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Gökçe DİŞLEN¹

**THE REASONS OF LACK OF MOTIVATION FROM THE
STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' VOICES**

ABSTRACT

Motivation has been centre of attention among teachers throughout the years because it constitutes the backbone of learning process. Learning is a complicated and dynamic process, and learning in real sense gets completed through motivation. Since will to learn builds one of the basic elements of learning, students take an important step on the road to learning through motivation. However, students may sometimes lose their willingness and interest towards lesson, which puts a major barrier in front of effective language learning. Therefore, this study is concerned with lack of motivation. To begin with, this study explores the reasons of disinterest students display towards language-learning. Next, it dwells upon the ways of promoting motivation of the students showing reluctance against foreign language learning. The teachers and students in a high school were the participants of this study. The data were collected through classroom observation, interview with teachers and questionnaire to students.

Key Words: lack of motivation, foreign language learning, promoting motivation

**ÖĞRENCİLERİN VE ÖĞRETMENLERİN İFADELERİ İLE MOTİVASYON
EKSİKLİĞİNİN SEBEPLERİ**

ÖZET

Motivasyon, öğrenme sürecinin temelini oluşturduğu için yıllarca öğretmenlerin ilgi merkezi olmuştur. Öğrenme, karmaşık ve dinamik bir süreçtir, ve gerçek anlamda öğrenme motivasyon ile tamamlanır. İstek, öğrenmenin temel unsurlarından biri olduğu için, öğrenciler motivasyon ile öğrenme yolunda önemli bir adım atarlar. Ancak, bazı zamanlar derse karşı ilgi ve isteklerini yitirebilirler, ki bu da etkili dil öğreniminin önünde büyük bir engeldir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma motivasyon eksikliği ile ilgilidir. Çalışma, ilk olarak, öğrencilerin dil öğrenmeye karşı gösterdikleri ilgisizliğin sebeplerini araştırır. Daha sonra, yabancı dil öğrenimine isteksizlik gösteren öğrencilerin motivasyonlarını artırma yollarına odaklanır. Çalışmanın katılımcılarını, lise öğretmen ve öğrencileri oluşturmaktadır. Veriler, sınıf gözlemi, öğretmenlerle sözlü görüşme ve öğrencilere anket uygulaması ile toplanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: motivasyon eksikliği, yabancı dil öğrenimi, motivasyon artırma

¹ Adana Bilim ve Teknoloji Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksek Okulu, gdislen@adanabtu.edu.tr

1. INTRODUCTION

Motivation is a key term in language learning and it is multidimensional. For this reason, it has different definitions. Williams and Burden (1997, 120) define motivation in general as follows:

- a state of cognitive and emotional arousal
- which leads to conscious decision to act and
- which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and /or physical effort
- in order to attain a previously set goal or (goals)

