

ICPESK 2018
International Congress of Physical Education, Sports and
Kinotherapy. Education and Sports Science in the 21st
Century, Edition dedicated to the 95th anniversary of UNEFS

MOTIVATION – FACTOR IN LEARNING ENGLISH BY
STUDENTS FROM PHYSICAL EDUCATION FACULTIES

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Abstract

The study of English is more a necessity than a tendency or preference. Students' motivation is such an important factor in foreign language learning that no teacher can ignore this essential aspect of methodical and educational approach. The following factors can be mentioned among the factors that favour foreign language learning: aptitude for learning these languages, student intelligence, perseverance or motivation, the role of programs and textbooks, the role of the foreign language teacher. Aim of research: Optimisation of the professional English language skills training process for students from Physical Education and Sports Faculties. Research objectives: Studying the theory and practice of the educational process in the English discipline from the State University of Physical Education and Sports (SUPES). Methodology of research: Analysis and generalisation of literature, study of working documentation, pedagogical observation. By studying the specialised texts, the following results are to be achieved: the formation of the oral and written communication skills, as well as the achievement of some performances that allow the student to read fluently the literature in the studied foreign language. Conclusions: The subject of student motivation is studied by most of the professors at the Department of Modern Languages in the SUPES. That is why, at the methodical assemblies of the Chair of Modern Languages, in common with the High School colleagues, we have exchanged experience in the field, concluding that most foreign language teachers opt for the use of modern methods and different means of motivating students to learn systematically and creatively.

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Keywords: Motivation, study of English language, English teacher, student, education.



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1. Introduction

Students' motivation is such an important factor in foreign language learning that no teacher can ignore this essential aspect of methodical and educational approach. The following factors can be mentioned among the factors that favour foreign language learning: aptitude for learning these languages, student intelligence, perseverance or motivation, the role of programs and textbooks, the role of the foreign language teacher.

2. Problem Statement

When examining foreign language learning, we note that motivation is analysed in different terms compared with other subjects. The student learns either from parents' desire to master a foreign language or from their own desire to achieve outstanding results. The end, however, remains the mastery of language as a means of communication in various situations of everyday life, learning which remains artificial anyway and to which the teacher has to apply his/her imprint of authenticity.

The theoreticians-researchers John Nicholls, Carol Dweck and Martin Covington focused on the goals/objectives pursued by individuals [Eng. *goals*] in achievement/success situations. Orientation towards an objective rather than to another is the motivational basis for achieving a certain goal (for example, to learn to get good marks for the exam or to improve knowledge). Nicholls and Dweck argue that the first motivator of the achievement/success behaviour is the desire to demonstrate a high ability or to avoid negative ratings of skill; Covington, on the other hand, states that individuals are motivated by the desire to maintain their sense of self-worth (Elliot & Dweck, 2005).

Television, radio, international tourism and international exchanges make students aware of the need to learn and master at least one foreign language in this dynamic world, where barriers seem to give way to a steady communication process, but where it remains the last most resilient barrier of the past, of language as a means of communication. A foreign language learning based on communication has unquestionable advantages, including:

1. Develops students' means of expression, with beneficial effects on the mastery of the mother tongue;
2. Develops the cultural dignity of students, revealing new ways of life and other cultural values spoken by the learned language;
3. On a moral and human basis, communication-based methods create and develop a spirit of tolerance and openness, of which our current awareness is all conscious. In order to achieve these goals, a good foreign language curriculum must propose three specific strategic objectives:
 - a communication objective;
 - a linguistic goal of reflection on the language in which we teach students to communicate and, at the same time, comparative reflection on the mother tongue;
 - a cultural objective without which the student's new ability to communicate would risk to run in empty.

Conscious of these three objectives illustrated in programs and manuals, which we hope the best ones, the teacher has to design the learning-assessment strategies that will best suit the different categories of students and it is immediately evident that the progressive mastery of an instrument of more and more

effective communication is the first source of motivation and the best guarantee of success. That is why, in the foreign language textbooks, we must first put the emphasis on learning communication.

3. Research Questions

1. How to study the theory and practice of the educational process in the English discipline at the State University of Physical Education and Sports (SUPES)?
2. How to assess the level of professional English language in SUPES students?
3. How to determine the content of the English language course in order to build communication skills in foreign languages?
4. How to acquire the sports terminology and the ability to read foreign literature?

4. Purpose of the Study

Optimisation of the training process of the professional English language skills for students from physical education and sports faculties in order to optimally motivate them to achieve the modern (or English) language learning process.

