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Where Motivation and Learning Meet: Bringing Key Concepts, Research Insights, and Effective Practices Together into the Language Classroom

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Preface

“My English students are not motivated enough” is a widespread comment from English teachers worldwide, especially in higher-level education. I have even said that myself on many occasions. This concern has guided researchers, teachers, and specialists linked to English language teaching to research motivation in our field. The study of language learning motivation has a well-known history. As we can see in this work, it goes from Gardner in the early ‘60s to Dörnyei, Murray, and Gao in the mid-2000.

This book takes readers from the theoretical stands on motivation in English language teaching (ELT) with a reflective approach to the practical issues that will help teachers to promote motivation in the English language classroom. Conceptions, views, and implications on motivation from 14 collaborators are presented from a theoretical review, research results, and analytical takes on concepts like attitude, demotivation, and other key factors influencing the ELT field.

The variety and experiences of the writers of this book will give you several perspectives on how motivation is conceived and applied in the ELT classroom from the teacher’s and the student’s points of view. Seven professors, one computer science specialist, two students and four university graduates from different institutions of higher education of Ecuador actively participated in writing this piece of remarkable work. This book will guide all English language practitioners who would like to know more about the power of motivation and how they could promote it; and for students who want to be engaged in their English learning process.

I do believe that the theoretical discussions carried out in this book present thorough revisions of pertinent resources from the ELT field. The key terms are introduced to clarify the path to understanding motivation. The analysis of the different factors that motivate or demotivate language learners is up to date. The first three chapters are devoted to approaching the theoretical foundation of motivation. The reader will find a fascinating dynamic between teachers and students reflecting and collaborating to bring this book to light.

Although motivation is tackled throughout the chapters, there are some other concepts, such as self-esteem, attitude, and self-reflection, within the language learners that are highlighted in every chapter. Also, those concepts linked to motivation

are integrated with the English teaching method to demonstrate a natural path to enhancing motivation in the ELT classroom. It is important to say that most of the information here has been analyzed in the light of the educational university levels, which has a crucial relevance in the Ecuadorian context.

In different chapters, there are meaningful insights into effective teaching approaches, methods, strategies, and techniques to promote motivation in the EFL university classroom. I firmly believe that all of them will have significant impact on English teaching and learning in these post-pandemic times. The highlighted meaningful, effective practices will help to create motivation for successful language learning, which is of high importance among language teachers these days.

This book is unique because it begins with its reviews on motivation within the Ecuadorian English teaching-learning context. It seeks to acknowledge a recent remarkable growth of interest in motivation in the Ecuadorian English language teaching field. This interest is primarily shaped by local educational and pedagogical success rather than by the purely understanding of a motivational theory. It brings together writers' perspectives on motivation who are both practitioners and researchers. Finally, this work will determine that contextually grounded and locally produced insights, questions, and understandings about motivation can have a broader global meaning, and it can mirror the experiences and concerns of ELT practitioners around the world.

By Mahly Jahzeel Martínez Jiménez, Ph.D.

Introduction

Motivation ignites learners' willingness to improve their abilities in areas of their interest, as it originates from a person's desires, needs, and inner drives. Therefore, it is a pivotal determinant when engaging in any learning process. Within the context of second or foreign language learning, fostering and maintaining motivation by means of internal or external factors will inspire learners to set in motion to accomplish their language learning goals.

At the classroom level, foreign language practitioners need to be aware of what factors are essential to promote student motivation towards effective language learning. In addition, it is imperative for practitioners or instructors to make informed decisions based on key theoretical factors and study results related to motivation in English language acquisition. In doing so, English language learners will be more likely to engage in meaningful learning experiences, which will help them to use the target language for different purposes, both in the classroom and more importantly in the world beyond the school's walls.

It is imperative to point out that this book has a threefold purpose, as it will be seen in the below descriptions of the five chapters. First and foremost, a review of the relevant literature on motivation in the field of education and, particularly, in foreign language learning is provided. Secondly, key study results of the project, entitled *Factors that motivate English learning of university students in Ecuador: Researching the perspectives of different educational stakeholders*, are disseminated, in conjunction with its adopted paradigm and research methodology. Thirdly, helpful techniques and strategies are put forward for an effective teaching of the English language, where motivation is the primary crosscutting point.

Chapter I lays the groundwork and key issues related to motivation. It defines what motivation means, as well as the key elements that have an impact on it, such as: the teacher, the teaching methods, the content, the learning environment, and the student himself. It also delves deeper into the sources of internal and external motivation and the benefits that each of them has on learning. This chapter also presents the characteristics that a learning environment must have to be motivating and exposes the importance of creating this type of environment for students.

Although the general concept of motivation works in a very similar way at different levels of education, there are certain particular aspects that need to be taken into account when teaching at higher levels (university students) due to the specific needs and goals present at this level; hence this chapter concludes by examining those aspects that are specifically relevant to motivation at this level of education.

