REVISTA ESPACIOS

Methods for Boosting the Positive Motivation of Students as Part of Providing University Instruction in the English Language

Métodos para impulsar positivamente la motivación de los estudiantes para proporcionar instrucción universitaria en inglés

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Content

ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the methods for boosting the positive motivation of students in teaching a foreign language (English) in university. The authors employ problem-based learning and questionnaire-based surveying as their primary research methods intended to help boost student motivation for learning a foreign language (English) and subsequently evaluate the outcomes. The paper defines the concepts of motivation and positive motivation and provides a detailed characterization of the system of motivating the learning of a foreign language. As a consequence of this research study, the authors identify some of the key factors shaping positive student motivation for learning a foreign language (English) and bring forward a set of methods for learning and teaching foreign language material that may best motivate students to engage actively in learning and cognitive activity. The paper experimentally substantiates the motivational efficiency of problem-

RESUMEN:

El propósito de este trabajo es examinar algunos de los métodos para impulsar la motivación positiva de los estudiantes en la enseñanza de un idioma extranjero (Inglés) en la Universidad. Los autores emplean el aprendizaje basado en problemas y la topografía basada en cuestionarios como sus principales métodos de investigación destinados a ayudar a impulsar la motivación estudiantil para aprender un idioma extranjero (Inglés) y posteriormente evaluar los resultados. El documento define los conceptos de motivación y motivación positiva y proporciona una caracterización detallada del sistema de motivación del aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera. Como consecuencia de este estudio de investigación, los autores identifican algunos de los factores clave que dan forma a la motivación estudiantil positiva para aprender un idioma extranjero (Inglés) y promueven un conjunto de métodos para aprender y enseñar material de lengua extranjera que mejor motive a los

based learning as a stimulus for the mental activity of students learning a foreign language and provides an insight into the potential of play-based technology intended to help connect motivational factors with speech practice.

Keywords: motivation; motive; positive motivation; motivational factors; student; teacher, instructor; cultivating positive motivation

estudiantes a participar activamente en el aprendizaje y la actividad cognitiva. El documento fundamenta experimentalmente la eficiencia motivacional del aprendizaje basado en problemas como un estímulo para la actividad mental de los estudiantes que aprenden un idioma extranjero y proporciona una visión del potencial de la tecnología basada en el juego para ayudar a conectar los factores motivacionales con la práctica del habla.

Palabras Clave: motivación; motivo; motivación positiva; factores motivacionales; estudiante; Maestro, instructor; cultivar la motivación positiva

1. Introduction

The need to learn a foreign language in an efficient way is determined by the social order placed by society, business relations with other countries, and social-economic transformations. In this regard, there increases the need for individuals with a solid command of a foreign language who are capable of interacting with foreign partners (Gotlib, 2009).

Right now, there is an active search being undertaken to find new ways of boosting the efficiency of learning and come up with theoretical and methodological material that would enable galvanizing student learning and cultivating student creativity and self-reliance. A major objective is to cultivate in students sustainable cognitive interests that will serve as motives for learning.

Central to the study of human behavior and analysis of people's needs and motives that lead to specific actions is motivation. Researchers construe the term 'motivation' differently: some suggest that motivation is a system of factors urging you to perform a certain action (Ilin, 2003), while others deem it to be the stimulation of a person (a student, worker, or any doer) aimed at achieving a goal (Zanyuk, 2002). The pedagogical encyclopedia defines 'motivation' as a system of motives or stimuli (impetuses) for human behavior and activity (Kairov & Petrov, 1965).

P.M. Yakobson views motivation to learn, on the one hand, as the result of processing a set of influences the learner receives from within the family and social domains and, on the other hand, as one's attitude toward these influences associated with the characteristics of one's mindset, desires, and interests. The researcher identifies 3 types of motivation for learning: negative motivation (arises in students who understand that there may arise certain problems if they do not study, like being continually reminded, reprimanded, and threatened by instructors and parents); motivation that is outside of one's actual educational activity (students' moral and social motives; their desire to attain personal well-being); motivation that is laid down in educational activity (an aspiration to learn new things and overcome difficulties of an intellectual nature). The scholar is convinced that negative motivation for learning does not lead to successful results (Yakobson, 1969).