As it is clear, motivation is a process. It is not an aim, like a product. On the contrary, it is a tool that helps us to reach our aim. First, we feel an interest and set a goal and decide to take an action accordingly. Then, we try to maintain our interest and struggle to realize our purpose. This process plays a big role especially in language learning since it makes language learning more meaningful. Slavin (1997, 345) describes this process in a general sense: "...motivation is what gets you going, keeps you going and determines where you are trying to go". As it is obvious, motivation provides students with a direction to follow. It is a concept revealing the reasons why people act and think as they do (Weiner 1992 in Włodkowski 1999). These aspects of motivation are supported by Brophy's approach to motivation (1998, 3): "Motivation is a theoretical construct used to explain the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of behaviour, especially goal-directed behaviour. In the classroom context, the concept of student motivation is used to explain the degree to which students invest attention and effort in various pursuits, which may or may not be the ones desired by the teacher". As it is obvious, motivation constitutes one of the significant backbones of learning process in student life; hence a lot of studies place a high a value on this concept. However, lack of motivation still constitutes a serious problem both for teachers and students in language classrooms. What is important is to determine the causes of inadequate motivation and know how to handle with students lacking motivation. Timmins (1999) suggests finding out the reasons of lack of motivation in students by using psychology in the classroom. Thus, it is of great importance for teachers to take affective factors into account. When students have low self-confidence and self-esteem, high anxiety and inhibition, their level of motivation is destroyed. Moreover, teachers' negative attitude towards students and non-supportive classroom environments damage students' willingness towards lesson. Shortage of positive reinforcements, approval and appreciation of students by teachers influences motivation to learn negatively. As Nakamura (2000, 84) asserts, "Nothing contributes to one's self esteem, resiliency and overall wellness more than being accepted". Hence, any threat to students' psychological well-being decreases their interest in lesson. However, it is not a problem that cannot be solved. Teachers should take more careful roles. McDonough (2007, 2) describes teacher's role in this matter as follows: "It involves providing a supportive and challenging learning environment, but also facilitating the development of the learners' own motivational thinking, beyond simply identifying their original orientation". Likewise, willingness in role transfer between teacher and students cultivates motivation to learn, thus positive feelings on account of the fact that students assume more active roles in learning. As Scharle and Szabo (2005, 7) indicate, "a feeling of responsibility and independence brings a sense of well-being and confidence". In the classrooms where teachers present students with the chance to get active participants, students become more eager towards lesson. Thus, learner autonomy promotes their level of motivation to learn. Autonomy supportive environments providing students with choice and encouragement for

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personal initiative enhance autonomous motivation (Gagne 2003). Such a responsible behaviour of student boosts motivation as “meaningful choice engenders willingness, and the willingness is the door to increased motivation” (Harper 2007, 25). Furthermore, preparing the lesson in a way that will be attractive to the students helps the teacher enhance their motivation to learn. Fulfilment of students’ needs acts as a hindrance for lack of motivation. Concerning the issue, Self-Determination Theory, a theory of motivation, is based on the satisfaction of some psychological needs. Ryan and Deci (2000, 68) specify these needs as autonomy, competence and relatedness and add that “competence, autonomy and relatedness, when satisfied, yield enhanced self-motivation and mental health and, when thwarted, lead to diminished motivation and well-being”. This theory also addresses the social conditions that foster or reduce motivation in parallel with the fulfilment of psychological needs (Deci & Ryan 2008). Considering that language learning gets completed through interaction, it seems reasonable to take social variables into account. At this point, teacher’s level of awareness regarding the issue holds great significance. It is of importance for the teacher to be conscious of his/her roles, learning process itself and both in-class and out-class learning conditions. As Glasser (2001, 88) advises teachers, quitting the “role of worker” and regarding themselves as “modern managers” render classroom environment more satisfying. Likewise, Longworth (2003, 30) identifies inspirational skill of teachers as “stimulating learning into an enjoyable experience through a knowledge of psychology of learning motivation and how to overcome barriers to learning confidence”. As it is apparent, motivation, one of the affective factors in learning process, has an important place in educational context.

All in all, language learning requires time and effort. Most of the time students lose their interest and enthusiasm towards language learning due to negative feelings such as low self-confidence and esteem, excessive anxiety, teacher’s harsh and discouraging attitude and psychologically insecure classroom atmospheres. However, it is not impossible to make students more willing to learn. By making lessons more appealing through different activities, building supportive environments, and reinforcing students positively, teachers can foster students’ interest and take sound steps on the path to increasing motivation.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Aim of the Study

This study is a classroom research, focused on finding a solution to the motivational problem in the classroom; thus, the main purpose of the study is to determine why some students are so disinterested in lesson and find ways of enhancing their motivation to learn. The questions below constitute the foundation of the study:

- 1) What are the reasons of some students disinterest in English lesson at high school?
- 2) What are the ways of promoting these students’ motivation towards English lesson?

2.2. Research Design

This study is descriptive in nature. Students and the teacher were observed in real classroom environment. Data were gathered from three sources. Qualitative research design was applied. Data were subjected to the content analysis. “Content analysis is used to refer to any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (Patton 2002, 453). In the content analysis, frequencies of occurrence of ideas were counted, recurring responses of different

participants were noted and these data were interpreted. At the end themes were specified and data were interpreted reflectively.

