

BACKGROUND TO LANGUAGE LEARNING AND FACTORS WHICH CAN INFLUENCE MOTIVATION

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the factors which can influence motivation while learning foreign languages, the ways of developing different strategies of a lesson and provides some tips for improving language learning. Also, it describes possible solutions for dealing with the anticipated problems.

Key words. motivation, culture, encouragement, the teacher, the classroom atmosphere, the task, rapport, self confidence, interest, autonomy, personal relevance, goal.

Motivation is the thoughts and feelings which make us want to and continue to want to do something and which turn our wishes into action and it is very important in language learning. It is one of the key factors that helps make language learning successful.

There are several different factors (things that influence) which can influence motivation. They include:

- The usefulness to us of knowing the language well. Many people want to learn a language because it can help them achieve practical things such as finding a (better) job, getting onto a course of study, getting good marks from the teacher, or booking hotel rooms.

- Our interest in the target language culture (the culture of the language we are learning). We might want to get really good at Russian, for example, so that we can read books by famous Russian authors, or understand the world which produced their great artists and composers. This is learning a language because of interest in culture with a capital C.I.E. high culture. Many people are also interested in culture with a small c. They want to learn Japanese, for example, so they can understand Manga comics better, or learn English to read about their favourite celebrities. We may also be interested in the target culture because we actually want to become part of that culture, perhaps because we are moving to the country. In this case we might be

interested in aspects of the country's customs and lifestyle, and see the target language as a key to understanding and becoming part of that culture.

- Feeling good about learning the language. If we are successful at something that success makes us want to continue doing it and achieve greater things. Managing a to communicate in a foreign language can make us want to communicate more and better. Confidence (feeling that we can do things successfully, learner autonomy/independence (feeling responsible for and in control of our own learning) and a sense of achievement being successful at something we have worked an are all part of feeling good about learning a language. If we think we are good at something we want to do it.

- Encouragement and support from others. We may live in a country or family or go to a school where learning a foreign language is highly valued and much encouraged. This helps us to realise the importance of the foreign language and gives us emotional support as we learn. People who live in a country where people can't see the point of learning a foreign language may have little motivation to learn a foreign language.

- Wishing to communicate fully with people who matter to you. People may have friends, boy or girlfriends, business partners, etc. Who speak another language. They want to develop their relationship with them. This is a strong motivation to learn a language.

- Our interest in the learning process. Sometimes we want to learn a foreign language simply because we enjoy our language class; we like the teacher, how he/she teaches, the classroom activities, the coursebook or maybe the topics the class deals with. All these are factors related to learning itself, which come from the classroom.

We can see that there are different kinds of motivation. Some come from inside the learner and some come from the learner's environment.

Learners may differ in their motivations; some may have strong motivation of one kind but little of another, other learners' motivation may be a mixture of kinds. There are also learners, of course, who are unmotivated, i.e. Who have no motivation or are demotivated, i.e. They have lost their motivation. And motivation can change, too. A learner may, for example, be quite uninterested in learning a particular language, then meet a teacher who helps them love learning the language. Motivation can change with age, too, with some factors becoming more or less important as learners get older.

Two researchers in motivation, Z. Dörnyei and K. Csizér, have suggested there are ten key areas in which the teacher can influence learners' motivation, and have provided a list of strategies for motivating learners in these areas.

Read the strategies and tick the ones which are most important for you.

The teacher	1 Show a good example by being committed and motivated 2 Try to behave naturally 3 Be as sensitive and accepting as you can 4 create a pleasant, calm, secure and ordered atmosphere in the classroom
The Classroom atmosphere	4 Create a pleasant, calm, secure and ordered atmosphere in the classroom 5 Bring in humour and laughter, and smile
The task	6 Give clear instructions 7 Point out the purpose and usefulness of
Rapport	8 Treat each learner as an individual
Self confidence	9 Give positive feedback and praise 10 Make sure your students experience success 11 Accept mistakes- they are a natural part of learning
Interest	12 Select interesting tasks and topics 13 Offer a variety of materials and activities 14 Make tasks challenging to involve your students 15 Use learners' Interests rather than tests or grades, to encourage learning
Autonomy	16 Encourage creative and imaginative ideas 17 Encourage questions and other contributions from students 18 Share as much responsibility for organising the learning process with your students as possible
Personal relevance	19 Try and personalise tasks to make them relevant
Goal/Target (aim for learners or teachers)	20 Set up several specific learning goals for the learners 21 Encourage the learners to set goals and work towards them 22 Do a needs analysis of the learners' goals and needs.
Culture	23 Make learners familiar with the cultural background of the language 24 Invite native speakers to some classes 25 Find penfriends for your learners

Some of these strategies will work better in some learning contexts than others. For example, with young learners. it can be very helpful to give praise and positive feedback as well as bring examples of the culture into the classroom. Some classes may love games and competition while others may react badly to them. The teacher can choose from the list the strategies for motivating students that are likely to work best for their learners in their learning context.

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