

Motivational Strategies in EFL Classrooms

英语学习动机的激发与培养策略

孟天 著



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内容提要

动机作为推动学生进行学习活动的内部动因对教与学的效果有关键影响。本书理论与实践相结合,对英语学习动机的激发与培养策略进行阐述,重点探讨了如何增强班级凝聚力、创造激发动机的先决条件,采用哪些教学材料、教学方法及反馈机制激发和培养学生对语法、口语、阅读、写作及反馈的兴趣,达到教学目的。

本书对英语教师、英语教研人员、英语教育专业的本科生和研究生都有参考价值。

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This book is the outcome of my research for more than a decade. I should like to thank all those teachers and friends who have enlightened, guided and encouraged me throughout the long process of my research and teaching. I derived many inspirations from interaction with them. I hope that this book will be an inspiration to some of them.

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Introduction

This book is about motivational strategies in EFL classrooms, which cannot be managed well if theoretical and practical issues are not considered and explored. Based on my research and teaching practice for more than a decade, I focus on general principles and specific implementations of motivational strategies. The samples of tasks exemplify motivational strategies that can be integrated into EFL teaching and learning, related with group bonding, grammar, speaking, reading, writing, and giving feedback.

Improper strategies may demotivate students and the impacts of some strategies are not infrequently disputed. I have tried to discuss motivational strategies helpful in my teaching contexts. However, it is not feasible for me to offer a comprehensive or synoptic account of all the strategies. I hope this book, though not exhaustive, can open up further discussion in the area of motivational strategies. Researchers and teachers can be inspired to do more exploration of motivational strategies and make them exert more significant influence on EFL teaching and learning.

This book consists of seven chapters:

Chapter One sketches the theoretical components of motivational teaching from which I have been inspired to rethink and implement motivational strategies and tasks in EFL classrooms.

Chapter Two is devoted to the concept of group cohesiveness, the advantages of promoting it, and possible ways to attain it in the language classroom through integration of its elements into the syllabus.

Chapter Three attempts to show grammar teaching involves not only a set of rules, but also meaning and use. Jokes as meaningful and interesting resources are proposed to generate a pleasant classroom atmosphere and motivate teachers and learners, and thus reduce tension and anxiety in grammar classrooms. Clear guidelines and techniques are exemplified to promote the strategy.

Chapter Four suggests the application of group work and communication strategy training to offer learners more communication opportunities and help learners achieve their communication goals. It focuses on how to make group work effective and how to teach

communication strategies.

Chapter Five focuses on the elaboration of types of graded readers and authentic reading materials for EFL learners. They are integrated into reading with the purpose of developing learners' reading strategies and arousing their genre and critical language awareness. Appraisal theories are proposed and exemplified to help learners interpret reading materials. The chapter ends with how to monitor and assess learners' reading progress with traditional and alternative methods.

Chapter Six looks at the integration of genre approach and creative writing to provide learners with the motivational opportunity to take new roles as writers and readers, arouse learners' genre awareness and develop their imagination and creativity.

The last chapter, Chapter Seven, begins with the definition and functions of feedback, nature and sources of errors; and then focuses on feedback to speaking and writing in terms of feedback techniques, and teachers' and learners' roles in dealing with feedback.

This book is intended to offer motivation theory as well as concrete suggestions for classroom practice. Samples of motivating tasks attached to every chapter demonstrate how to incorporate the theories and develop them to generate and sustain motivations in teaching practice.

As I have already indicated, the focus of the book is on the practice. I report on my own teaching and offer teaching materials that I used in my teaching contexts. However, it is teachers who ultimately need to become the prime agents of testing and adapting these strategies due to the uniqueness of each classroom. Teachers need to progressively increase understanding of motivational strategies and better the implementation in classrooms.

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Chapter One

Motivational Strategies in EFL Classrooms

1.1 Introduction

English, as a lingua franca, is a compulsory subject in the field of education in China. Students start learning English since primary education stage. For non-English-major students at colleges and universities, English is still a compulsory course. Successful English learning is a long process, which requires students' hard work with motivation.

It is significant for teachers to develop and deepen the understanding of motivation and motivational strategies. What tasks can motivate students to work hard on English? What materials can help students understand and retain grammar and vocabulary? What roles should teachers play to instill motivation into students? This chapter attempts to present definition and types of motivation, motivational strategies in the target language learning context.

1.2 Definition of motivation

Motivation is a key factor of successful learning of a second language. Ellis (1997: 75) states that motivation involves the attitudes and affective states that influence the degree of efforts that learners make to learn an L2. Harmer (2001: 51) states that motivation is some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something. Dörnyei (2001: 7) explains that motivation is responsible for the choice of a particular action, the effort expended on it and the persistence with it. Learners' motivation explains why they decide to learn the target language, how hard and how long they are going to pursue it with enthusiasm. From the cognitive view, the drive may be the need for exploration, activity, stimulation, new knowledge, and ego enhancement (Brown, 2000). Therefore, the term motivation is generally used to refer to the efforts that learners make to learn the target language as a result of their drive or need to learn it.