Chapter II brings forward the different factors that are the base for motivation including cognitive elements associated with attention that predict university students' academic performance. The chapter also analyzes learners' attitudes towards a language and anything related to it that may have an impact on their motivation to learn that language. In this sense, based on previous studies, the information discussed in this chapter sheds light on how the learning of English as a foreign language in university students was influenced by the attitudes of the learners in foreign contexts such as Indonesia, Turkey, and China. Motivation is also addressed in depth as the central topic of the chapter. In this regard, the different types of motivation including intrinsic, extrinsic, social and transcendent motivation are explained, as well as the cognitive characteristics that underlie the relationship between brain's executive functions and motivation. The chapter closes with literature related to motivation in language learning and teaching, student motivation, and the significant role that motivation plays in foreign language learning in college.

Chapter III highlights key information concerning the development of a research project on student motivation in English learning within Ecuadorian higher education. In this sense, a brief account is first given pertaining to planning and conducting a small-scale survey study focused on the aforementioned topic at three universities only. The account provides critical details related to the small survey study, as it laid the foundation for a large-scale inter-university research project directed by mixed methods. The large-scale research project was conducted in over 20 Ecuadorian universities, and it aimed at determining the main factors that motivated undergraduate students to learn English while they pursue their studies. Secondly, the project further explored the quantitative results through a qualitative phase, consisting of focus group discussions (FGDs) and individual in-depth interviews. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods helped to gain an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the essential factors that affect English students' motivation at the university level. The research-based findings

could be helpful for different stakeholders to make effective, informed decisions that boost student motivation toward successful English learning at institutions of higher Education in Ecuador and beyond.

Chapter IV provides key information about innovative EFL learning and teaching approaches. The first part of the chapter puts forward some innovations in education and in the field of teaching foreign languages. Its second section outlines the postmethod as an important innovative pedagogy in the last few decades. Moreover, suggested macro and micro strategies are highlighted towards the end of the chapter. Consequently, foreign language instructors can be equipped with the necessary tools to design and deliver effective language instruction under the teaching principles of practicality, particularity, and possibility. This sought to help promote classroom instruction where innovation and motivation are at the center.

Finally, considering that foreign language teachers ought to create conditions to motivate learners to learn the target language, chapter V proposes a set of twenty one techniques and strategies that may be useful to foster effective language learning among English students inside and outside the classroom. The group of techniques and strategies suggested in this chapter have, in some cases, been examined in research studies while others have been selected considering the results obtained through their constant use in foreign language classes. More importantly, this chapter contains a methodological guide with the procedures on how to implement many different helpful didactic strategies and techniques to better promote student motivation towards English language learning.

Chapter I

Motivation in Education: The Road to Successful Learning

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Introduction

In the current context of globalization and the rise of communication and information technologies, education requires new and better teaching strategies and teachers who become managers of the teaching-learning processes. It allows the integral development of students so that they are not only accumulators of knowledge but autonomous learners (Vásquez, 2010). For that reason, teaching professionals are in charge of various functions; the planning of teaching, the teaching of learning, and creating a favorable environment, with motivation being the main factor (Cáceres et al., 2021).

Motivation refers to those external and internal factors that influence or move a person to specific actions (Rosales, 2011). As Sánchez Franyuti (2000) stated, motivation is the behavior that originates from the relationship between needs - desires - stimuli. According to Núñez and Alonso (2014), motivation is based on three aspects: first, the intention to carry out the activity; second, having the physical or mental capacity to develop the action; and third, the will and effort that the person applies in the completion of the activity. Desire is a fundamental factor in the process since it is abstract and develops internally to create a favorable position to acquire new knowledge (Núñez & Alonso, 2014). In education, motivation involves the interest in improving the student's desire to learn (Cáceres et al., 2021). There are factors or events that act as stimuli and encourage the student to show interest

in what the teacher explains, participate actively in class, want to get involved in the subject, and investigate. All of this is a horizontal construction of knowledge between student and teacher.

The teachers play an essential role in the motivation process; their permanent contact with the students allows them to develop motivational strategies based on the relationships created with them by knowing their preferences, tastes, and the environment in which they operate. Thus, what the teacher needs to do is to ensure that motivation arises from themselves so that students can develop a taste for learning (Tünnermann, 2011). In this motivational framework, it is crucial to promote constructive and meaningful learning, in which the student is considered an active part of the teaching-learning process. Students can also be motivated by a horizontal and not vertical relationship, in which they feel free to contribute their knowledge regardless of whether it is right or wrong because they trust the teacher and the teacher shows a receptive attitude.

The educational relationship is a vital factor in motivation, starting from appreciating the students and understanding their existence and context, instead of seeing them as entities inside the classroom that need to be filled with repeated knowledge and without criteria. This way, the teaching-learning process is always carried out in an environment of respect and dialogue. To be effective, it is crucial that the teachers recognize students' efforts, congratulate their achievements, and motivate them to solve increasingly challenging activities, showing high expectations for them. This helps to build teacher-student trust, which translates into efficiency (García, 2016). Students who have learned to identify the causes of their achievements or failures, are able to create their path to success, which is undoubtedly one of the main objectives of education.

