

Study of Inspiring the Motivation in Second Language Acquisition

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Abstract: Motivation plays an important role in second language acquisition. It is a non-intellectual and emotional factor in second language learning. This paper will mainly how to inspire the motivation in second language acquisition.

1. Introduction

It is a fact that different students get different results in second language learning though they are in the same class, at the same age and learn from the same teacher. The best reason for the difference is that they have different emotional factor, including motivation, attitude, interest, and disposition and so on. It can be easily seen that the motivated learners tend to be more active in the learning process while the unmotivated learners are more likely to be passive in class.

This thesis will mainly focus on inspiring the learner's motivation in second language acquisition in order to improve second language acquisition. It has five parts. The first part is a short introduction of the article; the second part mainly introduces second language acquisition; the third parts talk about motivation; in the fourth part, the author will give some practical steps to inspire the learners' motivation in the process of second language learning; and the last part is the conclusion of the thesis.

2. Second Language Acquisition

2.1 Stephen Krashen and Second Language Acquisition Theory

Second language refers to any language other than one's mother tongue. It is a fact that when learning a second language, one often faces a lot of difficulties. That is because the process of second language learning is often disturbed by the previous knowledge of one's first language. As is known to all, each language is unique. It has its own set of grammar, syntax and pronunciation and so on. The knowledge of these rules often hinders one's process of learning a non- native language.

The second language acquisition theory describes the different phases of the process of language acquisition. It refers to the study of how and through what process an individual acquires a second language. According to Stephen Krashen (University of Southern California), who is a world famous expert in the field of linguistics and has done great research into the theories of language acquisition and development, language is acquired. He makes the distinction between language learning and language acquisition. Krashen holds the point of view that language acquisition is a

subconscious process to acquire a language in natural settings, while language learning is a conscious process to obtain a language in school settings.

“Language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, and does not require tedious drill.” Krashen's widely known and well accepted theory of second language acquisition has had a large impact in all areas of second language research and teaching since the 1980s. In his point of view, "The best methods are therefore those that supply 'comprehensible input' in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear. These methods do not force early production in the second language, but allow students to produce when they are 'ready', recognizing that improvement comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input, and not from forcing and correcting production.”

2.2 Five main hypotheses of Krashen's theory of second language acquisition

Krashen's theory of second language acquisition is based on the following five main hypotheses:

2.2.1 The Acquisition-Learning hypothesis

The Acquisition-Learning distinction is the base of Krashen's theory. It is the most important of all the five hypotheses. The Acquisition-Learning distinction is also the most widely known and well- accepted among linguists and language practitioners all over the world.

According to Krashen, 'the acquired system' and 'the learned system' are two independent systems of second language performance. Exactly speaking, the 'acquired system' or 'acquisition' is the product of a subconscious process very similar to the process children undergo when they acquire their first language. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language - natural communication - in which speakers are concentrated not in the form of their utterances, but in the communicative act.

2.2.2 The Monitor hypothesis

The Monitor hypothesis explains the relationship between acquisition and learning and defines the influence of the latter on the former. The monitoring function is the practical result of the learned grammar. According to Krashen, the acquisition system is the utterance initiator, while the learning system performs the role of the 'monitor' or the 'editor'. The 'monitor' acts in a planning, editing and correcting function when three specific conditions are met: that is, the second language learner has sufficient time at his/her disposal, he/she focuses on form or thinks about correctness, and he/she knows the rule.

It appears that the role of conscious learning is somewhat limited in second language performance. According to Krashen, the role of the monitor is, or should be, minor, being used only to correct deviations from 'normal' speech and to give speech a more 'polished' appearance.

2.2.3 The Input hypothesis

By proposing the Input hypothesis, Krashen tries to explain how the learner acquires a second language, or in other words, in what way second language acquisition happen. The Input hypothesis is only connected with 'acquisition'; it is not concerned with 'learning'. According to this hypothesis, the learner improves and progresses when he or she receives second language 'input' that is one step beyond his or her current stage of linguistic competence. For example, if a learner is at the first level, then acquisition takes place when he or she is exposed to 'Comprehensible Input' that belongs to the second level. We can then define 'Comprehensible Input' as the target language that the learner would not be able to produce but can still understand. It goes beyond the choice of words

and involves presentation of context, explanation, rewording of unclear parts, the use of visual cues and meaning negotiation. The meaning successfully conveyed constitutes the learning experience.