2.3. Participants

Two parties from high school environment participated in this study. In other words, the study consisted of both teachers and students at an Anatolian High School in Adana. Students were chosen by Purposive Sampling since they were sampled with a purpose in mind. McMillan and Schumacher (1997) notes that such kind of sampling promotes the usage of information gathered from small samples. The students were 9th grade students. Since the study is a classroom research in nature, only 15 students took part in the study. The study did not take the gender of the students and teachers into account.

2.4. Instrumentation

Observation, interview and questionnaire were used for collecting the required data in this study. I was participant observer and interviewer during the data collection.

2.4.1. Observation

The students and teacher in the EFL classroom were observed during their class hours. These observations were conducted in order to determine the reasons of lack of motivation in learning English.

2.4.2. Interview with the Teachers

The teachers were asked about the causes of disinterest in learning the target language. Furthermore, thorough interview they were asked some questions about what the possible ways of maintaining motivation in the classroom. The main interview was performed with the teacher whose classroom was observed. However, questions were asked to other English teachers so as to learn their opinions in a collaborative framework. Each viewpoint was expected to contribute to the solution of the problem. Through interview it was aimed to elicit how teachers deem the issue of motivation in language learning.

2.4.3. Questionnaire to the Students

An open-ended questionnaire was given to the 9th grade high school students. In this study, open-ended questionnaire aimed at allowing students to express their feelings and thoughts freely without limitation. Students were asked when they felt motivated or unmotivated during the lesson. They were also asked what factors affected their willingness towards lesson. What is more, the question of what kind of language classroom they imagined or dreamt was asked to the students. The questionnaire played a role in making students' beliefs and standpoints explicit regarding the concept of motivation. They were ensured their names would not be exposed without their consent.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

3.1. Analysis of the Observation

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I attended one classroom to observe the reasons of disinterest that some students displayed in that classroom. During the observations, I tried to focus on the behaviours of those students. This way, it was aimed to find out what kind of factors or situations lead to lack of motivation in English lesson and to produce possible solutions to this problem.

Students were observed in their real classroom environments. Some of the students hesitated to get involved in the lesson. When the teacher asked questions, they were not much eager to answer. Especially three of the students were the least motivated ones. It was difficult for them to focus on the lesson. They were the ones who did not do their homework among other students. When the teacher asked them the reasons of their not doing homework, it was easy to observe that they did not give enough importance to completing it. They tried to find such excuses for their mistake as having exams of other lessons. Their lack of motivation reflected itself upon the incomplete homework. They did not make an effort to answer even the questions asked to warm them up for the lesson. Even in the presentation phase of the lesson, it was difficult to arouse their interest. No matter how risk-taker they got sometimes during the lesson, the involvement level decreased when tricky questions were asked. They were good at transformation questions, ones asking transforming affirmative sentences to negative and vice versa due to the fact that such questions were easy, non-challenging and they did not require working their minds much. They felt safe with mechanical exercises. Furthermore, they got stuck with repetition questions since they did not listen to the teacher. The teacher asked for them to repeat what was said; however, they could not answer as they got busy with other things than the lesson. What is more, they did not show much interest when the teacher gave homework for the next lesson. It was obvious that they did not take pleasure, fun and joy out of studying a foreign language. However, it is worth mentioning that they did not display a serious misbehaviour in spite of the fact that they were unwilling towards the lesson. There was not a negative classroom environment. The teacher built a positive environment. It was clear that she had a good relationship with her students. She respected them, took a warm attitude towards them and she made an effort not to make them feel offended and humiliated. She cared to help students feel relaxed in the classroom. Despite this, some students did not take an interest in English. The biggest problem for them in that classroom was lack of motivation. The reason of this situation seemed as those students' negative attitude towards English. They did not feel will to learn within themselves. Apart from extrinsic motivation, they also lacked intrinsic motivation. This shortage of motivation, eagerness and willingness made them not take pleasure out of learning English.

