

# **Motivating EFL/ESL Learners.**

**BY**

**Mehboobkhan Ismail.**

## Introduction

A Julia Penelope quote will obviously provide a good beginning to this paper. “Language forces us to perceive the world as man presents it to us”. (Quote Garden 2011).

It takes time and dedication to learn a foreign language. Some reasons can be attributed as practical, some inspirational, some intellectual and others sentimental, but whatever may be the reasons, having a clear idea of why you are learning a language can help to motivate us in our studies. People involved in language teaching often say that students who really want to learn will succeed whatever the circumstances in which they study.

## **Section. (1) Literature Review**

“You live a new life for every new language you speak. If you know only one language, you live only once” (Omniglot 2011) says an old Czech saying.

The learner gets the ability to step inside the mind and context of other cultures by learning a new or other languages. Many factors contribute to learning a new language. Mainly in the world where people and nations are increasingly more dependent upon each other to supply goods and services , to solve political disputes, and to ensure international security, understanding other cultures is a supreme fact. Intercultural understanding begins with the people who have language capabilities and who can thereby provide one’s own nation or community with one’s own view by melting foreign culture into one’s own culture. Only when individuals become competent in particular languages can a nation prosper and be successful in international affairs and business.

## (II)

A person who is competent in foreign languages can level the difference between cultures, contribute to international diplomacy, and promote national security and world peace. Furthermore an individual can successfully engage in international trade and business (Vistawide 2011).

“Effective communication and successful negotiations with a foreign partner, whether with a partner in peacekeeping, a strategic economic partner, a political adversary, or a non-English speaking contact in a critical law enforcement action --requires strong comprehension of the underlying cultural values and belief structures that are part of the life experience of the foreign partner.” - Dr. Dan Davidson, President of the American Councils on International Education (Vistawide 2011).

(III)

Motivation is a process that can arouse and instigate behavior, give direction, continue to allow behavior to persist, and lead to choosing or performing a particular behavior. Motivation is a kind of desire for acquiring a new language (Dergisi 2001, p. 220). There may be certain difficulties encountered while teaching a second or foreign language. Acquisition becomes easy when the learner has got a strong desire to learn. In order to predict the success of a foreign language motivation is an exclusive one. It can be further defined as complex phenomena that is often used. It is a desire to achieve a goal filled with energy to attain the prescribed goal. With the help of motivation a teacher can easily direct the learner to achieve the goal. Becoming part of the language learning process is as an essential part of a learner. Motivation can be helpful to people who are culturally integrated. It is a self – oriented process. How much a learner can stick to his learning habit depends upon the motivation.

(IV)

A number of factors influence anyone's success at mastering a new language. Certain motivating factors are as follows.

**Immersion:** It’s an environment where the learner learns quickly which lasts long. It will be better to immerse in a particular language which enables one individual to notice all forms of communication. Also it encourages the habit of forming one’s thought in the native language. Language occurs in context so immersion is important because it teaches the learner the value of context.

(V)

**Consistency:** It is a phenomena of relentless exploration of language. The process of becoming familiar with the language is not as easy as becoming familiar with a city. Consistency is essential

for language because language is something that grows always, not something that can be shortened or memorized. Learning always takes place not when a new word is encountered but when a new context for an old word is discovered.

(VI)

**Early start :** No language is foreign to a young child. Children experiment with all kinds of noises and are less set in their ways in terms of which sounds they share. Mistakes are just a natural part of that eager experimentation because children try out new words often in their regular uses. Starting early enables the child to see every fact side by side. When a child learns the slight differences of meaning that words take on in different languages, they discover that there are different ways of seeing and experiencing things (Early Advantage 2011).

(VII)

**A goal:** It may not be considered as a necessary measurable component of motivation. But it is a strong stimulus that gives rise to motivation. A goal can possibly be a wish to integrate and adapt to a new target culture through the use of the language.

A strong desire to attain the goal: Attitude towards learning language, the depth of desire and motivational intensity determines the aspiration towards the goal (Root 1999 p. 2).

(VIII)

**Aptitude:** Each person has got a unique style in life skills. The students who have high aptitude for learning new languages can easily learn, on the other hand someone who has got less aptitude can face difficulties. A teacher never can raise aptitude among the students but he can make the most of what exists.

(IX)

**Timing:** Timing is an important factor for learning a foreign language. Early child hood shows a clear period of time to acquire a language rapidly, is before the brain develops into the full sphere this is the easiest time to learn a new language.