American psychologist J.S. Bruner maintains that "interest in the material to be learned is the best stimulus to learning". Whilst, if the student performs an assignment that does not arouse his interest, his learning activity does not have a corresponding motive. However, there may be other motives like a desire to achieve success or a willingness to finish a boring assignment as soon as possible. During the process of learning a foreign language, motivation will be cultivated efficiently only when the subject of learning activity is engaged in the process most actively (Bruner, 1962).

N.V. Kostyuk suggests that any activity by people is always poly-motivated, i.e. it is governed and encouraged by various motives. The hierarchy of these motives evolves through the process of one's development in quite an unregulated fashion under the influence of various external and internal factors (Kostyuk, 2005).

Based on her research on motives for learning, scholar E.V. Karpova brings forward 4 groups of

motives:

1) motives of achievement, which govern activity aimed at achieving robust activity outcomes and satisfied through the realization of the successfulness of one's activity;

2) cognitive motives, which beget activity aimed at obtaining new knowledge and gaining an insight into certain phenomena and whose actualization is associated with the realization of the feeling of satisfaction from discovering something new that was not known to the person before;

3) educational motives, which facilitate activity aimed at enhancing existing ways of learning. The motive is satisfied through the awareness of that the new ways of learning have been already assimilated;

4) educational-professional motives, which beget activity aimed at cultivating in one the qualities needed for one's future professional career (Karpova, 2012).

V.G. Aseev differentiates between negative and positive motivation, suggesting that motivation is associated with a person's emotions and cannot exist outside of the emotional sphere. Furthermore, into the concept of motivation the researcher incorporates urges, motives, needs, interests, goals, motivational mindsets, etc. (Aseev, 1976). S.S. Zanyuk has, likewise, suggested the existence of positive and negative motivation. The scholar construes negative motivation as "an urge that can be aroused by one's awareness of the possibility of certain inconveniences and punishments that may occur in the event of failure to perform an activity. Forefeeling trouble and punishment is what stimulates one to activity when there is negative motivation at play" (Zanyuk, 2002, p. 132).

Researchers have pointed out that it can be possible to develop positive motivation provided the following principles are actualized in the educational process: learning being professionalized; the content, forms, and methods of learning being problem-based; the learning and cognitive activity being of a creative nature; learning being dialogue-based (Agapova & Aisner, 2011, p. 58).

I.V. Soloveva regards as the primary condition for the development of positive motivation for learning specially organized educational activity that is capable of influencing the motivation sphere of the subject of learning and will be built based on a personal-activity approach. To this end, the organization of learning the English language ought to be grounded in the use of a personal-activity approach, while the educational process ought to be built factoring in as much as possible the student's past experience and his individual and age characteristics and organized as the subject's educational activity the object whereof is speech activity (Soloveva, 2010).

To be able to form and develop positive motivation for learning, it is worth fostering in students an idea of what they are going to do professionally and a clear awareness of the actual potential end result of their learning and putting in place a well-developed system of learning actions, which act as a condition for both the formation and development of cognitive motives for learning.

One of the objectives facing foreign language instructors, per Z.R. Lazareva, is "the cultivation of psychologically comfortable and situationally adequate conditions for pedagogical communication with students" (Lazareva, 2014, p. 70). This is why friendly relations between students in a group and those between instructors and students are a crucial factor in the formation of positive motivation for learning a foreign language. To attain this objective, the instructor ought to have a solid command of the basics of psychology and pedagogy and have the ability to analyze pedagogical situations, for this is a major factor in the formation of motivation and efficiency of learning.

V.F. Basharin suggests that the activeness of students in class ought not to be overlooked by the instructor. It can be rewarded in various ways: through oral and written approval and good grades. Many students believe that a good grade, a compliment, and a friendly attitude on the

part of the instructor are perfectly facilitative of the formation of motivation for learning a foreign language. Thus, instructors ought to keep in mind that student activeness in class should not be overlooked (Basharin, 1984).