Key elements of motivation

Several elements or components are required to motivate students, which are the following: student, teacher, content, method, and environment (D'Souza & Maheshwari, 2010). All these elements have a special impact on student motivation, which is explained below:

Student

Students play a fundamental role in developing their motivation because they are the main protagonists of their educational transformation. Students have their learning styles, backgrounds, and interests; therefore, they also have a distinct motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Wood, 2019). Learning motivation may depend on someone's life plan, including long-term goals, professional objectives, needs, habits, and what is perceived as success or well-being (Dresel & Hall, 2013). For that reason, students need to be exposed to learning processes that allow them to develop their instructional plan and various strategies and systems that work well for them individually, motivate them, and build their learning successfully.

Teacher

The students tend to feel more motivated by teachers they like than by those they do not like (Hassan, 2014). This motivation is not based only on their personality or compatibility with students, but also on their knowledge of the subject, their teaching and assessment skills, and their teacher qualifications (D'Souza & Maheshwari, 2010). To truly motivate their students, teachers need to be empathetic and accessible, adopt the role of facilitator rather than authority, provide support for those students who need it, sincerely care about their students, promote student autonomy in the learning process, encourage collaboration among peers, and finally, create positive interactions with their students (Afzal et al. 2010).

Content

This is also a fundamental element of motivation. The content needs to be relevant, useful, timely, attractive, and accurate to be effective. It succeeds in motivating students when it allows them to feel capable, competent, and in control of their learning process; encourages creativity and critical thinking; helps them feel connected and interested in the topic; develops their skills and abilities; and promotes their curiosity (Gibbens, 2019; Simmons & Page, 2010).

Method / Process

How the content is presented in a class; that is, the strategies and the teaching process can be decisive in a student's motivation. The methodology for teaching and assessment needs to be innovative, interesting, flexible, and adaptable to the needs and circumstances of the students to ensure motivation. It needs to allow students to learn not only in a theoretical but also in an experiential way; promote a positive social interaction; guide and provide feedback; and evaluate the process and progress rather than the outcome (Dörnyei, & Ushioda, 2009; Filgona et al., 2020).

Environment

A motivating environment will be the one in which the students feel safe and comfortable learning even from their mistakes without fear or shame. Students need to feel that the class is academically productive and challenging; structured and organized, but at the same time, flexible to give students options according to their needs and interests; encourages teamwork; fosters respect for others, encourages students to actively participate in class without hesitation, and promotes cohesion and genuine interest and concern for one another in the classroom (Daniels, 2010; Gibbens, 2019).

These five elements - students, teachers, content, methodology, and environment - are fundamental in developing motivation. Each must meet the criteria above to achieve a successful teaching-learning process.

Sources of motivation

There are two sources of motivation depending on the goal a person wants to achieve: an internal or an external reward. If the motivation - reward or punishment - comes from outside the individual, the motivation is considered *extrinsic*. It usually occurs that, when this external incentive is no longer present, the motivation to learn will also disappear, and the person will stop doing that activity (Ghanea et al., 2011). There are also external reasons for a person to learn, such as: passing an exam, passing a

class, getting a job, enrolling in a university or institution, or meeting a requirement. An example of extrinsic motivation would be when a student participates in a project not because he enjoys it but because he wants to meet an external objective (receive a certificate). Nevertheless, when the motivation is only extrinsic, the person cannot internalize the importance of learning or develop an independent and continuous learning process (Tucker & Luu, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

On the other hand, *intrinsic* motivation comes from within the individual; the activity, not the reward, interests the student and provides satisfaction and curiosity. Therefore, intrinsic motivation can result in an inner desire to continue learning (Alresheedi, 2014; Harmer, 2002; Kim & Pekrun, 2014), as the case of a student who carries out a specific activity motivated by his desire and not because someone else requests him to do it.

Now, depending on where the motivation for a particular behavior originated, there may be internal or external sources of motivation. As Deckers (2010) explained, internal sources of motivation could be of biological or psychological origin, while external sources could refer to incentives or objectives that motivate specific behavior.

Internal sources of motivation

Internal sources of motivation refer to all those biological, psychological, and other intrinsic aspects that motivate behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2012). There are several internal sources of motivation, that will be analyzed and discussed in depth below:

Needs. Activities that people carry out are motivated by the idea of satisfying a need they have. Needs can be primary (for survival), for example, the need for food or shelter, or they can also be secondary as an intellectual or spiritual needs (Adiele & Nath, 2013; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). People have a combination of needs developed over the years that have been influenced by education, occupation, among others.

Attitudes. They refer to the mental disposition that a person has towards something. People have positive attitudes towards things or activities they want or feel can help them satisfy a need. However, they tend to have a negative attitude towards things or activities that prevent them from achieving their goals

or needs. A person who has a positive attitude towards something, will likely be more motivated to do it and finish it until the final objective has been reached (Gardner, 1985; Williams & Williams, 2011). Applied to learning, specifically to English as a foreign language (EFL) learning, means, for example, that when a person has a positive attitude towards the L2 community, he/she will be more interested and motivated to learn that language (Pae, 2008; Svobodová, 2015).