All in all, some students did not make an effort to participate in the lesson and lacked both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, which constituted a problem for that classroom. Although the teacher took a helpful attitude, they did not take an interest in the lesson much, which may result from the unawareness of the importance of learning a foreign language.

3.2. Analysis of the Interview with the Teacher

I conducted an interview with the English teacher of the related classroom. I took her ideas about the causes of lack of motivation in students and times they feel willing towards lesson. She talked about the possible ways of fostering students' motivation to learn and teachers' role in helping students feel eager to participate in the lesson, as well. Other English teachers in the school declared their opinions on this issue, which supported the findings of the research. The responses of the English teacher of the concerned classroom are propounded below:

Table 1. Results of Interview with the Teacher

Questions	Teacher's Responses
Reasons of lack of motivation in students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Difficulty in concentration • Habits of solving multiple choice questions • Overloading • Language lesson hours • Syllabus • Health problems • Shortage of material
Times when students feel motivated towards lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start of new subject • Times of communication • When provided with positive reinforcements • Attractive materials • Appealing examples
Techniques and methods than can increase students' level of participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usage of visual aids • Communicative approach • Grammar teaching • Using body language
Teacher's role in fostering students' motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building positive environment • Appealing to students' needs and interests • Being interested in current issues and giving current examples

The interview began with the question that asked the reasons of lack of motivation seen in the EFL classroom. The teacher of the concerned classroom stated that students' age plays a big role in their level of motivation. Since they are adolescents, they feel less interested in the lesson. Similarly, they have difficulty in concentrating on the lesson.

Moreover, the teacher claimed that students are not interested in social sciences and they get accustomed to solving multiple choice questions, which decreases their willingness. They do not like challenging questions. Likewise, doing too many exercises and overloading the students affect their motivation negatively. They get tired of answering too many questions. According to the teacher, the hours of language lessons are a big problem for them. Students feel reluctant to learn when English lesson is at the last hour. They feel exhausted and their level of will diminishes. Furthermore, the teacher said that syllabus density affects students' motivation negatively. Teachers rush to finish the syllabus, which results in ineffective teaching and learning with unmotivated students. That's why; the teacher suggests that the syllabus contain around 5 items. She also notes that one of the least motivated students has health problems. That student has attention deficiency disorder and takes pills for it. She believes that the disorder influences his motivation adversely. What is more, the teacher explains that there is shortage of materials, which puts a barrier in front of them to arouse students' interest.

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The interview continued with the question that asked the times when students feel motivated towards lesson. The teacher noted that students get willing at the beginning of a new subject. They get curious about the new item. They also enjoy the lesson during communication. When they speak in English, they feel more fun and joy. For this reason, the teacher recommends teaching English for communicative purposes. This way, lesson becomes more meaningful and purposeful for the students. She also adds that positive reinforcements such as verbal and nonverbal praises, approval of the students make them feel willing towards lesson and increase their self-confidence. They feel more relaxed when they feel the sense of success. Moreover, the teacher said that students get more eager to learn when attractive materials are used in the classroom. Such materials attract their attention and keep them alert. She also adds that examples from teacher's private life take students' attention much.

The third question asked about the techniques that increase students' level of participation. The teacher pointed out that usage of visual aids promotes students' learning; thus, they improve students' attention and interest. Visual aids such as posters, pictures attract their attention and make lesson more colourful for them. This way they begin to take more interest in the lesson. Similarly, using body language makes lesson more understandable, which increases students' motivation. When lesson gets clear and comprehensible, they feel more willing. She also emphasized the importance of communicative approach. When students are taught to communicate in English, they feel more willing and they see they can speak in English. However, she places a great value on grammar teaching, as well. She regards grammar as a tool for teaching speaking.

The last question was about the teachers' role in fostering students' motivation. The teacher stated that building a positive environment holds a great importance in students' motivation. When students feel relaxed, their level of interest is improved. She also noted that appealing to students' needs and interest renders them more motivated to learn. The teacher furthered that teachers' being interested in current issues and giving current examples make students more involved in the lesson. This way, they can build relationships and understand the lesson better.