2.2.4 The Natural Order hypothesis

The Natural Order hypothesis is based on research findings (Dulay & Burt, 1974; Fathman, 1975; Makino, 1980 cited in Krashen, 1987). It suggested that the acquisition of grammatical structures follows a 'natural order' which can be predictable. For a given language, some grammatical structures tend to be acquired early while others late. This order seemed to be independent of the learners' age, L1 background, conditions of exposure, and although the agreement between individual acquirers was not always 100% in the studies, there were statistically significant similarities that reinforced the existence of a Natural Order of language acquisition. However, Krashen points out that the implication of the natural order hypothesis is not that a language program syllabus should be based on the order found in the studies. In fact, he rejects grammatical sequencing when the goal is language acquisition.

2.2.5 The Affective Filter hypothesis

The Affective Filter hypothesis shows Krashen's view that a number of 'affective variables' play a facilitative, but non-causal, role in second language acquisition. These variables include: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Krashen claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating anxiety can combine to 'raise' the affective filter and form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. In other words, when the filter is 'up' it impedes language acquisition. On the other hand, positive affect is necessary, but not sufficient on its own, for acquisition to take place.

From the above mentioned, we can conclude that the acquiring of a second language is often affected by the learner's exposure to language models. Besides, second language acquisition is also affected by one's emotional state. Students often fear experience fear and anxiety before learning a new language. Sometimes, they will also lack the motivation to learn it.

So this paper will mainly focus on inspiring the learner's motivation in second language acquisition in order to improve second language acquisition.

3. Motivation of Second language acquisition

3.1 Definitions of motivation

According to Keller (1983), motivation refers to the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect.

Williams and Burden (1997) defined motivation as a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which give arises to a period of sustained intellectual and /or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal.

In general, motivation is the desire that fuels a person to do certain things based on his own wants and needs. It has a great influence on learner's effect.

3.2 Types of motivation

Learning motivation can be divided into three types: instrumental learning motivation, integrative learning motivation and resultative learning motivation and internal motivation.

3.2.1 Instrumental motivation

Instrumental motivation means that learning a second language is only to attain some goals, for example, finding a good job, passing an important exam. In many cases, the so-called instrumental motivation can play an important role in second language acquisition, because they want to attain some goals through learning. However, it is also the disadvantage of instrumental motivation, because once their goals are achieved, they will probably lose the motivation.

3.2.2 Integrative motivation

Integrative motivation means that learner learn a foreign language out of his or her interest in the culture, history, customs of a certain country. For example, if one is interested in a foreign country, he will adopt an active attitude in language learning to learn more about the country's culture, history and society and so on.

3.2.3 Resultative motivation

Resultative motivation means that learners aim to get a good exam scores and satisfaction from learning. In this sense, better motivation will inspire learning and better result will contribute to maintain motivation.

3.3 Importance of Motivation

Motivation plays a very important part in second language acquisition. If the learner is greatly motivated, his or her potential will be fully exploited. In this way, the learner will make great progress in language learning. Let's take a 36 years old father for example. He wants to learn oral English because he wants to set a good example and teach his daughter oral English. Such kind of motivation made him to practice very hard every day. Gradually, he can even have dialogue in English with his daughter. From this example, we can see clearly how important the motivation is for the learners.

3.4 Motivation factors

It is a fact that motivation plays an important role in second language acquisition, thus it is necessary for us to have an analysis on the factors that can influence the learner's motivation.

3.4.1 Value

Value is often labelled by various researchers as valence, incentive value, attainment value and task value and son on. High levels of the value of the second language learning usually intensify the learner's interest in learning the language. This, as a result, will intensify the learner's motivation. Many people in the world choose to learn English as a second language mostly because English is widely used in the world stage, that is to say, learning English as a second language has a high utility value. Besides, English is easy to learn; it cost less efforts and time of the learner.

3.4.2 Self – efficacy

Self- efficacy refers to the learner's opinion about his or her ability to carry out a task, the degree to which the learner thinks his or her ability to deal with the difficulties and challenges in the process of learning.

