



Journal of Arts & Humanities

Key to Language Learning Success

Oktavian Mantiri ¹

ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the important elements of language learning and teaching i.e. the role of teachers as well as the attitude and motivation of learners. Teachers undoubtedly play crucial roles in students' language learning outcome which could ignite or diminish students' motivation. Positive attitudes and motivation – instrumental or integrative and intrinsic or extrinsic – are key to successful learning. Therefore it is paramount for language teachers as well as learners to know these roles and nurture the best possible ways where language teaching and learning will thrive. This paper also suggested that both stake-holders should be open to holistic approach of language learning and that other factors such as the environment could play an important part in language teaching and learning success.

Keywords: Language learning, attitude and motivation, second language learning, language learning success.

Available Online: 29th January, 2015.

MIR Centre for Socio-Economic Research, USA.

1.0 Introduction

This article is a literature review of some of the prominent research done in the field of language teaching and learning, and motivation. The purpose to identify and explore the key factors that affect language learning and teaching. In this 21st century, technological advancement and border crossing have become a common phenomenon. People are being exposed to different world languages and cultures in a pace that have never been perceived before. As a result, language teaching and learning or the lack of it is being taken for granted. This article will explore some of the key factors that significantly affect language learning and teaching success, namely the student and teacher's roles, their attitude and motivation.

¹ Adjunct Faculty, Asia-Pacific International University Universitas Klabat, Thailand. Email: omantiri@gmail.com

Analysis will be based on some practical example found in teaching and learning context will be explored and a general conclusion and recommendation will be drawn.

2.0 The student's and teacher's role

Language learners vary from those who learn a language as part of the curriculum in schools, to learners who take language classes for a specific purpose. Gardner (2001) suggested that when learners first step into the language classroom, the end-result of being able to speak a language is what motivates them to learn. Moreover, he stated that, unlike other subjects, learners carry with them obligations such as acquiring the beginning of cultural understanding, language content and skills as well as achieving spoken fluency that can and will be applied outside the classroom. Learners are often unaware of these aspects of language learning that await them during the early course of the learning. He also suggested that the initial drive and eagerness to learn may eventually fade away due to several factors such as the way the classes are conducted or the age of the learners who may well be past the critical period of language acquisition. It is therefore crucial for students to be made aware of this aspect of language learning early on in their learning process.

Dornyei and Murphey (2003) described the notion of 'role' teachers' have in English language teaching as the "shared expectation of how an individual should behave... what people are supposed to do". Gardner (2001), Harmer (2001), Littlewood (1981), Richards and Rodgers (1986), Tudor (1993) have shed light as to the potential roles language teachers have from being a facilitator, instructor, classroom manager, consultant, advisor to communicator. Language teachers undoubtedly play a crucial role in students' learning success. All aforementioned experts agree that teachers carry with them obligations in teaching the language that require sufficient proficiencies in all aspects of language teaching. These aspects include having the appropriate training and the skills to teach the language. Aside from those, the expectation in which teachers have the learners is also included in principles of the method of language teaching (Gass and Selinker, 2001).

3.0 Attitudes, motivation and language learning

Attitude is arguably an important impetus in language learning. Erika Cox (2002) outlined the three components that describe attitudes: cognitive, affective, and behavioural (sometimes called conative function). The cognitive component refers to the knowledge, ideas and beliefs connected to a specific opinion, while the affective component refers to emotions and values, and where as the behavioural component refers to a certain behaviour towards people or things (Cox, 2002, p.105). A research by Rebecca Oxford (1989) suggested that the combination of cognitive, affective, and behavioural elements are reflected in the students learning styles It is therefore important for teachers to facilitate formation of positive attitudes in order for students to develop their learning skill for language learning.

Undoubtedly, motivation plays a crucial role in language learning. Researches have shown the significant relation between students' success and motivation in language learning (Bernard, J. 2010; Merritt, 2013). Most recently, Schumann (cited in Rasavi, 2014) pointed out the importance of social factors, of what he puts it as "to get to know, to be with, to interact with and perhaps become like the speakers of [a] target language".