Values. They are moral or social norms that people respect, admire, and honor, which may have been instilled by society, the family, or developed by the same person. Values are important because they can motivate an individual to do something he believes should be done. Values play a crucial role in encouraging and achieving goals (Kohoutek, 2000; Svobodová, 2015).

Interest. This is another critical aspect of motivation. Interest causes one to pay attention to an activity, resulting from having developed a positive relationship with that activity over time. Someone who has a strong interest in a topic or activity, takes pleasure in learning it or being involved in it, so he performs it out of his own will (Goodman et al., 2011).

Curiosity. Human beings are curious to learn and explore the world. When a person has a doubt related to a topic he likes, this person will be curious to learn. When the topic is enjoyable, students will always be motivated to learn and will want to know more and more about this topic (Frith, 1997; Solak, 2012).

Competences. They refer to the sense of success that comes from doing an activity considered challenging. Competences can also be a source of intrinsic motivation. If a person believes he will not be able to achieve something, he will not feel motivated. Something similar happens if he thinks that something is too easy and does not represent any challenge for him (Frith, 1997; Shernoff et al., 2014).

Enjoyment. There is a strong correlation between the enjoyment of an activity and the level of motivation to complete it. Motivating someone goes beyond simple obligation; the individual must enjoy doing or participating in that activity. In the case of learning a language, the student who enjoys learning that L2 will join in the activities for the pure pleasure of learning and will

continue being a life-long learner not because he has to but because he wants to (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Wu, 2003).

Ideal-Self. It represents the person someone wants to become, which includes not only the job and the lifestyle he wants but also the qualities he wishes to have, for example, being an educated person with specific skills and knowledge (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014). The desire to become the type of person someone wants to be can become a source of motivation to learn something or do something to achieve that goal.

Internal sources of motivation are indispensable, but they are not the only ones since there are also external sources of motivation.

External sources of motivation

External sources of motivation are those that do not come from the individual himself, but come from the environment that surrounds him and lead a student towards a specific goal; for example, the desire to please parents, to avoid punishment, to obtain a reward, and others (Deckers, 2010). External motivation works through incentives which are stimuli that have a motivational mechanism. They lead a person to do or not do something (Firdissa, 2017). Incentives can be positive or negative. Positive incentives could be a reward or a favorable result; for instance, when a teacher congratulates a student for his excellent work. Negative incentives can be, for example, a reprimand or a sanction to eliminate unwanted behavior (Sieberer-Nagler, 2016). The following are some important sources of external motivation.

Parents. They can be the best source of motivation for their children, especially when they are young. Parents can set an excellent example for their children and create a positive image of themselves for the future; that motivates them to learn and set goals that they will reach later on (Simpkins et al., 2015). Parents are the first educators of their children. Although they are unaware of it, their attitude towards learning can influence their kids' perception of education (Gardner, 1895; Villiger et al., 2014). Regarding foreign languages, parents' attitude toward a language and what they think about the usefulness and importance of that language impact the interest that their child will develop in learning it.

According to Wigfield et al. (2016), there are four critical parental factors that influence the perspective that their children have about education and their motivation to learn; which are the following: 1) the characteristics of parents, family, and neighborhood (e.g., household income, parental education level, and occupation); 2) parental beliefs (e.g., parenting styles, the importance or value that parents place on school performance); 3) parental behaviors (e.g., parental involvement in the teaching-learning process of their children); and 4) parental perception of their children (e.g., expectations of their children's success and perception of their competences and skills). Parental expectations are fundamental since they can directly correlate with the students' level of motivation and achievement of goals, and can ultimately influence students' educational achievements. Consciously or unconsciously, a person will even study a particular career, subject, or language to meet the parental expectations (Goodman et al., 2011; Lazarides et al., 2015).

Teachers. They also play a fundamental role in motivating students to learn. Motivation is achieved when the teacher's methods and strategies meet the needs of each student and promote a positive attitude towards learning a specific topic or subject (Firdissa, 2017). Extrinsic motivation, initially promoted by the teacher, can become an intrinsic motivation. When the teaching-learning strategies employed are adequate, relevant, and enjoyable for students and the classroom climate is favorable and promotes the student's self-esteem, self-confidence, and sense of achievement, students can develop that internal curiosity and desire to learn that topic (Goodman et al., 2011; Mojavezi & Poodineh, 2012).

Grades. The primary objective with which institutions and society in general often use grades is to measure the progress and achievement of students and provide a space for feedback; however, grades can also have a crucial motivational effect on students, be it positive or negative (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Koenka et al., 2019). High grades can motivate students to persist in an activity or even encourage them to try harder, while getting low grades can either make students realize that they need to put more effort into their learning process or otherwise demotivate them to the point where they will be inclined to drop out of the class or give up (Chamberlin et al., 2018). Awareness of this reality is

essential to know how to use grades appropriately, using them to give feedback and timely help to students who need it, without letting grades become the main element used for measuring students' progress or achievements or the principal motivational tool used by the teacher.