3.2.1. General Ideas

Other English teachers explained their opinions on this issue apart from the classroom teacher. One of the teachers believes that different type questions instead of multiple choice or fill in the blanks challenge the students and decrease their motivation. They are accustomed to traditional language learning. She also adds that students coming from private schools to public school have lack of motivation. They feel too relaxed in the lesson and they do not show much interest in lesson. Lack of motivation in teachers was also mentioned by teachers.

3.3. Analysis of the Questionnaire to the Students

In the questionnaire, 6 open-ended questions were asked to the 9th grade students to find out their opinions on the issue of motivation.

The responses of fifteen 9th grade students were analyzed in this study. The first question asked in which situations the students feel motivated towards lesson. As their answers reveal, teacher's use of humour in the lesson (3), teachers' being happy, positive and warm in the classroom (5), being well-prepared before coming to lesson (5), positive reinforcements such as praise, high grade or small presents (1) and teacher's telling the lesson in an enjoyable manner with different activities (1) play a big role in promoting students' will to learn.

The second question that was asked to participants to reply was about the times they experience lack of interest in lesson. As their answers indicate, when the lesson is covered as a flow of information from teacher to students in a colourless manner (5), the friends talk too much and distract their attention (6), they do not understand the lesson and get bored (2) and the teacher tells the same subject constantly and gives a lot of similar exercises (2), they feel less willing and interested in the lesson.

The third question asked to participants was about the effect of some activities such as games, group works or role plays on their motivation. As their responses show, such different and appealing activities promote their motivation and enthusiasm (14). However, 1 student out of 15 participants answered negatively. That student feels discouraged when he cannot be successful in such activities. For this reason, he does not prefer getting involved in role plays or group works. The students who answered positively believe that such activities help them to build good relationships among friends, pay attention to the lesson, feel free of problems, achieve permanent learning, take pleasure out of the lesson, practice what is learnt and keep alert during the lesson.

The fourth question that was directed to the participants was about the impact of the teacher's attitude upon their willingness towards lesson. As their answers emphasise, all of the students (15) hold the opinion that teacher's attitude influence their motivation. They believe that teacher's positive and warm attitude, teacher's being happy, calm, teacher's appreciation and approval of them, not humiliating them increase their level of motivation. Students would like to see the teacher as motivated and willing enough. Only one of the students out of 15 claimed that he feels more motivated and driven when the teacher behaves him badly and ignores him.

The fifth question was about the factors which make learning difficult for the participants. Memorization (5), teacher's telling the lesson in a complex and boring manner (4), teacher's ignorance of students' psychological condition (1), difficult and dull subjects (3) and reluctance to learn (2) make learning process hard for the students and in such situations learning in real sense does not occur.

The last question asked to the students was about what kind of language classroom they imagine in their minds to make learning attractive and enjoyable for them. As their answers indicate, classrooms in which there are a lot different activities such as discussion on songs, games, group works or activities that require usage of English words outside classroom or in other lessons (4), there is plenty of visual materials on the wall (2), everybody speaks in English (2), foreign people come and speak to student (3), teacher covers the lesson in an enjoyable manner (3) and there are a lot of repetitions and exercises in the target language are the ones that students imagined as attractive language classrooms.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted with a view to determining the reasons of lack of motivation in an EFL classroom at an Anatolian High School in Adana. This study also aimed at finding out possible ways of promoting students' willingness towards English lesson.

Considering the findings of the study, it can be said that students' age, habit of solving multiple choice questions, syllabus density, overloading, health problems, shortage of materials, traditional teaching methods like expository teaching, boring and colourless lessons, attention distracters like too much noise in the classroom, lack of comprehension and boredom, too many similar type exercises and questions lead to lack of motivation and enthusiasm in students

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towards language learning. Together with the causes of inadequate motivation in students, this study gave an idea on how to enhance students' motivation to learn. Building positive and supportive classroom atmospheres, teacher's warm and appreciating attitude, teacher's being happy, calm and peaceful during the lesson, use of humour in the lesson, studying the lesson and getting prepared in advance before coming to the classroom, positive reinforcements such as verbal and nonverbal praises and high grades, teaching in an enjoyable manner, new subjects, using English for communication, appropriate materials and examples that appeal to students' interests and activities requiring students to use English outside the classroom hold great importance in promoting their motivation during the lesson. Taking such tips into account and avoiding the factors that hinder their will to learn decrease students' level of anxiety and inhibition, thus increase their eagerness and participation.