The Socio-Educational Model developed by Robert Gardner provides a representation of how motivation, combined with several factors, may influence the success of second language acquisition. The model was developed as an attempt to interrelate the four factors that influences the learner's success in second language acquisition. Gardner presents these four factors in a schematic representation of the model: External Influences, Individual Differences, Language Acquisition Contexts, and Outcomes (Gardner, 2001, p.4).

Gardner indicated that external influences are any factors that might influence the learner's language learning, in which they are divided into two groups History and Motivators (Gardner, 2001, p.4). As for the first group, he believed that the different cultural, personal and social backgrounds of the learners play a role in language learning. The second group may refer to the help provided by the teachers in the process of language learning in motivating the learners.

Dörnyei (2001) however, outlined four different components of motivational teaching practice (motivators) in the second language classroom that could be employed by the teachers:

- 1) Creating the basic motivational conditions;
- 2) Generating initial motivation;
- 3) Maintaining and protecting motivation and
- 4) Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation (p.29).

Gardner (2001) explained that the two groups of external influences have a direct effect on attitudes toward the learning situation (p.7). According to Ushida (2005), motivation in this model is defined as "the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to learn the language and satisfaction experienced in this activity." A "motivated learner" is, therefore, defined as one who is: (a) eager to learn the language, (b) willing to expend effort on the learning activity, and (c) willing to sustain the learning activity (Gardner, 1985, as cited in Ushida, 2005). Ushida further explained that there are three ways in which motivation plays a significant role in Gardner's Socio-Educational Model. First, motivation mediates any relation between language attitudes and language achievement. Second, it has a causal-relationship with language anxiety. Moreover, third, it has a direct role in the informal learning context, showing the voluntary nature of the motivated learners' participation in informal L2 learning contexts (Ushida, 2005).

Dörnyei (2005) defined individual differences as anything that makes a person distinct and unique from other people. In his study, Dörnyei (2005) mentioned that the main focus areas of the research on individual differences are temperament, intelligence, attitudes, abilities, personality, mood, and motivation (p.7). Norris-Holt (2001) stated that the individual differences phase of Gardner's model is believed to be the most influential in second language acquisition.

The third factor of Gardner's model is the context of language acquisition. It refers to the setting in which the learning takes place. The two contexts that are classified under learning settings are structured and unstructured settings. The first context includes learning that takes place in a classroom with formal instructions, and the second context refers to learning that takes place in a natural setting. Norris-Holt (2001) stated that the context of learning could change the impact of the factors of the individual differences mentioned above which is why the second and third factors in the Socio-educational Model are seen as closely related to each other.

The outcomes of language learning can be classified into two categories: linguistic and non-linguistic (Gardner, 2001). Norris-Holt (2001) explained that linguistic outcomes refer to actual language knowledge and language skills, and non-linguistic outcomes refer to the learner's attitudes toward the cultural values and beliefs of the target language community.

3.1 The instrumental and integrative orientations of motivation

In their extensive study of motivation in second language learning, Gardner and Wallace Lambert divided attitudes that motivate language learning into two orientations known as "instrumental" and "integrative" motivations (Brown, 2000). Brown explained that the instrumental orientation referred to acquiring the language as a means for attaining instrumental goals related to the learner's career, for example, career expansion, or academic in that the individual desires to undertake studies in another country that requires the target language. On the other hand, the integrative orientation referred to learners who have the desire to be socially and culturally involved in the target language community (p.162).

There have been claims and counter-claims regarding the instrumental and integrative orientations, which resulted in some favouring the instrumental orientation as an effective context of successful language learning, and others favouring the integrative orientation. Despite the various claims and counter-claims, Brown (2000) explained that the different variable findings and empirical investigations only point out that there is no single means of learning a language as learners in some contexts may benefit from integrative orientation while others in different contexts may benefit from instrumental orientation (p.163).