Peers. They also play a significant role in students' motivation, especially in teenage years because, during this period, young people tend to be emotionally and physically further away from their parents and closer to their peers (Burroughs, 1989; Juvonen et al., 2012). During this stage, young people usually choose friends with similar personalities, values, behavior, expectations, and even similar academic performances. Peers can have an important influence on the student's opinion about the importance of study habits and of learning in general (King & Ganotice, 2014; Wang & Neihart, 2015).

In conclusion, there are several sources of motivation, both internal (specific to the individual) and external (from the surrounding environment). To achieve quality learning, the extrinsic and intrinsic stimuli must be balanced because both of them influence the persistence and determination that a student will put into his learning process.

Characteristics of motivating learning environments

Some fundamental and general characteristics are required for the teaching-learning process to be motivating, among which are the following:

Inspire interest

The teaching-learning process must awaken the students' interest (Weinstein, 2010). The teacher has to show enthusiasm for the class; stimulate students' curiosity to learn; use interesting and varied strategies, activities, and materials; promote the active participation of students; and even include a bit of humor in the class used in a respectful and timely manner (Christenson et al., 2012).

Be relevant

Student's motivation depends on whether or not the education provided is considered valuable, meaningful, and relevant, and if it is closely related to the students' interests, needs, and short- and long-term goals. Teachers know the importance of what they teach, but it is impossible to assume that students do. Students need to recognize the immediate and future applicability or usefulness of what they learn (Frey & Fisher, 2010). Therefore, it is sometimes necessary for teachers to explicitly explain the benefits of the subject being taught and its relationship with their life and real needs. To achieve this, the learning process needs to be more experiential than theoretical, and the class needs to be functional and applicable.

Develop an expectation of success

Motivating learning environments should promote a sense of achievement. Students are usually more motivated when they believe they control their learning process and success. Creating this sense of accomplishment requires that teachers have high expectations of their students and that they show confidence in their ability to achieve their goals (Celikoz, 2010). Self-confidence is also developed when the expectations established for students are achievable and reasonable (Redondo & Ortega-Martín, 2015). Expectation of success is essential because it gives students confidence and stimulates them to make an even greater effort.

Create satisfaction

Reinforcing achievements with internal or external rewards can also help students develop the desire to continue learning (Murray, 2011). This involves, for example, sincerely praising students for their achievements or progress and avoiding embarrassing them or making them feel guilty (Urhahne, 2015). It is possible to correct students when necessary; nevertheless, it has to be done in a way that helps students realize their mistakes and be motivated to continue improving instead of feeling ashamed and unmotivated.

Importance and benefits

One of the primary purposes of education is to keep students motivated (Naranjo, 2009; Valenzuela et al., 2015). Motivation can make the difference between appropriate or inappropriate academic progress since, if applied correctly, it would allow the development of the students' abilities and skills and gradually solve more complex problems or tasks. Learning does not occur where the motivation is lacking. Therefore, motivation plays a vital role in education since it can get students to show interest in learning, and it is directly related to good academic performance. The more motivated a student is, the better results he will obtain. The student who is motivated will know how to overcome his frustrations and will try again when he does not achieve the desired results at first (Tünnermann, 2011).

Motivation nurtured by teachers is also indispensable because it is connected to the expectation of success or failure. When a student does not expect success, frustration appears, triggering a predisposition on the part of the student towards failure because the student sees himself as someone who does not have enough intelligence or ability to improve his performance. The student may focus on achieving a goal only because it is essential to pass the school term; however, he lacks internal motivation to believe in his potential. Therefore, teachers need to find ways to motivate students so they are reassured that they can achieve their objectives (Castro-Carrasco et al., 2012).

Likewise, compelling motivation through constructive and meaningful learning will ensure that students keep their attention focused on the goals they propose and want to achieve. Through the methodology used, the teachers fulfill a role of great importance as they can generate motivation and also ensure that it is maintained in each of the students throughout the learning process (Naranjo, 2009; Wigfield & Cambria, 2010).

In general, among the benefits of motivation are the construction of self-efficacy, which is the probability of adequately performing a task and the effort applied to complete it; good school performance, which is closely related to the improvement of the cognitive ability and the knowledge acquired by the student; the correct development of skills and the increase of their initiative through meaningful

learning, which will be helpful for the student to function in society for the rest of his life; the enhancement of self-esteem, creating a positive self-image that can be high and stable; and the consolidation of interests, knowledge, and skills, which refers to how much the student cares about doing the task and the pleasure that this generates (Castro-Carrasco et al., 2012; Valenzuela et al., 2015).

Motivating students to learn in higher education institutions

Higher education has always had a fundamental and essential role in developing a country and its society. Students who wish to study this level of education want to achieve personal and intellectual growth and acquire competencies and professional skills that will allow them to get a good job (Mendonça & Aragão, 2021). However, in recent years, it has been observed that the competitiveness to access the places offered by higher institutions and the challenges students face during their careers have become demotivating factors for many students (Marić, 2013). Motivation plays an indispensable role in the process, as it allows students to be loyal to their aspirations and dreams and not give up at the first stumble (Khan et al., 2019). Life is about falling several times but never losing faith and having the motivation to achieve the ideals set.