In conclusion, motivation is one of the major keys to success. Considering students' age, level, interest and needs, making a few changes in the way of teaching and helping students take fun out of lesson contribute to motivation and effective learning.

DISCUSSION

Language learning is not an easy process, and it requires time and effort. However, it is not just a cognitive process. It leads us to bringing some affective factors to this process. Affective factors, which are related with the state of our emotions, play a big role in language learning, and they can even determine the level of success in learning because of the fact that when we develop positive feelings during the language learning process, the possibility of achievement will directly increase. One of these affective factors is motivation in language learning.

Motivation provides students with a purpose and direction to follow. For this reason, it has a great significance in learning. However, in the case of insufficient motivation, some problems begin to appear. Students do not take most out of their learning. Language does not seem meaningful and purposeful. Without will and desire to learn, it is difficult to achieve effective and fruitful learning, which provides us with the opportunity to benefit from our learning. As Huitt (2001) suggests, displaying the importance and necessity of language will help improve their motivation to learn even in the case of inadequate intrinsic motivation. Hence, teachers should get more aware of importance of motivation in language learning and with simple changes they can promote their students' motivation.

In regard to the findings of this study, it is important to find out the reasons that lead to lack of motivation. In the classroom observed and researched, students experience lack of motivation when there is a negative environment. Teacher's being negative and non-supportive destroys their motivation. For this reason, establishment of positive and supportive atmospheres intensifies students' willingness towards lesson. Students do not inhibit themselves from learning and get more willing towards language learning when teachers establish positive and psychologically healthy environments that appeal to students; as a consequence, they can achieve fruitful learning. Brown (2001, 89) lists some tips to break potential barriers to learning:

- “help your students to laugh with each other at various mistakes that they all make”
- “be patient and supportive to build self-esteem, yet at the same time be firm in your expectations of students”
- “elicit as much oral participation as possible from students, especially the quieter ones, to give them plenty of opportunities for trying things out.”

As it is obvious, when students develop positive attitudes towards themselves and lesson, they get more eager to learn and take sound steps on the road to learning in real sense. Although the teacher who was observed and interviewed is really good at building positive environment, more attention should be paid to make students understand the importance and necessity of language learning. Slavin (1997, 359) advises teachers to “use extra classroom program that make learning experiences relevant”. This way, they will need to use the language outside the classroom. For example, they can organize language clubs or find pen-pals. Similarly, teacher can take students to international fairs so that they can talk to native speakers. They may find such activities enjoyable, and when they see they need that language they will want to study more. The students given questionnaire stated this fact, as well. For this reason, providing the students with meaningful and purposeful activities contributes to fruitful learning process as Jackson (1990) recommends helping students to pay attention as they deal with exercises that will be beneficial to them. In addition, teachers can change the way they teach. Rather than direct teaching or teaching for the sake of teaching, teachers should organize the lesson in a way that attracts their students and appeals to their age and interests. As McDonough (1986) suggests, teachers should not forget that students’ needs, points of view, personalities, individual differences and teacher’s treatment to them are also determinants of success and failure. Students complained about boring and colourless lessons. They need action, fun and communication in the lesson. They can be given more responsibility during the process, which increases their sense of success. Wesley (2007, 2) advises not asking students just the same tasks every time and adds that “a stimulating environment creates enthusiasm and the opportunity for ‘big picture’ thinking”. Furthermore, though the teacher is very effective, they lack enough material. As a consequence, that classroom should be provided with colourful and different materials and visual aids which attract their attention and increase their will to learn. Considering all these points and results of the study, it is likely to pave the way for prevention of lack of motivation and help students show both academic and emotional improvement.

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