at least a modest expectation of success and to assign a task at least some positive value. If you have high expectations of success but do not value a task at all (mentally assign it a "0" value), then you will not feel motivated at all. Likewise, if you value a task highly but have no expectation of success about completing it (assign it a "0" expectancy), then you also will not feel motivated at all.

Expectancies are the result of various factors, but particularly the goals held by a student, and the student's self-efficacy, which we discussed earlier in this chapter. A student with mastery goals and strong self-efficacy for a task, for example, is likely to hold high expectations for success—almost by definition. Values are also the result of various factors, but especially students' interests and feelings of self-determination. A student who has a lasting personal interest in a task or topic and is allowed to choose it freely is especially likely to value the task—and therefore to feel motivated.

Ideally both expectancies and values are high in students on any key learning task. The reality, however, is that students sometimes do not expect success, nor do they necessarily value it when success is possible. How can a teacher respond to low expectations and low valuing? We have offered a number of suggestions to meet this challenge throughout this chapter. In brief, raising low expectations depends on adjusting task difficulty so that success

becomes a reasonable prospect: a teacher must make tasks neither too hard nor too easy.

Reaching this

general goal depends in turn on thoughtful, appropriate planning—selecting reasonable objectives, adjusting them on the basis of experience, finding supportive materials, and providing students with help when needed.

Raising the value of academic tasks is equally important, but the general strategies for doing so are different than for raising expectations. Increasing value requires linking the task to students' personal interests and prior knowledge, showing the utility of the task to students' future goals, and showing that the task is valuable to other people whom students' respect.

5. TARGET: A MODEL FOR INTEGRATING IDEAS ABOUT MOTIVATION

A model of motivation that integrates many ideas about motivation, including those in this chapter, has been developed by Carole Ames (1990, 1992). The acronym or abbreviated name for the program is TARGET, which stands for six elements of effective motivation:

- **T**ask
- **A**uthority
- **R**ecognition
- **G**rouping
- **E**valuating
- **T**ime

Each of the elements contributes to students' motivation either directly or indirectly.

5.1. Task

As explained earlier, students experience tasks in terms of their value, their expectation of success, and their authenticity. The value of a task is assessed by its importance, interest to the student, usefulness or utility, and the cost in terms of effort and time to achieve it. Expectation of success is assessed by a student's perception of the difficulty of a task. Generally a middling level of difficulty is optimal for students; too easy, and the task seems trivial (not valuable or meaningful), and too hard, and the task seems unlikely to succeed and in this sense useless. Authenticity refers to how much a task relates to real-life experiences of

students; the more it does so, the more it can build on students' interests and goals, and the more meaningful and motivating it becomes.

5.2. Autonomy

Motivation is enhanced if students feel a degree of autonomy or responsibility for a learning task. Autonomy strengthens self-efficacy and self-determination.

Where possible, teachers can enhance autonomy by offering students' choices about assignments and by encouraging them to take initiative about their own learning.

5.3. Recognition

Teachers can support students' motivation by recognizing their achievements appropriately. Much depends, however, on how this is done; as discussed earlier, praise sometimes undermines performance. It is not especially effective if praise is very general and lacking in detailed reasons for the praise; or if praise is for qualities which a student cannot influence (like intelligence instead of effort); or if praise is offered so widely that it loses meaning or even becomes a signal that performance has been substandard.

5.4. Grouping

Motivation is affected by how students are grouped together for their work (“Instructional Strategies”). There are many ways to group students, but they tend to fall into three types: cooperative, competitive, and individualistic (Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

In cooperative learning, a set of students work together to achieve a common goal (for example, producing a group presentation for the class); often they receive a final grade, or part of a final grade, in common.

In competitive learning, students work individually, and their grades reflect comparisons among the students (for example, their performances are ranked relative to each other, or they are “graded on a curve”).

In individualistic learning, students work by themselves, but their grades are unrelated to the performance of classmates.

5.5. Evaluation

Grouping structures obviously affect how students' efforts are evaluated. A focus on comparing students, as happens with competitive structures, can distract students from thinking about the material to be learned, and to focus instead on how they appear to external

authorities; the question shifts from “What am I learning?” to “What will the teacher think about my performance?” A focus on cooperative learning, on the other hand, can have doubleedged effects: students are encouraged to help their group mates, but may also be tempted to rely excessively on others' efforts or alternatively to ignore each other's contributions and overspecialize their own contributions. Some compromise between cooperative and individualistic structures seems to create optimal motivation for learning (Slavin, 1995).

5.6. Time

As every teacher knows, students vary in the amount of time needed to learn almost any material or task. Accommodating the differences can be challenging, but also important for maximizing students' motivation. School days are often filled with interruptions and fixed intervals of time devoted to non-academic activities—facts that make it difficult to be flexible about granting individuals different amounts of time to complete academic tasks. Nonetheless a degree of flexibility is usually possible: larger blocks of time can sometimes be created for important activities (for example, writing an essay), and sometimes enrichment activities can be arranged for some students while others receive extra attention from the teacher on core or basic tasks.