(X)

**Strategy:** It may be termed as an approach of language development in a certain way. Strategic procedure helps a learner to progress step by step.

(XI)

**Opportunity:** According to the meaningful situations, daily use of language can be said to be an opportunity. The using of language according to proper situations makes a learner learn a new language effectively. In an example, adults are superior to children in learning but a child can pick up the language earlier than the adults (Tokuhama-Espinosa 2003, p. 2).

(XII)

**The relationship with the native language:** If the new language is similar to the native one it will be easier to learn. The sound systems, similarity in use of Grammar, vocabulary and styles may contribute similar criteria for the new language.

(XIII)

**Siblings:** They can create good or bad impact for learning. In positive approach the younger siblings can benefit greater from the elder ones. They can act as a second teacher to the younger ones. In other words the elder one possesses an ego, meaning that they may dominate the language exchange and help the younger one's development. Though the teacher may not share the same remarks about the learning.

(XIII)

**Sex:** The mentality of boys and girls are totally different in learning mainly on languages. The first one is less patient and latter one good deal more patient.

(XV)

**Personality:** The learners who are shy or anxious usually make slow progress mainly in the progression of oral skills. They may not take proper opportunity to speak or mingle with others. On the other hand the students who are able to speak or communicate ideas can make good social networks which enables them to acquire the language rapidly. The outgoing students will take risks and they give more importance to practice and are never concerned about making mistakes.

(XVI)

**Experiences:** The students will be in a strong position to develop a foreign language when they get enough general knowledge and experience. For instance the learners who has been exposed to various languages and cultures will have a strong base for learning a new language than someone who has not had any such experiences.

(XVII)

**Instruction:** The learning may be differentiated according to the teachers. Some provide appropriate and effective learning experiences in the classrooms. Such students perform faster than other students. The true learning takes place only when the teachers provide proper accommodation to the linguistic development.

(XVIII)

**Culture and status:** When the learners culture is lower in status than the learning culture, the language learning makes slower progress. It will be a positive attitude when the learner's culture is higher than the learning one.

(XVIII)

The above mentioned factors are subjective and according to the learners. On the other hand many other features also depend on learning a new language. Each learner's family plays a vital role in learning. All the students deserve a strong and positive reinforcement from their parents and teachers for acquiring a new language.

## **Discussion**

(I)

Any form of training in foreign languages has to take into account how languages are learnt. There has long been a general consent among researchers that language teaching should take the instinctive mechanisms into account that are effective in naturalistic language acquisition. And that the mental dispositions and processes that learners themselves bring into the classroom have not been adequately taken into account in language teaching practices.

(II)

Practical assumptions would be that languages are best learnt through speaking. Rather than the first language the foreign languages should be used in the class rooms. Grammar should not be taught plainly. Teaching should involve not just the second language but the whole linguistic knowledge and behavior.

(III)

Linguistic theory and description necessarily determines the design of the foreign language theme. Communication is not only an exchange of linguistic character. But language is basically culturally charged, there will be one or two similarities between a language and culture. Sometimes a

particular type of people can find similarity with other foreigners who live along side them.

Moreover traditions manifest itself in various semiotic modalities: verbal or visual.

(IV)

Political considerations may not be a component in the subject of a foreign language. The traditional notion that foreign language teaching and learning are value –neutral activities has been contested in recent years on the grounds that the promotion of one particular foreign language and its allied culture can impact negatively on the survival of others.

(V)

For an instance, the rapid globalizing stretch of English in particular has been seen as endangering the continuing existence of other languages and as a threat of linguistic assortment, there by furthering the ideological and economic agenda of its native speakers. The teaching of English therefore can be seen as hegemonic activity lending support to the cause of linguistic imperialism.

(VI)

Learners bring to the learning process a natural cognitive endowment and an innate knowledge of language- in effect their own agenda for acquisition. These endowments however are subject to change in the course of an individual's human right to greater political freedom and liberation and are supported by the principle of constructivist psychology that new knowledge cannot in fact be transmitted or taught, but rather has to be constructed by the learners themselves.

### **The key factors that motivate someone to learn a foreign language.**

Motivation plays a vital role in learning a foreign language. A good advisor can teach the learners very effectively. Language learning is at once complex and simple. Language learning becomes simple when we give our brain the right opportunity. The learners have to expose themselves to massive doses of speech when they face difficulties. Furthermore engage in a wide range of conversational interaction other than speaking and writing activities. And finally learn to know the people whose language they are learning. When a learner learns language he not only learns the particular language but also their lives, experiences and beliefs (Thomson 1993).