Making students feel motivated to study is the main focus of education because their success depends largely on motivation (Dörnyei, & Ushioda, 2009). Nevertheless, some barriers affect motivation in students, but some factors increase motivation in them (Sogunro, 2017), for example: “quality of instruction and curriculum, relevance, pragmatism, interactive classrooms, effective practices, progressive assessment, timely feedback, and self-direction” (Sogunro, 2015, p. 22). A study by Kew et al. (2018) indicated that teachers can increase students’ motivation by providing them with better materials for their learning process. If there is motivation to learn, the learning potential will increase; causing learning and motivation to be called inseparable and establishing a reciprocal relationship between academic performance and motivation (Sogunro, 2015).

In addition, Sogunro (2017) mentioned that motivation has a significant characteristic because it is contagious and transmitted not only from teachers to

students but also vice versa, from students to teachers and classmates. If there is an interest on the students' part to learn, feel self-sufficient, succeed, and complete all tasks and assignments, teachers also feel motivated. Motivation can help everyone, and when it is about students, it helps them to achieve meaningful learning, to master contents and skills, and in general, to meet the expected learning objectives.

Motivation in higher education: Importance of the teacher's attitude

Motivation is crucial to obtain great academic, emotional, and even social results in students. However, it is worth mentioning that there is an aspect of vital importance to awaken students' motivation and even increase it: the attitude of the teacher. Henry & Thorsen (2018) stated that creating a welcoming environment with successful interpersonal communication creates positive teacher-student relationships and, thus, greater motivation to learn and teach. It is easier to produce greater motivation when a teacher is aware of what can be achieved through proper teaching. Teachers who are motivating will lead students through their instruction and continuous support to be motivated as well (Lam et al., 2009).

According to a study, teachers must consider the following aspects or teaching techniques to achieve greater motivation in their students successfully: proper planning of classes, timely preparation of lessons, advice from other teachers, communication with their students to know their needs, adequate distribution of grades, promoting more active participation of students during classes, among others, to help students get motivated to learn (Tanveer et al., 2012). Thanks to the technological era, students can use various specialized tools during their academic training, especially in higher education where students are already much more responsible and aware of what they have and how to take advantage of them, so it is suggested that teachers should use technological tools to take full advantage of their benefits in terms of education (Schulz et al., 2015).

Tohidi & Jabbari (2012) mentioned that it is necessary that teachers, in addition to teaching, also become friends with their students because greater trust will be generated during the teaching-learning process. This will contribute to seeing teachers not as enemies but as agents or sources of knowledge for students and even as a means of inspiration to learn and improve themselves. Luján (1999) also stated that attitude will always be a factor that directly influences the students' motivation

since positive relationships will be formed from the environment and attitude among people, classmates, parents, teachers, and the general population. Therefore, there will be greater motivation to continue cultivating these relationships and reap great rewards in different areas.

Moreover, teachers having an empathetic attitude toward their group of students is significant to achieving the motivation that is needed and, at the same time, fighting against social exclusion among peers. The result will be that students will feel more emotionally comfortable, secure, and confident in achieving their goals, taking risks, creating emotional bonds, and learning with a livelier and more positive attitude (Arón & Milicic, 1999).

According to Dörnyei (2003), the teacher's motivation when putting their profession into practice is fundamental to fulfilling the purpose of education. If a teacher feels motivated and has a positive attitude, students will also be motivated, and that will be reflected in the learning achievements of each of the students. Hortigüela (2019) mentioned that there will be more individual and shared responsibility among the students with motivation, and that they will develop interpersonal and group skills, receive feedback in the best way, and applaud each other's achievements and efforts. Through this type of teaching, the classroom environment will improve and learning will be much more attractive, fun, and meaningful.

Motivation in higher education: Importance of constructivism

Cetin (2015) stated that the constructivist learning environment has its origins in philosophical minds such as John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Howard Gardner. In general, these scholars expressed that constructivism is a social process of active construction of knowledge from pre-existing knowledge, experiences, and interactions. In this way, individuals cease to be passive learners and become the center and authors of their own knowledge. Furthermore, the more students construct or reconstruct their knowledge, the more they acquire intellectual growth. Experiences, without a doubt, play a fundamental role in the learning process by providing the student with facility, responsibility and commitment to interpret and incorporate new information into pre-existing schemas.

Based on the constructivist view, each learner is unique and has their own conception and understanding of the world around them. However, one thing in common that all learners develop when immersed in constructivist learning is a strong motivation to continue constructing their own knowledge (Williams & Burden, 1997). That is to say, learners are less likely to feel afraid, make mistakes and undergo failure, as they prefer to focus on learning. And this is where students use their interests, prior knowledge, purposes and goals to achieve meaningful learning. Therefore, each student will feel an increased self-efficacy to learn and create new knowledge. Moreover, the motivation generated within learners will help them increase the desire to continue building their own path to learning, so they can achieve their objectives or expected results with ease.