1.3 Types of motivation

Motivation is related with learners' contexts of learning the target language, like attitudes toward the culture represented by the target language, interest in interacting with speakers from the culture background, desire to pass exams, the result of learning, and some degree of self-identification with the target community. Four types of motivation, integrative, instrumental, intrinsic and resultative motivation, have been identified.

Integrative motivation involves an interest in learning a second language because of personal interest in the people and culture represented by the target language group (Gardner, 1985). Instrumental motivation, also termed as extrinsic motivation, is linked with the effort and desire to achieve the goal of learning the target language such as passing exams, applying for jobs, whereas intrinsic motivation is closely linked with learners' learning interest initiated by teaching contents and methods etc. (Ellis, 1997; Harmer, 2001). To a great extent, resultative motivation results from learning success in the target language.

Motivation in EFL learning contexts can be very complicated. Learners normally learn the language for a variety of motivation, for example, to be outstanding in the class, positive attitudes towards teachers' teaching behavior, and the past experience of learning. Motivation is also dynamic, going up and down depending on elements of teaching and learning environment.

1.4 Motivation constructs

Researchers have proposed L2 motivation constructs for better understanding of motivational strategies.

Dörnyei's model (1994) views motivation from a classroom perspective. Dörnyei sees L2 motivation in three levels: the language level, the learner level and the learner situation level. The language level distinguishes between the integrative and instrumental motivational subsystem. The learner level identifies individual characteristics of the learner, such as self-confidence and need for achievement. The learning situation level is concerned with specific classroom-setting motives; course-specific motivational components, teacher-specific motivational components, group-specific motivational components.

Williams and Burden's model (1997) follows different principles from Dörnyei's model (1994). Their model distinguishes the influence of internal and external factors on motivation. Internal factors cover many subcomponents, e. g. intrinsic interest of activity, feeling of competence, self-concept associated with personal strengths and weaknesses in required skills, affective factors involving confidence and anxiety. External factors range from parents and peers, to interaction with teachers and peers, to the learning environment.

The model proposed by Dörnyei (2001) focuses on the process of motivation; firstly motivation needs to be generated, and then it should be actively maintained and protected; the third phase is concerned with motivational retrospection, namely learners' retrospective evaluation of how things went.

The subcomponents of the factors which can affect motivation overlap to some extent, which indicates that there are some basic elements that can affect and influence students' feeling and engagement with learning. Harmer (2001) summarizes and groups the sources of motivation; the society learners live in, significant others, the teacher, and the teaching and learning method. The views of the target language learning from the society, parents, peers or the teacher will affect students' attitudes towards the target language. Students' attitudes towards the teaching and learning method will also, to a large extent, affect their motivation.

1.5 Motivational teaching in EFL classrooms

Motivation can be initiated, increased, developed and sustained with strategies. Motivating language learners is of great importance. However, EFL classrooms are very complicated when teachers attempt to motivate students. They should take account of a variety of factors.

1.5.1 Motivational teaching practice

Dörnyei (2001:28) defines motivational strategies as techniques that promote the individual's goal-related behavior. Figure 1.1 summarizes the components of motivational teaching practice in the L2 classrooms and accommodates strategies that can affect teaching and learning result;

The systemic framework of motivational teaching practice in the L2 classroom pro-

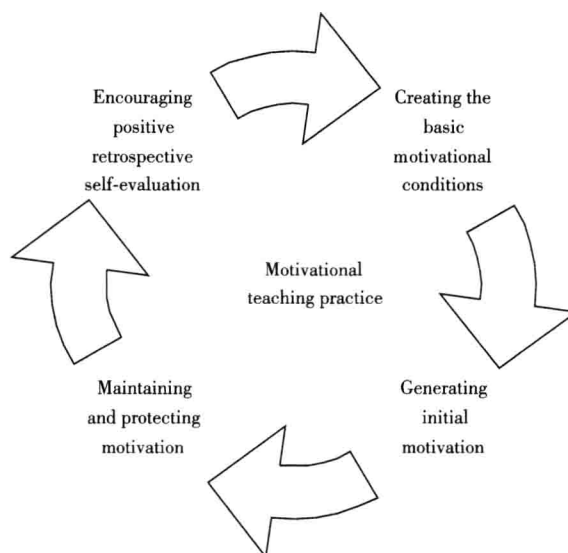


Figure 1.1 The components of motivational teaching practice in the L2 classroom (adapted from Dörnyei, 2001: 29).

posed by Dörnyei (2001:29) shows that the application of the strategies is process-oriented, comprising four phases: creating the basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation, and encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation.

Certain preconditions need to be established to move to the step of generating motivation: appropriate teachers' behavior and a good relationship with students, a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere and a cohesive learner group with appropriate group norms.

Generating initial motivation requires enhancing learners' language-related values and attitudes, increasing learners' expectancy of success, increasing learners' goal-orientedness, making the teaching materials relevant to learners and creating realistic learner beliefs.

Maintaining and protecting motivation consists of making learning stimulating and enjoyable, presenting tasks in a motivating way, setting specific learner goals, protecting learners' self-esteem and increasing learners' self-confidence, allowing learners to maintain a positive social image, creating learner autonomy, promoting self-motivating strategies, and promoting cooperation among learners.