The Importance of Teacher’s Understanding of L2 Motivational Strategies

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Abstract

Motivation is an important contributing factor to success in second language (L2) learning. It is a process that involves goals, physical or mental activities. Therefore, understanding L2 motivational strategies is important thing for the teachers. Those who use the motivational strategies in teaching can greatly enhance the classroom experience and student performance. What are the strategies of L2 motivation, and how these can be implement in teaching are reviewed from some literature. For some studies, strategies of motivation that used by teachers are affecting the students’ achievement in learning. Thus, this study discusses the importance of teachers’ understanding of L2 motivational strategies by giving some models of L2 motivational strategies and the implementation. This study will be benefit for language teacher to promote English language learning.

Keywords: motivation, L2 motivation strategies, models, implementation

Introduction

In the field of education, motivation is one important part of the learning process. This is because the motivation is included as a factor that can affect the success of L2 learning (Nicholson, 2013:277). Thus, it is important for teachers to understand L2 motivational strategies.

In an article that written by Lee (2015) entitled Factors Affecting the Use of L2 Motivational Strategies: Teachers Understanding of Motivation and Beyond, teachers’ second language learning and teaching experiences effect their understanding of second language motivation, and a variety of factors pertaining to teachers, students, and institutions are influential in the use of strategies. Teachers’ understanding of L2 motivational strategies becomes a factor that influences the teachers in using the motivational strategies in teaching. This result is related to the importance of understanding the strategies.

Due to insufficient evidence from previous research, it remains unclear why some teachers may be reluctant adopt L2 motivational strategies. It is also hard to evaluate how deeply any recommended strategy will permeate into actual teaching. From the view of research gaps, teachers’ perceptions of L2 motivation with reference to existing research and their own experience are analyzed. It is
also identified factors other than understanding of motivation that effect teachers’ use of motivational strategies.

Lee’s study used exploratory research on a wide range of potential factors that may affect the actual use of strategies in-depth interviews with three Hong Kong community college English teachers with different background of qualifications, research interests, and teaching experience.

UNDERSTANDING OF L2 MOTIVATION

The interview data of Lee’s study demonstrates the complexity of the teachers’ understanding of L2 motivation. Although they exhibited different degrees of familiarity with research, all interviewees provided detail and thoughtful accounts of their perceptions of L2 motivation and the relevance of their L2 experience to those perceptions. Whilst not all interviewees associated their understanding of L2 motivation with research, their description of L2 motivation was largely aligned with existing theories and frameworks, particularly those which are more closely concerned with the classroom setting and teachers’ roles. Teacher W demonstrated a noticeably higher level of knowledge about L2 motivation research, which may be explained by her higher educational qualifications and exposure to applied linguistics research.

FACTORS AFFECTING THE USE OF L2 MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES

In spite of richness of the interviewees’ understanding of L2 motivation, Lee found that it was a somewhat insignificant factor in determining their use of L2 motivational strategies. This may result from the rather homogenous L2 profiles, needs, and motives of community college students, which cause English teachers to employ similar strategies regardless of their own views on L2 motivation. Alternatively, the findings may have been influenced by a culture-specific trait among Hong Kong English teachers that was not uncovered in the interviews. The weak link between teachers’ perspectives of L2 motivation and their strategy use, coupled with the reported low usefulness of strategy guidelines, implies that simply presenting L2 motivation research and lists of
recommended strategies in teacher training may be insufficient to change teachers’ motivational practice.

The most significant factors affecting teachers’ use of L2 motivational strategies were all related to some extent to the feasibility of strategy use. In his study, it seems that the L2 teachers were preoccupied with feasibility rather than importance and effectiveness.

All in all, teachers’ understanding of L2 motivation is one of the important factors that influence the use of L2 motivational strategies as supported by Gömleksiz (2001) it is very difficult to teach a second language in a learning environment if the learner does not have desire to learn a language. Considering the importance of teachers’ understanding of L2 motivational strategies, this paper will provide the theory of L2 motivational strategies and the importance of L2 motivational strategies.