2. Methods

Based on many years' experience summarized in multiple publications and substantiated by open classes, the use of a problem-based method appears to be the most efficient way to optimally organize students' learning and cognitive activity in foreign language class (Chambers, 1999; Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

Problem-based learning is grounded in the system of questions (problems), to which students do not have a ready answer. They are forced to look for a solution on their own, which creates a problem situation. It is during the process of solving problems that students receive, discover, and master new knowledge. There is a need for a system of questions that would require strenuous thinking and independent effort to solve problems. Students are expected to mobilize their knowledge acquired earlier, recalling things and trying to come up with relevant proof.

A major and crucial precondition for the successful performance of learning actions is having a solid command of language material. Cultivating language competence is a crucial component of the learning process. That said, it is commonly known that mastering the grammar of a foreign language is a matter of great difficulty for non-language college students to deal with. The manner in which grammar rules are explained in textbooks is, normally, too drawn-out and complex, which results in lack of interest among non-language students and makes it hard to ensure positive motivation among students majoring in an engineering field.

The use of sets of problem-based assignments to help foster language competence makes it interesting for students to study grammar and learn grammar rules which is truly, one of the more tedious aspects of learning a language (E. Pavlyuk & L. Pavlyuk, 2016).

A significant reserve for boosting the efficiency of classes is turning to the technical mindset of students majoring in an engineering field. Having given up on prolix explanations of grammar and adopted ways of codifying information commonly employed in the exact sciences, certain scholars have made a wide use of formula-like notation for grammar rules and a method of templates and models (Zamotina & Krekhtunova, 2015).

In developing the abilities related to solving reading-based communication problems (extracting information from a text and conceptualizing it subsequently), problem-based assignments most completely match the principles of communication-oriented learning. In essence, the very form of presenting language or speech material – the question – makes a problem-based methodology communicative.

Speech exercises dealing with reading specifically ought to be of professionally significant, and at the same time creative, nature and urge one to strive for the maximum exertion of one's thinking capacity when reading (motivating to engage in creative activity in class). Interest in performing these assignments largely depends on the way problems are framed and formulated and their novelty and professional significance. Such problems are a crucial motivating factor that enables the instructor to successfully manage the cognitive activity of students. It is during the process of performing problem-based assignments that students acquire and assimilate new knowledge. They derive intellectual pleasure from overcoming difficulties, which has positive effect in terms of cultivating sustainable cognitive interests. It is problems that require independent thinking and solving that have robust motivational potential.

Problem-based learning presupposes the mandatory engagement of the entire audience in solving a problem. There is no working with just one student: the traditional correcting of mistakes is replaced by engaging the whole group in resolving the issue. There are 2 major factors crucial to robust teamwork: 1) the competition factor (who is better? who is faster?) and 2) the time factor (the mandatory tracking and limiting of time given to students for solving a problem). These factors are known to galvanize students for maximum performance

in a problem situation. An intense regimen under which the students have to work will keep them from getting bored and "clock-watching".

By developing the thinking ability, attention, and memory of students as subjects of educational activity, the proposed technology may help cultivate their motivation, develop their ability to independently enhance their command of the foreign language, foster a commitment to ongoing self-education, and nurture a willingness to achieve success as a professional.

The instructor ought to possess a considerable arsenal of techniques for varying the classes and employing additional resources to supplement the main textbook or educational package.

Significant potential in this regard is offered by play. Play helps keep the whole group interested in educational activity, helps the instructor put together situations in which speech acts as a means, and enables you to take part in all kinds of activity in order to better understand others or get some information across. Properly selected games can be employed to help reinforce certain elements of vocabulary or grammar. Many games presuppose employing language structures as intensively as regular training exercises do, ensuring that a specific language form is used over again. In the end, the main purpose of play is to enable a person to shift to fluent communication.

If we are to stick to the viewpoint that play can ensure intensive and sufficient language practice, then it is worthy of a special place in the repertoire of any instructor.

