

# Example of engaging class motivation in second language learning essay

[Profession](#), [Student](#)



## - Motivation Models

When learning a new language, there are many theories and models demonstrating how motivation can be achieved. The most prevailing one is what Dorney (2003), Professor of Psycholinguistics at the University of Nottingham, calls intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In detail, an intrinsically motivated student studies because he/she finds learning fascinating and a truly rewarding experience. An extrinsically motivated student, on the other hand, studies to get good grades and to enjoy peer and teacher appraisal for his/her academic performance. However, motivation is a real challenge, given the variety of learning styles and student attitudes (Deci & Flaste). To each of the four core skills in second language learning, that of speaking, writing, reading and listening, every student responds differently, depending on their aptitudes, which determine their success level in second language learning (Skehan). Others argue that self-efficacy is the most important factor that ascertains student success in learning (Dorney).

Dornyei (2002) defines tasks as « the primary instructional variables or building blocks of classroom learning» (137) and also that they are « discrete units of situated learning behaviors” (139).

Intrinsic motivation can be promoted with classroom activities. If a task is interesting and is presented in an engaging way, students might value the particular activity and be motivated towards learning. According to research, how a student feels about a specific task is all about the generalized motives and situation-specific motives (Boekaerts). In other words, a student can be motivated by a classroom activity either because of their personal traits, or due to a motivation in a given situation, respectively.

Dorney (2001) adds another three dimensions in task motivation that include appraisal, task execution and action control (31). Appraisal is directly linked to the environment in which a task is executed. Task execution is how a task is executed. Something very interesting can bring boredom to the class if not presented properly, and a task that is not so intriguing can become of true value depending on the way it is presented in class. Of course, the teacher's personal style and character play an important role in presenting a task to the class. Action control is how learning can be achieved by task motivation. In order to motivate all students, it is preferred a teacher to assign individual, competitive and cooperative tasks (Dörnyei). It makes sense, though, that cooperative tasks that allow students to interact with other classmates and contribute in completing a task, are more appealing. However, if a class has high-achieving students, individual tasks can be equally motivating. It all depends on each student's likes and dislikes. What is more, tasks that have an element of surprise and students do not have a clear idea of what is about to happen after they complete a task are generally more motivating than tasks that are predictable (Dörnyei). Additionally, if a teacher wants tasks that are easy to manage and allow more flexibility, an open task, where many answers can be taken as correct, make a perfect fit to a class with low-achieving students (Dörnyei). However, no task is likely to engage a student that is unwilling to communicate or is distinguished by low self-confidence (Dörnyei)

- Other Effective Ways to Motivate L2 Students

Perhaps the challenge in student motivation is not only how to make language learning process engaging, but also how to maintain class

motivation. Motivation that reaches utmost levels come from the foreign exchange programs (Berwick et. al) or any other activity that allows students to reside and get to know the second language's cultural background and way of living. Those programs normally apply to university-level students, leaving secondary school students out.

A student that is encouraged is definitely a motivated student that participates in class activities and tasks and wants to further develop their skills related to the target language. For that reason, if a teacher manages to let students feel a sense of achievement while executing an assigned task, will have made a great start towards student engagement (Strong 1983, cited in Ellis 1997).

Undoubtedly, an appealing text is a significant factor that determines whether students will be motivated in the classroom. For example, huge bulks of grammar and vocabulary within a text are usually turning students off from learning. And, it does not need much thought to say that any task students enjoy working on, for any reason, can be included in the list of motivating tasks.

Providing students with autonomy, meaning freedom to express their ideas helps them to acquire language acquisition faster and easier (Dörnyei & Ushioda). By having autonomy, students are in charge of their own learning and manage their assignments. On the other hand, autonomy can turn into a boomerang for a teacher, if he/she does not control the level of autonomy he/she gives students. So, autonomy should be properly limited and not allow students believe that their teacher is not competent enough to teach; hence does not take him/her seriously (Dörnyei & Ushioda).

If a student is given the chance to develop their very own strategies that will help him/her cope with a task, helps in staying motivated, especially in challenging learning situations (Deci and Ryan). In other words, student competence is essential to student engagement when learning a second language. A teacher's role is very important at this stage, as they need to properly evaluate the tasks that are about to be given to the class and determine which one is neither too difficult, nor too easy. A task with increased difficulty will make students feel less competent and prefer to opt out of the task, while a fairly easy task might bet them bored and totally uninterested in the task. Ideally, a given task evolves and is of medium-level difficulty.

Last, but not least, being part of a community is crucial to everybody, including students, who want to both achieve proficient learning acquisition and be part of the target community at the same time (Gardner). The community students want to feel they fit in, is that where goals are shared with their peers and teachers. When students acquire pleasant experiences from their involvement in the aforementioned communities, they develop strong relationships with other community members, which enhances motivation level (Dörnyei, 2002).

#### - Motivating Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

According to the Council for Exceptional Children, among the student body, there will definitely be students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD (Lavoie). In fact, the 10 percent of the student body have ADHD (Lavoie). Those students are distinguished with lack of concentration and inability to stay still for long. What teachers need to do in these cases, is to

try to make those students focus on the given task, by keeping them away from distractions. For that reason, a first smart move could be to seat them away from the windows and the door. Also, students with ADHD need to face front and see the teacher. Again, the teacher's personality plays a vital role. It takes a lot of patience and true, genuine flair for teaching to be able to reach out to students with ADHD. What is important, though, is that teachers know students with ADHD need utmost stimulation, else they create excitement in their lives by disrupting their environment (Lavoie). The performance and motivation of a child with ADHD are affected by " his degree of interest in the activity, the difficulty of the activity, and the duration of the task. He will have significant difficulty with tasks that require organization, planning, inhibition, self-monitoring, and sustained effort" (Lavoie). So, if the curriculum is stimulating and interesting, the student with ADHD will experience the least distractions possible.

## **Conclusion**

Motivating students is a problem almost all teachers around the globe will need to cope with, at some point of their professional lives. Among the numerous theorists, Zoltan Dörnyei's viewpoints about student motivation are greatly valued throughout this paper, as his theories and models about second language learning have been vastly embraced by the world of education and academia.

Of course, undeniably, teachers play a crucial role in student motivation, when the latter need to learn a second language. Educators need to come up with effective lesson plans that will include tasks that are not too difficult, to prevent students from feeling incompetent, or too easy, as students need

not to be bored when working on a task. Perhaps the most serious part in student motivation is how to keep them motivated for long, ideally as the second language learning process lasts. In this case, a teacher's personality is the key.

Autonomy was also put under the microscope and it turned out that students appreciate been given the freedom to manage their own learning, but not complete freedom to do as they please when assigned with tasks, as they might go overboard and think their teachers are not competent enough to teach them something of true value.

Also, any task that allows students feel part of a community that bear the same goals makes them more effective in learning and definitely more motivated to learning a second language where achievements are appraised. Also, the type of a given task is essential. Those tasks distinguished by the element of surprise are far more preferable than those where the final outcome is predictable. Finally, any tasks that have more than one correct answer drive student motivation to the highest limits, especially if the teacher has minded the difficulty level of the given task does not exceed the student's achieving levels and is not too easy either.

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