L2 MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES

Teachers have to understand the theory of L2 motivational strategies in order to make them easy in implementing the right strategies in the classroom. According to Dörnyei (2001:28), “motivational strategies are techniques that promote the individual’s goal-related behavior.” These refer to those motivational influences that are consciously exerted to achieve some systematic and enduring positive effect. He promoted several ways to organize the strategies as follows:

- focus on the internal structure of a typical language class and cluster the strategies according to the various structural units (e.g. strategies to present new material, give feedback, set up communicative tasks or assign homework).
- design a primarily trouble-shooting guide in which some particularly problematic facets of the classroom's motivational life are listed and suggestions are offered on how to handle these (e.g. how to deal with student lethargy; lack of voluntary participation; or anti-learning influences of deviant children).
- focus on key motivational concepts, such as intrinsic interest, self-confidence or student autonomy, and use these as the main organizing units.
• center the discussion on the main types of teacher behavior that have motivating effects (e.g. showing a good example and modeling student behavior; communication and rapport with the students; consciousness raising about self-regulated strategies; or stage managing classroom events).

Dörnyei also provided the components of motivational teaching practice in the L2 classroom. They are creating the basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation, and encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation. They can be described as follow:

![Diagram of Motivational Teaching Practice](image_url)
Besides knowing the components of motivational practice, teachers should also recognize that there are different variables for motivational strategies called cognitive, affective, and social (Chastain, 1988). Some students are motivated by a desire to know (cognitive drive), a means of enhancing their self-concepts (ego enhancement), and social factors (social affiliation). By having this knowledge teachers are expected to use appropriate strategies for teaching practice.

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE L2 MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES

Feng and Chen (2009) stated that motivation is the driving force to encourage the learners to learn, while strategy being the techniques or devices for a learner to use for gaining knowledge. It can conclude that L2 Motivational strategies as techniques that are used to encourage L2 students to achieve the successfulness of learning.

According to Gardner (1985), research in language learning strategies suggested that several factors could influence strategy use. However, motivation is regarded as the most important one. To learn language, a learner should be motivated. Brown (2000) said that motivation is probably the most frequently catch-all term for the explaining the success or failure of virtually any complex task. Without the proper motivation for the students to engage in a learning experience, the best designed experience will be unsuccessful.

Considering the motivation level of learner is the most important factor in successful instruction (Crooks and Schamidt, 1991). Feng and Chen (2009) stated that integral combination of motivation and strategy is a key to successful language learning, while ill-advised use of learning strategy will lead to failure. It is important for teacher to be sensitive of individual difference in choosing the appropriate L2 motivational strategy. Knowing the strategies which promote motivation can help teachers have a better understanding about the role of motivation in learning second language.

By having wide knowledge about L2 motivational strategies will make teachers aware that the strategies should be implemented in the teaching practice. And they have to use appropriate strategy for their students. The choice of the
right strategy will bring their students success in achieving the goal of learning language. As stated by Anjomshoa and Sadiqhi (2015:135), the importance of the teacher factor in having a high level of motivation in second language acquisition cannot be neglected. The success of a teacher in second language acquisition in school affects directly the success of learners.

CONCLUSION

This article has discussed Lee’s (2015) article on Factors Affecting the Use of L2 Motivational Strategies: Teachers’ Understanding of Motivation and Beyond which the conclusion that the most significant factors affecting teachers’ use of L2 motivational strategies of were all related to some extent to the feasibility of strategy use rather than importance and effectiveness. Therefore, the importance of teachers’ understanding of L2 motivational strategies is the main factors in using the strategies in teaching process. Based on Lee’s article the writer gives more additional theories related the L2 motivational strategies and the importance of the strategy in other to encourage the teachers to use the L2 motivational strategies.

REFERENCES