Motivation in higher education: Current trends

Mainly, thanks to globalization, most higher education institutions have been transformed, changing the traditional to the modern, adopting a new teaching-learning approach that responds to the needs of students and motivates them to prepare to face this new updated world. As a result, new trends have arisen regarding education and motivation (Aydin, 2014). The role of teachers and students should now focus on having a correct teaching-learning process, where the management of learning strategies plays a fundamental role in successfully facing the academic requirements and the demands of society (García et al., 2015). Van (1984) said that to have a quality learning outcome, it is necessary to have a deeper focus and provide students with a constructivist conception of learning. Yew (2016) likewise expressed that it is required to have a pedagogical approach that allows students to engage in significant problems to achieve better learning actively. A collaborative environment contributes to creating mental models for learning, promotes social interaction for cognitive development, and forms self-directed learning habits through practice and reflection.

Similarly, another notable trend in education is to motivate students to engage in learning through optimal active learning environments with a constructivist vision. Activities that promote more complex thinking processes allow students to make decisions and solve problems based on authentic contexts and real situations (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995). Using current news, online videos, modern didactic

tools, and techniques will foster dynamism and responsibility in students, and it will allow for increased student-student and teacher-student learning collaboration.

Also, a trend being applied in higher education institutions is to make students self-reflect and evaluate their learning more profoundly, thus fostering their metacognitive ability. Teachers can awaken this metacognitive ability in students by carrying out various activities where learners use their critical thinking and become more autonomous in their learning process (Nasution & Sinaga, 2017). This moves students to demonstrate greater responsibility and motivation, adopt a critical stance toward the world and develop their potential as learners (Nosratinia & Zaker, 2013).

Motivation in higher education: Common problems

Despite the new trends mentioned above, within the educational field, specifically in higher education institutions, some problems still negatively influence student learning and motivation, so it is important to analyze some difficulties or factors that may affect the motivation and thus students' interest to learn. Teaching techniques should be designed and implemented to counteract these problems and achieve more efficient learning results (Al, 2010).

The following are some problems or difficulties in the students' learning process that affect their motivation:

Teaching quality. It has been identified that one of the factors that negatively affect student motivation is teachers' lack of preparation or the lack of adequate teaching competence for the target group. As a result, the teaching strategies used do not obtain the students' expected learning results (Leiva, 2013). Songuro (2017) explained that the lower the quality of instruction, the more likely the student is to feel unmotivated to learn and uninterested in performing the tasks or having active class participation.

Emotional contagion. Negative moods will always influence the students' academic performance and motivation. This emotion can be transmitted to other students, affecting the group's performance (Sogunro, 2015). When the teacher asks the students to perform a task in pairs, if one of them has negative emotions, low spirits, and no interest in collaborating in the classwork

performance, this will cause his partner to be affected by his mood and emotions as well. In this case, the expected learning objective or results will not be achieved without the necessary motivation, good cooperation, and mutual collaboration among peers.

Stress. Long study hours, many classes, stress, and lessons with high degrees of difficulty can also decrease motivation and affect students' learning (Salagre & Serrano, 2003).

Misuse of free time. Intrinsic motivation arises from self-reflection, thoughts, needs, and experiences that help achieve independent learning and good academic results (Irgashev, 2019). Most students today do not take advantage of at least a part of their free time to have independent and autonomous learning outside of class; instead, they prefer to do other activities and leave aside the academic part, which decreases their motivation to learn and thus, affects their academic performance.

There are indeed some challenges, but it is important to take advantage of what is available and make the best of it (Crow, 2006). When motivation occurs, the benefits surpass any possible challenge.

Motivation in higher education: Key advantages

Motivation is undoubtedly a determining factor for students to start their studies in a higher education institution, have an outstanding academic performance, have active participation, and persevere in achieving their goals (Siegle et al., 2014). Motivation will always bring significant advantages for students and therefore for education and society in general, such as:

A desire for constant improvement. Motivation provides the learner with the vital impetus to start learning; therefore, motivation must be ongoing so that the learner has the driving force to continue the long learning process (Ghaedi & Jam, 2014). Continuous motivation will also cause the learners' desire to excel academically to be constant. Each learner is different, but they all need the motivation to meet their expectations.

Increased energy. Villar (2018) explained that motivation is a unique source of energy that should be harnessed to the fullest at all times and that will give students the right encouragement, enthusiasm, and attitude to strive regardless of the difficulty. If students feel motivated, they are eager to fulfill their purposes (Filgona et al., 2020).

Inspiration. Teachers with a vocation and motivation to teach bring positive aspects to education. These kinds of teachers provide an appropriate and supportive learning environment for students to acquire and build positive relationships; students get motivated by the enthusiasm they receive from the teacher, which even helps to learn more efficiently. Teachers can foster satisfaction and student growth and therefore, are seen as guides or role models for other teachers who will want to adopt that stance to generate that kind of motivation and inspiration in their students (Siegle et al., 2014).