### **How can we improve the motivation in our students.**

By supporting Garden's theories of motivation in one way teachers can improve motivation in the students. Learning mainly takes place according to the necessity of the learner. One's own environment and social circumstances help motivation in learning.

### **Behavioral approach.**

Rewards plays a vital role in one's learning. Behind every learning there will be reward. A student should always ask himself, what can I get when I learn a new language. Or why should I learn a new language. This feeling may arise a future plan among the senior learners. And among minor learners may arise minor motivation like the appreciation of teacher or parent because they may not be able to recognize a long term reward or benefit. But the real fact that if continued motivation takes place within a learner then automatically learning will take place.

### **Cognitive view**

Every learner is a unique phenomenon. Same result cannot be expected from all learners equally. A learner creates choices to achieve personal language goals and to avoid uncomfortable experiences. Various other factors also may depend on learning. Stressing the importance of discovery, environmental exploitation, staying busy, curiosity of our surroundings, interest in people from different backgrounds, the desire of knowledge, investigation and acceptance and acknowledgement by the society.

### **Constructivist view**

An individual's social surroundings act as an important perspective of learning. A learner can acquire knowledge only when he fulfills all basic needs of his life. Aptitude and attitude may be differentiated according to students. Motivation is viewed not only as one's own self determination but also the way in which individuals interact within various circumstances. Language learning depends on the basic motivation which is necessary for a child to learn another language (Faulkner 2009, p. 3).

When the teacher identifies what kind of motivation leads the student to realize his goal, only then can the teacher solve the problem regarding learning? A learner can be motivated either intrinsically or extrinsically. If the motivation comes intrinsically, learning takes place rapidly. For instance a student learning French may be motivated by French movies, books or any related reasons. While it is reasonable to suppose that many adults learners have some degree of extrinsic

motivation, and while it is clear that the attitude of students can be affected by members of their communities, there can be no doubt that intrinsic motivation plays a vital part in most students success or failure as language learners. Many students bring no extrinsic motivation to the classroom. They may even have negative feelings about language learning. For them what happens in the classroom is of vital importance in determining their attitude to the language.

Primary school students may not see enduring benefits; he may be attracted by small rewards offered by his teacher or parents. Likewise when the learning takes place extrinsically, it becomes a hard task for the teacher to motivate the learners.

### **Negative impact of motivation**

Most teachers appreciate that praise can influence positive behaviour and promote learner's intrinsic motivation. In the classrooms positive reinforcement is always necessary for the well being of the learner. By a simple word 'good' a lot of motivation can be generated among the learners.

Punishment can create a bad impact among the learners. One may be humiliated before others and loose interest in learning. Punishments can help in learning but the final result will be a failure. Sometimes rewards or small gifts create positive feedback towards students by increasing their willingness to participate in future learning discussions and activities. (Faulkner 2009, p. 7)

### **Improving tips of motivation in the students.**

First of all a teacher should have an up to date knowledge of teaching. Motivation also can depended on the knowledge of the teacher (Macaro 2003, p. 3).

**Lecturing:** Is a common method used in every sphere of teaching. Through lecturing there arise listening exercises in the learners which leads to creative thinking for new ideas and discoveries. When an idea is shared among the group of learners, different ideas can be generated from the listeners which enable them to learn easily. One idea can lead up to different good ideas.

**Classroom discussion:** Speaking enables learners to acquire knowledge easily. Every learner may not be in an equal position to accept ideas. Even a poor students can try to speak when he gets a chance in the group to speak. It will be very effective though and time consuming. Visual representations or video clips can help them to generate ideas. With the help of visual



representation every child may be involved in the learning process, where there is interest there is learning (McCarthy 1989).

**Role playing:** Narration strengthens the learner. Through dramatization the teacher motivates the students to use what they have studied. It will be very effective when the learners are outside the classroom. The dramatization is helpful as a solution to the unknown answers and provides an opportunity to practice their skills.

**Work sheets:** This is a process of self checking. It allows the learners to think by themselves without being helped by others. The generated thoughts of the learners can be shared in large groups and help to get proper feedback from the teachers or friends.

**Brain storming:** Can be termed as sharing of ideas by a small group. With the given topic learners can generate their own ideas and finally conclude them into a good idea. Acquisition takes place when learners are involved in common sharing or discussion. There will be full participation of learners since it is recorded as well as encouraged. It can be drawn upon by the learner as good experience and a spirit of congeniality is created.