3.2 The intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions of motivation

The intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions of motivation have been frequently used in the field of study of second language learning. However, the relationships between these dimensions to the more established concepts, such as the instrumental and integrative orientations, have not yet been specified although there have been studies that has provided insights into how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation fit into the field of second language learning (Dörnyei, 1998).

The basic differences between learners with intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are that members of the former group learn for the joy of personal mastery not for any external reward while members of the latter group are driven by external rewards. According to Brown (2000), many researchers feel that intrinsic motivation is superior to extrinsic motivation because learners who are intrinsically motivated will retain the information longer than those who only learn for the purpose of gaining praise or rewards.

4.0 Conclusion

Language teaching and learning is a complex process. There are factors and elements attached to it that needs to be well comprehended by both stake-holders to have any chance of success. Language learners are individuals with differences. Teachers, on the other hand, equipped with their variety of teaching skills, need to understand that factors such as attitudes and motivation are crucial in language learning success. Teachers play crucial role of linking the students with the knowledge i.e. language by utilizing techniques that enhance positive attitude and motivation.

Undoubtedly, teachers' roles and students' attitudes and motivation – instrumental or integrative, and extrinsic or intrinsic – are all important aspects to be grasped in language teaching and learning. More importantly however, the ultimate and ideal goal of teaching learning should be about holistic language experience that entails not only teaching approaches, and students' attitudes and motivation, but also the environment and other facilitating factors for learning. This may sound as an unsurpassed task for teachers and students. However, as Dörnyei (2005) penned it, the factors that determine the ultimate success of learners in mastering a second language consist of more than just language aptitude and motivation, it also includes an array of personal factors that can be collectively termed 'individual differences'.

The author would also like to emphasize and recommend the important role policy makers and school administrations will play in this endeavour. Role such as promoting and upgrading teachers for new knowledge, improving school facilities to meet the 21st century learners, and improve policy that promotes foreign or second language teaching and learning school-wide.

References

- Bernard, J. (2010). Motivation in Foreign Language Learning: The Relationship between Classroom Activities, Motivation, and Outcomes in a University Language-Learning Environment. (*Unpublished thesis*). Carnegie Mellon University. USA
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching, fourth edition*. New York: Addison

- Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Cox, E. (2002). *As psychology level for AQA specification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (1998). Motivation in second and foreign language learning. *Language Teaching Journal*, Vol. 31, pp. 117-135. doi:10.1017/S026144480001315X
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Dörnyei, Z. & Murphey, T. (2003). *Group dynamics in the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gardner, R. C. (2001). Language learning motivation: The student, the teacher, and the researcher. Retrieved from University of Texas, Texas Foreign Language Education Conference. Website: <http://studentorgs.utexas.edu/flesa/tpfle/contents1.doc>
- Gass, S. M. & Selinker, L. (2001). *Second language acquisition: An introductory course*. 2nd Edition. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Harmer, J. (2001). *The practice of English language teaching*. 3rd Edition. London: Longman.
- Littlewood, W. (1981). *Communicative language teaching: An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Merritt, A. (2013, February 28). What Motivates Us to Learn Foreign Languages? Retrieved from The Telegraph website: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationopinion/9900074/What-motivates-us-to-learn-foreign-languages.html>
- Norris-Holt, J. (2001). Motivation as a contributing factor in second language acquisition. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 7(6). Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Norris-Motivation.html>
- Oxford, R. (1989). *The roles of styles and strategies in second language learning*. Retrieved from <http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-9214/styles.htm>
- Rasavi, L. (2014, March 19). Language Learning: What Motivates Us? Retrieved from The Guardian website: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/mar/19/language-learning-motivation-brain-teaching>
- Richards, J. C. & Rodgers, T. (1986). *Approaches and methods in language teaching: A prescription and analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tudor, I. (1993). Teacher roles in the learner-centred classroom. *ELT Journal*, 47(1), 22-31.
- Ushida, E. (2005). The role of students' attitudes and motivation in second language learning in online language courses. *The Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium Journal*, 23(1). Retrieved from <https://calico.org/memberBrowse.php?action=article&id=131>