Generally speaking, learners with a low sense of self-efficacy in second language acquisition

consider difficulties as a threat to their dignity; they think more about their deficiencies and the barriers rather than think about ways to solve the problems. As a result, they are more likely to lose faith in their abilities and give up learning. On the contrary, learners with high sense of self-efficacy will brave the challenges and difficulties with great confidence. And they will not give up easily even in the face of failure. Therefore, learners with high sense of self-efficacy are more likely to succeed in foreign language learning.

3.4.3 Teacher's effect

Special attention should be paid to teacher's effect in the process of second language learning. As a matter of fact, the teacher's effect on the learner's second language learning is very complex. The teacher is absolute authority in the classroom and plays a crucial role in learning. On one hand, the teacher can provide knowledge, instruction and support for the learner in most cases; on the other hand, the teacher may also weaken the learner's motivation because of the improper responses to the learner's learning activity. Things get worse especially when the relationship between the teacher and the learner is bad.

According to a questionnaire in a middle school, at first, the learner liked English learning very much because his English teacher was very humorous and easy-going and always gave him confidence and praise. The learner would listen attentively in class and he liked English learning very much. But things changed as he had a new English teacher, who was very serious and never talked too much with students. It can be imagined that the learner soon quit up English learning. Therefore, the teacher's personality behavior and teaching methods will have great influence on learner's learning.

4. Ways of Inspiring Motivation in Second Language Acquisition

Firstly, the teacher should guide the students to make short-term goals. Generally speaking, the ultimate goal of learning a second language is to use the language to communicate with native speakers smoothly. But the ultimate goal is a little far away, especially when the learner meets some difficulties in learning, he or she would easily give up English as he cannot get rewards currently. In this sense, making short-term goal is necessary. The learner can make visible progress every day and get visible reward, thus, he or she will give confidence in the language learning. This will help a lot in the long run.

Secondly, the teacher should try to create a relaxed learning atmosphere. A tense learning atmosphere will surely make students feel nervous. They probably don't talk much in class because they are afraid of making mistakes. They will be reluctant to attend classes in the long run. This will definitely weaken their motivation of learning the second language. On the contrary, a relaxed learning atmosphere will make students feel ease. Students want to express their opinion and will not feel embarrassed even when they make mistakes. They will find second language learning is interesting. Relaxed learning atmosphere will definitely have a good effect on inspiring students' motivation, arousing their interest in second language learning.

Thirdly, the teacher should try to be an ideal teacher the way the students like. Special attention should be paid to the teacher's personality and character. According to a survey, we can illustrate the ideal teacher generally like this: the teacher should be easy-going so that he can get along well with the students; the teacher should be humorous so that he can make the classes lively and interesting; the teacher should be patient so that when the students make mistakes, he would not feel bothered; the teacher should be optimistic so that he can often encourage his students and give them confidence in second language learning; the teacher should be learned so that he can gain respect from students... It is difficult for the teacher to be a full man, but as a teacher, we should try to be a

full man and guide the students to be a full man.

Fourthly, the teacher should help students to enhance self-efficacy. The teacher should try to increase students' self-confidence in second language acquisition. To a certain degree, self-confidence decides the amounts of efforts and time that students will spend. It also decides the persistence that they will show in the process of second language learning. Just as the above mentioned, a high degree of self- efficacy will overcome the difficulties bravely; they will also be ready to solve the problems occurring in the process of learning.

Fifthly, the teacher should introduce English –related values and optimize students' attitudes about English. Attitude is everything. Learners' attitudes towards the language and culture influence their curiosity, attention and efforts to language acquisition. Therefore, it is necessary for the teacher to enhance the related values about second language values to students. The most important is to make second – language acquisition process interesting and lively.

Last but not least, the teacher should promote a correct way of learning. The teacher should help the learner realize that the more they do, the more they will gain. The teacher should also help students to believe that as long as they work more diligently than before, they will do much better. While students still in making progress though they have made great efforts, the teacher should help students to find out the reason and help them believe that they have the ability to master English.

5. Conclusions

The motivation of second language acquisition plays a very important part. Once the learner has enough motivation, he or she will overcome the difficulties with great confidence and determination in the process of learning. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to take proper measures to inspire students' motivation and help them achieve success in their second language acquisition.

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