### **How can a teacher be a role model in learning a foreign language?**

“A good teacher is like a candle - it consumes itself to light the way for others” - Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, translated from Turkish (Quote Garden 2011).

Teachers are carriers because they carry positive or negative impact towards the students. . The prime duty of every teacher is to accept the students the way they are. Therefore, teacher's precedence should only be the profit of the student's feelings (California State University n.d.)

### **My own classes**

Here I would like to talk about my own teaching methods and experiences.

My weekly schedule includes teaching children who are more than anything else very curious. So they need many stimulating activities such as singing songs with actions, flash card and memory

games. I find that it is very important to change activities frequently because their span of attention or concentration is less than that of adults. Children need to be involved in something active (they will usually not sit and listen). They do not have any other motivation besides play so almost everything for them depends on my energy, attitude and behaviour. I find that what motivates them also is praise and approval from me and their parents for what they are doing is of vital importance.

### **Adolescents**

These are basically senior high school low level baseball players who have very little extrinsic motivation in learning anything especially English. However they can be the most interesting and challenging students to teach. They also present me with more problems than any other age group. I certainly do not expect any extrinsic motivation from the majority of students and they are also not inspired by curiosity and teacher approval is no longer of vital importance. Indeed the teacher is viewed as a potential enemy. Peer approval however is very important. Therefore it is important that I the teacher remember that adolescents need to be seen in a good light by their peers, and to be-aware of the changes taking place in their bodies. And that they are easily prone to humiliation if the teacher is careless with criticism.

At this age getting the level of challenge right is vital. Where the level is too low the student simply 'switches off' : where the level is too high they may become discouraged and de-motivated . It is important to make sure to put language teaching tasks into an interesting context . More than anything else they have to be involved in the task and eager to accomplish it. This is where I find the use of visual aids very helpful. I am lucky to be teaching in a classroom which has "state of the art technology" so I use videos as a carrot for the students to watch after working on grammar exercises. They get to watch a movies for the last ten minutes of class, with a simple worksheet. This method keeps them focused on the task and out of mischief for a while.

### **Adult intermediate students.**

On the other hand are more extrinsically motivated. But intermediate students already know a lot and do not perceive any progress. Our job at the University is to show the students that there is still

a lot to learn (without making this fact demoralizing) and then setting realistic goals for them to achieve. Once again, a major factor seems to be getting the level of challenge right.

### **Adult advanced students.**

These students are highly motivated. Like intermediate students (but even more so) they find progress more difficult to perceive. Much of the time they are not learning anything new but learning better how to use what they already know. My adult learners meet once a week at a community centre and the other classes are of business people. Both of these classes have a mixed level of competencies so it is perhaps the most demanding type of class to teach. However they need the clarity that they get by me setting them short-term goals and tasks.

### ***Conclusion***

The method by which students are taught must have some effect on their motivation. If they find it deadly boring they will probably become de-motivated, whereas if they have confidence in the method they will find it motivating. Unfortunately there is no research which clearly shows the success of one method over another. What we do know however is that if the student loses confidence in the method he/she will be de-motivated, and the student's confidence in the method is largely in the hands of the most important factor affecting intrinsic motivation, the teacher.

Maugham has said that "You learn more quickly under the guidelines of experienced teachers. You waste a lot of time going down blind alleys if you have no one to lead you" (Quotations Page 2011).

The key motivating factor for learning a new foreign language is the teacher himself. Becoming part of the learning language is the essential element of a learner. The using of language according to proper situations makes a learner learn a new language effectively learning mainly takes place according to the necessity of the learner. One's own environment and social circumstances help motivation in learning. A continued positive feedback and appreciation of praise can influence positive behavior and further promote learner's intrinsic motivation. All students are unique; understanding them as they are, a teacher or a language advisor can improve the levels of motivation in the students.

There are many different reasons for learning a language . There are students who themselves make the decision to study and those for whom, the study of English is a compulsory part of their education. There are also many factors that may effect a student's motivation. The teacher's personality and the rapport he or she is able to establish with the student are of vital importance: so too is the ability to inspire confidence and to have answers for their questions. Teachers must also be aware and realize the important effect success has on motivation. They must be able to assess the students ability so that they are faced with the right degree of challenge: success in other words, should not be too easy or too difficult.