It is up to the instructor to decide which games will match the group's level of language preparation or interest and where and what kind of play will be most efficient. Play will be a highly efficient means of learning if it gets the group interested and if the volume of language aids and the extent of their use will be sufficient for its conduct. A good instructor always keeps in mind that the key to successful learning is motivation. It is clear that motivation is largely governed by the characteristics of the actual subject of learning, while a degree of positive or negative influence can also come from a set of external factors, like successful or unsuccessful rewarding. A major distinctive characteristic of play is motivating speech activity to attain a specific goal via the language. To attain this goal, it is required that participants in the communication process interact with each other, i.e. listen and talk to each other. Play stimulates interest, as a crucial factor in educational activity, ensuring an effective combination of motivation and the possibility of undergoing speech practice.

3. Results

The work on implementing problem-based learning was organized in the English class of 40 second-year students majoring in a non-language field, with a view to gauging their level of positive motivation for learning a foreign language prior to the start of the work and after its completion.

The results of observations of the activity of students and conversations with them conducted as part of the study revealed that the methodological support employed proved to be psychologically comfortable and facilitative of boosts in positive motivation for learning English.

The results from the questionnaire survey aimed at revealing student motivation for learning the English language are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Results from a Questionnaire Survey Intended to Provide an Insight into Student Motivation for Learning English

		Scale of interest, % of the sample	Scale of importance, % of the sample
	1	0	0

prior to the implementation of problem-based learning	2	10	0
	3	15	20
	4	50	55
	5	25	25
following the implementation of problem-based learning	1	0	0
	2	0	0
	3	5	0
	4	35	15
	5	60	85

Note. '1' corresponds to the minimum value ('not interested at all', 'not important at all'), and '5' corresponds to the maximum value ('really interested', 'really important').

The findings of the survey of students conducted before and after the work on implementing problem-based learning using supportive signals and a play-based method of learning indicated significant dynamics both in interest in (temp = 3.725; p<0.01) and in the assessment of the usefulness (temp = 3.134; p<0.01) of employing problem-based learning and play-based technology in university.

Thus, the authors were able to see for themselves in practice the significance of play in learning a foreign language. By ensuring a high level of motivation via boosts in student interest in school and creating an atmosphere of emotional comfort, play enables a quick shift to communication activity proper in learning oral communication.

4. Discussion of results

An analysis of relevant research reveals that stimulating student motivation for learning a foreign language within a polycultural space is conducive to a whole array of urges, like the need to know a foreign language for one's future career, an interest in other countries of the world and their culture, and an aspiration for self-actualization and self-assertion as a competent specialist (Pourfeiz, 2016).

Some scholars also believe that motivation is determined by a single motive or a single system of motives, which form a special sphere based on one's interests, needs, and objectives interrelated and interacting with each other. In learning a foreign language, one may need to make sure to differentiate between the following concepts and define them as clearly as possible:

the motive – why the student is learning the foreign language; what urges the person to do it (travelling overseas, getting to know Western culture, communicating with foreigners, etc.);

the goal – the desired outcome for which the student is aspiring (being able to move about overseas without the help of a translator/interpreter, read original Western literature, communicate fluently in the foreign language, which can be helpful in terms of the ability to "bridge" conversations, etc.).

When it comes to the educational process overseen by foreign language instructors, it is often worth using the concept of one's motivation sphere, which encompasses the entire aggregate of

motivation units inherent to the student: goals and needs, dispositions, interests, etc. The motivation sphere is at the core of the student's personality and it must be laid down as early as possible (starting at school age or during the first year in university) and develop throughout the educational process in learning a foreign language.

The success of cultivating one's motivation sphere during the process of learning a foreign language depends, on the one hand, on the degree of dialogicity in and one's awareness of the purport of learning a foreign language and how well one adopts a subject-reflexive attitude toward the actual learning process. On the other hand, the motivation sphere may be regarded as a subsystem of a personality, in which case it will be comprised of sustainable latent units: being oriented toward a fluent command of a foreign language, an interest in getting to know a different culture, motivation mindsets, a willingness to travel, etc. When you systematically cultivate a person's motivation sphere during the process of learning a foreign language, you actually develop the person's very personality. Thus, the instructor's pedagogical objective is to cultivate an interest in a foreign culture and develop fluent communication skills and habits that are typical of the society whose speech patterns are being learned.

