

A PROCESS-ORIENTED MODEL OF LEARNING MOTIVATION IN A HIGH APPLIED STUDIES L2 CLASSROOM

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Abstract

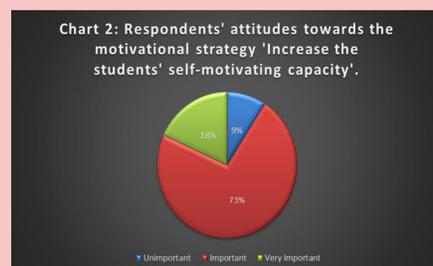
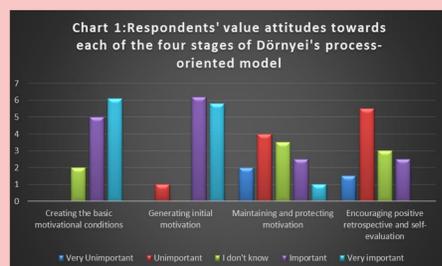
The question of how to motivate students in ESP teaching is one that does not have a single and simple answer because motivation is an extremely broad and complex construct. This paper relies on Zoltan Dörnyei's definition of motivational strategies and his process-oriented model of learning motivation in the L2 classroom. It presents the results of a survey aimed at obtaining classroom data on motivational strategies: 61 students of the Academy of Applied Studies Šabac, who all study English (L2) as an obligatory first-year subject, were asked how important they considered a selection of motivational strategies and to what extent they found the application of these strategies successful in creating, generating, maintaining and protecting their motivation for learning L2. Based on their responses, I try to identify the strategies that work best in the described learning/teaching environment and to single out strategies, if any, that tend to be underutilized in the L2 classroom.

Introduction

Dörnyei broadly defined motivational strategies as motivational influences that are consciously exerted to achieve some systematic and enduring positive effect (2001: 28). His approach is based on the process-oriented model whose components are: creating the basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation and encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation. In this paper, I examined students' attitudes to 33 motivational strategies formulated by Dörnyei (2001: 137-144), which I pre-selected and slightly modified to better fit the higher education vocational situation. The instrument was a survey that consisted of two parts: general information about the student and the 33 motivational strategies the 61 respondents were asked to evaluate using a five-point Likert scale: Very Unimportant; Unimportant; Neither Important nor Unimportant; Important; Very Important.

Results

It was assumed that the majority of respondents would recognize the importance of a great deal of motivational strategies since all of them obviously have a positive effect on motivation. Although the responses came up to this expectation, it turned out that the motivational strategies that work towards creating the basic motivational conditions and generating initial motivation, the first two components of the process-oriented model, were valued almost exclusively as either very important or important by respondents. Conversely, the motivational strategies belonging to the third and fourth stage – maintaining and protecting motivation and encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation – were considered less important by the respondents or they were indecisive about their importance. These results are presented in Chart 1 below:



Also, the results clearly showed that the strategy that is valued by students as rather important (although underutilized) in the classroom is the increase of the students' self-motivating capacity. The chart 2 above illustrates this result.

Conclusion

The application of Dörnyei's process-oriented model of learning motivation and motivational teaching practice in the L2 classroom proved to be successful in reaching the goal of this pilot research. The findings open up a few possibilities for adopting or rejecting certain strategies or improving their implementation. The motivational strategies that require particular attention mainly turned to be those for maintaining and protecting once established motivation, e.g. improving students' self-motivation, which is actually a strategy not so much used in our classroom. Some of the strategies can be further modified so that they better correspond to the high education and vocational-specific learning environment. On top of that, various sub-strategies require to be looked into more carefully, paying close attention to Dörnyei's concept of a teacher as a 'good enough motivator' (2001: 135) instead of a perfect one. Reaching the long-term goal of creating and maintaining more motivation-sensitive teaching practice of English as L2 at the Academy of Applied Studies Šabac requires further research into the self-motivation in both teachers and language learners as an important psychological factor in L2 learning. Finally, creating an overall positive motivational atmosphere in the classroom can and should be achieved through the smart and research-based selection of a few well-chosen strategies rather than the poorly managed abundance of them.

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