#### *References*

- California State University n.d. *What is the role of a teacher?* California State University, viewed 17 September 2011, <HYPERLINK "http://www.csun.edu/~meq75037/paper1.html" http://www.csun.edu/~meq75037/paper1.html>
- Dergisi, SB 2001, The effect of age and motivation factors on second language acquisition, *Journal of Social Science*, vol 11, no 2, 217-224
- Early Advantage 2011, *Three key factors for success in language and learning for children and adults*, Early-Advantage.com, viewed 17 September 2011, <HYPERLINK "http://www.early-advantage.com/Articles/earlyconsistentimmersion.aspx" http://www.early-advantage.com/Articles/earlyconsistentimmersion.aspx>
- Faulkner, T 2009, *Motivating Korean elementary students*, University of Birmingham, viewed 17 September 2011, <www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/cels/essays/secondlanguage/Module2TerryFaulkner.pdf>
- Frankfurt International School 2011, *The factors that influence the acquisition of a second language*, Fis.edu, viewed 17 September 2011, <HYPERLINK "http://esl.fis.edu/teachers/support/factors.htm" http://esl.fis.edu/teachers/support/factors.htm>

Herlihy, S 2011, *How to learn and teach English language*, EHow.com, viewed 17 September 2011, <HYPERLINK "http://www.ehow.com/how\_5452735\_learn-teach-english-

language.html"http://www.ehow.com/how\_5452735\_learn-teach-english-language.html">

Macaro, E 2003, *Teaching and learning a second language: a review of recent research*, Continuum Books

McCarthy, P 1989, *Common teaching methods*, . University of Hawai, viewed 17 September 2011, <HYPERLINK

"http://www2.honolulu.hawaii.edu/facdev/guidebk/teachtip/comteach.htm"http://www2.honolulu.hawaii.edu/facdev/guidebk/teachtip/comteach.htm">

Omniglot 2011, *Writing systems and languages of the world*, Omniglot.com, viewed 17 September 2011, <HYPERLINK

"http://www.omniglot.com/language/why.htm"http://www.omniglot.com/language/why.htm">

Quotations Page 2011, *Quotations by subject*, QuotationsPage.com, viewed 17 September 2011, HYPERLINK "http://www.quotationspage.com/subjects/learning/"

http://www.quotationspage.com/subjects/learning/

Quote Garden 2011, *Quotations about language*, Quote Garden.com, viewed 17 September 2011 <HYPERLINK

"http://www.quotegarden.com/language.html"http://www.quotegarden.com/language.html">

Richards, JC & Renandya, WA 2002, *Methodology in language teaching: an anthology of current practice*, Cambridge University Press.

Root, E 1999, *Motivation and learning strategies in a foreign language setting*, viewed 17 September 2011 <HYPERLINK "http://www.carla.umn.edu/resources/working-

papers/documents/WP14\_Learner\_of\_Korean.pdf"http://www.carla.umn.edu/resources/working-papers/documents/WP14\_Learner\_of\_Korean.pdf">

Thomson, G 1993, *Language learning in the real world for non-beginners*, LanguageImpact.com, viewed 17 September 2011, <HYPERLINK

"http://www.languageimpact.com/articles/gt/nonbegnr.htm"http://www.languageimpact.com/articles/gt/nonbegnr.htm">

Tokuhama-Espinosa, T 2003, *The ten key factors affecting successful multilingualism*, BilingualFamiliesConnect.com, viewed 17 September 2011, <HYPERLINK

"[http://www.bilingualfamiliesconnect.com/Ten%20Key%20Factors%20Influencing%20Successful%20Multilingualism\\_Tokuhama-](http://www.bilingualfamiliesconnect.com/Ten%20Key%20Factors%20Influencing%20Successful%20Multilingualism_Tokuhama-Espinosa.pdf)

[Espinosa.pdf](http://www.bilingualfamiliesconnect.com/Ten%20Key%20Factors%20Influencing%20Successful%20Multilingualism_Tokuhama-Espinosa.pdf)"[http://www.bilingualfamiliesconnect.com/Ten%20Key%20Factors%20Influencing%20Successful%20Multilingualism\\_Tokuhama-Espinosa.pdf](http://www.bilingualfamiliesconnect.com/Ten%20Key%20Factors%20Influencing%20Successful%20Multilingualism_Tokuhama-Espinosa.pdf)>

Vistawide 2011, *Why learn languages*, Vistawide.com, viewed 17 September 2011, <HYPERLINK

"[http://www.vistawide.com/languages/why\\_languages.htm](http://www.vistawide.com/languages/why_languages.htm)"[http://www.vistawide.com/languages/why\\_languages.htm](http://www.vistawide.com/languages/why_languages.htm)>