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Motivation for Learning English as a Second Language in Higher School: Comparative Analysis in Diachronic Aspect

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Abstract

The authors present the results of research carried out in 2017/2018 academic year and compare them with the results obtained in 1999/2000 academic year. The aim of the study was to find out the changes in students' motivation for learning English as a second language in general and changes in hierarchy of motives which have a strong positive effect on learning English as a second language from diachronic point of view. The methods of mathematical statistics and computer data processing as well as discursive reflection for making conclusions were used in the research. 97 Law, Economics and Agro-ecology students of National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine completed a questionnaire for collecting data and evaluating motives. The results of the research have shed light on motives and motivation of present-day Law, Economics and Agro-ecology students who learn English as a second language at higher educational institution.

Keywords: motivation, motivation for learning English as a second language, intrinsic motivation for learning English, extrinsic motivation for learning English, motives, students of higher educational institution, higher educational institution, higher education

Introduction

The problem of understanding motivational sphere of students who learn foreign languages in general and English for Specific Purposes in particular, which is considered in our study, has always been of special interest to different scientists all over the world. It is indeed an important scientific problem that has historical, cultural and educational significance in the light of the changes Ukraine has been experiencing since gaining its independence in 1991 and joining in the Bologna process in 2005. The major changes in the Ukrainian society connected with these important events subsequently caused changes in almost all spheres of life of Ukrainians. Due to Ukraine's enhanced cooperation

with many countries of the world, knowledge of foreign languages (in particular English) becomes the urgent necessity for many young people. Moreover, learning foreign languages contributes to the students' awareness of universal values, the formation of their ideas about moral and ethical norms and traditions of other countries. It also plays an important positive role in a future specialist's outlook. That is why the problem of forming the motivation for learning a foreign language is one of the most urgent in the pedagogical theory and practice of higher education at the present stage.

The aim of the research

The study was carried out in order to find out what motives exert positive effect on the English language learning among the present-day Law, Agro-ecology and Economics students and compare the results with those ones obtained in 1999/2000.

Analysis of the latest research studies and publications

Many Ukrainian and foreign scientists are engaged in scientific research connected with motivation. To understand what motivates present-day students to learn the English language we have to find out what motivation is, what types of motivation are and what motives influence the students' desire to be active and participate in all types of activities not only during practical classes but after classes as well. In a general sense scientists use the concept "motivation" in order to explain human behavior. Some scientists identify intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, implying the intrinsic motivation as something that human activity creates in the human consciousness or something which can be regarded as a kind of pleasure a person can receive as a result or process of activity (Rubinshtein, 2004; Galperin, 1976). In its turn, extrinsic motivation includes the motives that manifest themselves outside a person and his/her activities. Consequently, it can be argued that intrinsic motivation is the inner source of a person's development as an individual. Such kind of motivation stimulates a person's aspiration to perfection. Extrinsic motivation alternatively to intrinsic one only guides the person to achieve his/her own goals.

Akoue, Nguemba Ndong, Okomo Allogo and Tennant (2015) distinguish three types of motivation: intrinsic, extrinsic and integrative. Thus, they say that if intrinsic motivation comes from inside the learner, extrinsic one comes from outside them. In its turn, integrative motivation is similar to extrinsic in that the pressure comes from outside, but the driving force is the desire to be part of a group and not to be left out (Akoue, Nguemba Ndong, Okomo Allogo, Tennant, 2015, p. 31).

For Beckmann and Heckhausen (2018), any person is able to anticipate future events and his/her behavior is guided by anticipatory goal states. That's why

a core component of motivation is person's striving for affectively charged goal states.

So, substantial theoretical analysis of scientific papers allows us to conclude that motivation is central in person's structure and is one of the main concepts used for explaining driving forces of human behavior and activity. In our research we consider motivation as a systemic construct which consists of extrinsic and intrinsic motives which reflect person's needs in achieving a definite goal (Aristova, 2015; Malykhin, 2005, 2009; Shamne, 2017). Speaking about motivation for learning English as a second language among the students of higher educational institutions we suppose that it is rather sustained one and it is hardly possible to bring about some changes in it. Taking into account all points of view, we distinguish two types on motivation for learning English as a second language, namely, intrinsic and extrinsic ones which, in their turn, can exert either positive or negative character. Positive intrinsic motivation in learning English can be regarded as a source for the development of student's personality which stimulates his/her desire to achieve positive academic results, become a highly-skilled professional in order to be beneficial to society. It means that it is closely connected with development of student's cognitive and personal skills. As contrasted with positive intrinsic motivation, negative one is connected with the total indisposition for personal development and growth, as well as with working towards gaining thorough knowledge. Positive extrinsic motivation directs a student at achieving personal goals connected with future career, the desire to become of the highest performer in a definite sphere. Unlike the positive extrinsic motivation, negative one is connected with student's desire to avoid some problems which can arise if the student's academic performance is low (Aristova, 2000, 2002, 2015; Malykhin, 2005, 2009).