The student's educational motivation for learning a foreign language is determined by a set of specific factors:

- the very system of education or institution of higher learning where the student is undertaking his educational activity;

- the organization of the entire process of learning the foreign language;

- factoring in the personal characteristics of the student (one's age and gender, intellectual and communication abilities, mental development level, ability to form a self-appraisal, ability to engage in joint activity with other students, and ability to engage in teamwork);

- factoring in the personal characteristics of the foreign language instructor (one's attitude toward students and one's job);

- factoring in the specific characteristics of the foreign language itself (grammar characteristics, idioms, etc.) (Kasatkina, 2003).

Motivation for any kind of learning is systematic and is stimulated based on a hierarchy of educational motives which in science are divided into several groups: social (one's desire to assert oneself in society thanks to learning); impelling (the influence of certain subjects on one's consciousness); cognitive (arousing an interest in cognizing things); professional-value (one's aspiration to acquire a certain profession); mercantile (reflecting one's mercenary side).

Motivation for learning a foreign language is, likewise, systematic, with stimulating aspects of its own, which could be considered from the standpoint of learning the actual language:

- social: students with a fluent command of a foreign language aspiring, thanks to learning and their intellectual abilities, for self-actualization and self-assertion in society or the group they are part of;

- impelling: influence on the part of instructors, fellow students, and society as a whole the student gets exposed to in learning a foreign language;

- cognitive: arousing in the student an interest in learning and getting him to derive pleasure from engaging in the actual cognitive process and achieving particular results, which makes cognitive student activity highly significant to the process of learning a foreign language. This is why a dominant factor for the success of cognitive learning is cultivating in students certain cognitive motives (getting to know a foreign culture, learning about certain rites and customs followed in foreign countries whose language the student is learning, etc.) (Kasatkina, 2003);

- professional-value: students aspiring to acquire a certain profession (a foreign language instructor, translator, diplomat, etc.). If a foreign language is not what the student is majoring in, he could be motivated to learn it, from a professional standpoint, by the potential ability to communicate fluently with foreigners about something from his professional field without the

help of a translator;

- mercantile: associated with material gain, with it being no secret in the 21st century that knowledge of a foreign language is one of the most dominant factors determining the size of one's paycheck. But these motives are not deciding ones, their effect being limited and much depending on the psychological characteristics of every student individually (Harvey, 2017).

Methods that develop positive motivation for learning a foreign language are, above all, methods that galvanize the actual learning process: group work, discussions (dialogical speech), enacting and analyzing certain realistic situations, designing and presenting work, etc. Among this kind of methods employed by present-day instructors, including those teaching foreign languages, are cooperative learning and proactive learning, where the focus is not on the existing but the highest level a student can possibly achieve learning a foreign language. Here it, obviously, is worth factoring in the development of one's personality itself. Proactive learning stimulates students to display leadership qualities, which help them assert themselves in society in the future and minimizes hesitation in communicating in a foreign language (Efremov, 2012). Cooperative learning is predicated on working in pairs or in small groups, where students perform various assignments of an exploratory nature: roleplay and simulation exercises, educational design, and discussions. Cooperative learning lets you keep track of the way students reciprocate (Bruffee, 1995).

5. Conclusion

Motivation has a direct effect on the process of learning a foreign language. The student's motives that form in learning a foreign language are central to the development of a competent person, no matter what field is pursued for a future career path. Positive motives are significant to the formation of students' personal qualities during the process of educational activity.

Among the key factors in learning foreign languages and cultivating a motivation for learning them are the relationships between students and instructors within the group; instructors' knowledge of the subject and love of the subject; the degree to which one's knowledge is deepened; the degree to which one is willing to acquire new knowledge on the subject being studied; the degree to which cognitive activity is organized at an accessible level; whether or not there is a diversity of forms and types of cognitive activity; whether or not existing knowledge is supplemented; whether or not students get along in class; the degree to which students' notions about the outside world are expanded via a foreign language; the degree to which the process of learning a foreign language is oriented professionally, the degree to which efficient student performance is rewarded via approval, a good grade, etc., the degree to which play is used as part of learning activity, and the degree to which the latest technical means are employed.

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