Participatory education. Knowledgeable and experienced teachers can devise more modern and effective teaching strategies to foster greater student motivation. When students receive a meaningful and challenging education, their participation, persistence, and effort is higher, and there is a more active collaboration and involvement between student-student and teacher-student, achieving a better learning environment (Khan et al., 2019).

Better cognitive processing. Motivation also plays a vital role in the cognitive processing of each student during learning since it influences how information is assimilated and processed in his mind. There will always be a difference between a motivated and unmotivated learner. Motivated students will pay more attention and will try to understand the material more profoundly and not only superficially (Filgona et al., 2020).

Self-discovery and self-perception. Learners' motivation within the educational environment has a strong relationship with self-discovery and self-perception. Motivation will help each learner to discover who they are and what they want, and to develop their learning capabilities and discover their strengths and weaknesses. Motivated students will also adopt a positive attitude towards the educational challenges along the way and will have greater self-confidence so that perception and confidence will be transmitted outwardly (Grum et al., 2004).

Greater creativity. Villar (2018) mentioned that motivation in students brings excellent advantages in terms of their creativity because it helps them explore their minds in search of new ideas, awakens their imagination, helps them think more consciously, and allows them to be more effective in solving a problem.

In short, motivation will always bring significant advantages for students who decide to continue their studies in higher education institutions and will help them make the long learning process more manageable, and therefore the students' lives will be emotionally and academically stable.

Chapter reflections

The impact that motivation has on learning should make us reflect on to what extent we are managing to motivate our students and what to do to improve in this area. Motivation is essential for learning at all levels and for all subjects; unfortunately, it is often the case that students take courses and pass them to obtain a degree rather than to learn. This case often occurs in the context of university-level English teaching in Ecuador, where English tends to be seen only as a requirement that students must meet to graduate. In consequence, there is still much work to get students interested in learning the language, especially in cases where students do not see the relationship between English and their present life or future career.

It is essential to review fundamental aspects of motivation that are necessary to help students be more engaged in their process of learning this language. Throughout this chapter, it has been possible to analyze some fundamental elements that we must continue to take into account as teachers, such as helping students to have a sense of achievement, planning classes that are active, innovative, and dynamic, and creating learning environments where students feel safe and are not afraid to make mistakes and to keep trying. However, there are other factors that also have an impact on student motivation, for example, whether the content is relevant to students or not, or whether the topics have applicability or utility for their present or future life since that can inspire interest, encourage curiosity, and create satisfaction in students.

This situation makes us reflect on the direction that English language learning has in the country, being implemented only as an extra subject (English as a Foreign Language - EFL) external to the students' careers. This also makes us think about the possibility of taking new routes, such as: combining the learning of the English language with the learning of the students' careers through ESP classes (English for Specific Purposes, CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), or the implementation of classes purely in English, among other strategies that may allow integrating the learning of English with relevant and purposeful topics and objectives for students. All these decisions need to be analyzed, so this chapter gives teachers and all stakeholders some questions to think about to continue improving in this area to ensure that all students are truly motivated to learn English at university.

Conclusions

With the advent of globalization and continuous technological progress, new changes, approaches, and ideas have been adopted to respond to the needs of today's world. Due to the fact that education is the key to investing and achieving actual development for the benefit of the community, the teaching-learning process requires the best strategies, methodologies, and above all, teachers and students committed to seeking and building a better future. Motivation plays a significant role in achieving the ideals and purposes proposed within the educational field. Whether internal or external, motivation can help the student have an integral, active, autonomous, constructivist, and meaningful academic development.

It is necessary to consider that there are different elements that will have an impact on motivation: student, teacher, content, method, and environment to achieve the required motivation in each student. There are multiple sources of motivation, both internal and external, but all are necessary and need to go hand in hand for students to be active and persevering learners; the key is to use both sources timely and wisely. Knowing and understanding these sources of motivation is essential to awaken students' interest in learning.

Motivation is valuable at all levels, including higher education. College students need to be motivated to start, continue, and finish their studies or careers successfully. In this regard, adopting a constructivist conception of learning, using authentic contexts, awakening self-reflection, and encouraging metacognition are current trends that are helping to motivate students. The teachers' attitude is also critical as it directly influences the students, so he needs to be a creator of positive relationships between teacher-student and student-student, to be a support, a friend, and a means of inspiration and improvement. If the teaching methodology is innovative, flexible, and adapted to the needs of the students, when the content encourages creativity, curiosity, and critical thinking, and when the education environment is accessible and empathetic, we achieve a motivating teaching-learning process that brings significant benefits to education.

In conclusion, education will always be a field that seeks constant improvement to provide more significant opportunities to its students where their attitudes and interest will be vital to achieving their ideals. Even though it is not always easy to create a motivating environment, it is worth the effort since it promotes constant improvement, more substantial energy, inspiration, a more participatory education, better cognitive processing, self-discovery and self-perception, and greater creativity. The students' success will depend on the motivation they feel to continue in the great struggle. If students are motivated, they will enjoy the learning process, and therefore, studying will be a privilege and not a sacrifice for them.

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