In a broad sense the behavior of any person is determined by a great number of intrinsic and extrinsic motives which according to the definite conditions can exert either positive or negative character. The behavior of a student who studies a foreign language is not an exception. All these motives create a definite hierarchy which directs his/hers actions and express personal meaning. In our research the hierarchy of motives is regarded as a kind of ranging according to the importance degree, from the most important to the least important. And the most important thing for academic staff is to understand the nature of students' motivation in order to make the learning process efficient and successful.

Presentation of basic material of research

The research was carried out in two stages. During the first stage we developed a questionnaire conducting a pilot study among 290 students of higher education institutions of Ukraine in 1999. After the thorough analysis of the obtained results we singled out 10 most important motives in learning English mentioned by the majority of those interviewed, namely: *"I learn English be-*

cause my parents speak it fluently and I want to keep up with them"; *"Knowing English can help me find a good job abroad"*; *"If I speak English fluently I'll be able to get a good job in a joint company"*; *"I want to speak English fluently in order to communicate with people from different countries"*; *"I learn English only because it is a part of the curriculum"*; *"I want to get academic success in learning a foreign language"*; *"I feel cognitive interest in learning English"*; *"I take pleasure from learning English"*; *"I think that learning English is important for self-improvement"*; *"I think that learning English is important for my future scientific activity"* (Aristova, 2000). Then we selected 91 first- and second-year Law, Economics and Biology students to rate them by recording a number from 1 to 10 (1 – the most influential, 10 – the least influential).

During the second stage we selected 97 first- and second-year Law, Economics and Agro-ecology students of National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine and asked them to rate the motives singled out in 1999. After the qualitative analysis we compared the results with those ones obtained in 1999/2000 academic year.

Having analyzed the obtained results we found out that the most important motive for the present-day first- and second-year Law, Economics and Agro-ecology students is *"If I speak English fluently I'll be able to get a good job in a joint company"* (289.0 points). Students explain that *nowadays in Ukraine there are many joint companies which require specialists with profound knowledge of English*. They also add that *in most cases in Ukraine the salary depends on professionals' ability to speak the English language fluently as they have to represent their company at different meeting and conferences, effectively engage in negotiations with foreign partners etc.* The importance of this motive indicates the more pragmatic approach of present-day students in motivating themselves to learn English. In 1999/2000 academic year this motive took the second place with 355.5 points.

The second place is given to the motive *"Knowing English can help me find a good job abroad"* (342.0 points). We explain the importance of this motive with the development of academic and professional mobility of students and academic faculty. Thus, contemporary students as well as young professionals are able to take part in different exchange programs due to which they get experience of studying at foreign universities and working in foreign companies. Having practical experience of working abroad such students believe that they will find a good job easily. In 1999/2000 academic year this motive took the fifth place with 445.5 points. The difference in rating these motives can be explained by the fact that exchange and mobility programs were very rare back then and in 2000 students were not able to take part in them freely.

The third most influential motive is *"I want to speak English fluently in order to communicate with people from different countries"* (442.0). Most of stu-

dents mention that knowing a foreign language and especially English and being able to speak it fluently provides a unique opportunity to communicate with people all over the world. 1999/2000 academic year this motive took the first place with 313.0 points. The importance of this motive back then can be explained by the fact that when Ukraine was a part of the Soviet Union people had no opportunity to travel abroad freely that's why knowing languages was not of great importance to them. Situation changed dramatically after gaining Independence in 1991. When Ukraine gained its Independence Ukrainians started traveling abroad and understood that knowing different languages in general and English in particular played a great role in communicating with people all over the world.

"I think that learning English is important for self-improvement" is one more motive which changed its position in the hierarchy. It took the fifth place with 470.0 points in comparison with the results obtained in 1999/2000 academic year when it took the third place with 432.5 points. We can conclude that although this motive is no longer as important as it was many years ago it still plays a significant role in motivating students to learn the English language. Self-improvement which includes all spheres of peoples' lives and activities is such a process which lasts for long. For most students who would like to succeed in their future careers self-improvement is closely connected with learning and mastering English.

Conclusion

To sum up, due to conducted research we found out the changes in students' motivation for learning English as a second language in general and changes in hierarchy of motives which have a strong positive effect on learning English as a second language from diachronic point of view. The research supports our assumption that motivation for learning English as a second language in higher school is a sustained construct which consists of a definite set of extrinsic and intrinsic motives. All these extrinsic and intrinsic motives create a definite hierarchy which directs students' actions and expresses personal meaning. Although each student has a completely different hierarchy of motives, all the changes that are connected with motivation for learning English as a second language, on the one hand, show that it is a sustained construct that is rather difficult to change and, on the other hand, that it reflects all the changes that happen in society and attitude of people towards these changes.

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