5. Research Methods

Methodology of research: analysis and generalisation of literature, study of working documentation, pedagogical observation. By studying the specialised texts, the following results are to be achieved: the formation of the oral and written communication skills, as well as the achievement of some performances that allow the student to read fluently the literature in the studied foreign language.

6. Findings

Communication in foreign languages generally covers the basic skills described in the communication in the mother tongue. In addition, it is based on the ability to understand, express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions both in oral and written forms (listened, spoken, read, written), in appropriate social and cultural contexts (in education and professional training, workplace, leisure time), about someone's wishes and needs. Communication in foreign languages requires skills such as mediation, intercultural understanding. The level of advanced knowledge varies between the four dimensions (listened, spoken, read, written) and between different languages, in accordance with the social and cultural environment of the individual, the environment, their needs and/or interests. (Nastas, 2017; Viau, 2006)

Learning to communicate orally since first lesson, becoming more autonomous in this fundamental activity, then learning to become an autonomous reader, the student will only be able to feel confident in their forces. Curricular programs and textbooks, and then the method by which we give life to the content of each lesson, are therefore a powerful element of motivation and can be reformed by thinking of textbooks that incite to communication, to the discovery of elements of civilisation and culture that, by means of communication, are at hand as inexhaustible sources of enrichment of the spiritual universe of our students. (Braniste, Calugher, & Lungu, 2018; Dorgan, Calugher, & Lungu, 2018)

The fourth factor of motivation, undoubtedly the most important: the teacher. It has often been noted that a particular method is very successful for a teacher and is a complete failure for another, although the context of the application is identical. Is it natural to ask why? There is an essential area where the teacher can really have an influence on perseverance and motivation if he/she takes into account the following factors:

- meeting the requirements of students;
- students' attitude towards the teacher;
- students' interest in studying languages;
- students' attitude towards the culture of the people whose language they study.

The teacher must take into account these factors in the contemporary world so dynamic, changing one, in these times of the new generations of students, with needs that cannot be abstracted without the risk of failure in the instructional-educational approach (Manolachi & Budevici-Puiu, 2016; Budevici-Puiu & Manolachi, 2016). If we were to draw a portrait of the ideal foreign language teacher, no doubt the following features are very important:

- is a clever person (regardless of age);
- is very cultivated and strives to enrich the culture of his/her students;
- helps his/her disciples to succeed in life;
- causes them to understand and appreciate strangers;
- deals topical issues with them, making them forget the narrow horizon of the institution;
- knows how to do interesting lessons;
- has a good foreign language pronunciation;
- explains clearly;
- equally treats all students;
- demonstrates a lot of patience;
- insists on the spoken language;
- leads students to learn, to work. (Negruț & Arsith, 2013)

We can assume that, if each of us strives to get close to this portrait, our students will be motivated when they have the feeling that they are learning an authentic language, when their teacher offers them a good model of this language they will endeavour to imitate. The teacher must be especially and above all a good psychologist, constantly aware of the specific problems of each student, in order to help them surpass themselves and at the same time to create an atmosphere of trust and sympathy in the classroom, which characterises the teacher-student relationship.

Techniques and conditions favouring student motivation. Viau (2006) records some techniques that encourage student motivation:

- Start with an anecdote or a problem to solve, or with an intent that will awaken the interest and curiosity of the students;
- Present the plan of the statement (for example, questions or objectives);
- Before explaining a concept or phenomenon, their previous knowledge is called upon, asking them how to explain it;

- Illustrate the relationships between concepts with schemes, tables, drawings. Examples are given from their everyday environment or related to their interests.
- Students are asked to give themselves such examples of everyday life;
- Analogies or metaphors are used in the areas of interest;
- For each stage, the teacher offers them a model, showing them how to do it;
- Different means of learning are used (audio-visual media, posters etc.).

Suggestions for reviewing learning strategies in order to increase motivation for learning (mind-set of growth): Key/transversal competencies that are closely related to self-determination and mind-set are: “learning to learn”, “social and civic competencies” and “the spirit of initiative and entrepreneurship”. The skills that focus on student development are: self-knowledge (strengths, weaknesses, preferences, interests, expectations); identifying and setting your own goals (self-targeting, personal choice); planning/prioritising activities aimed to achieve goals; self-regulation (affective, cognitive, behavioural); self-evaluation, monitoring of your own progress underlying the goals; the information use of (internal and external) feed-back to improve their own activity; assertiveness. The skills that are on the basis of self-determination and increasing mind-set development are: setting goals; self-monitoring; self-learning; self-evaluation; strengthening/fostering, self-managed (for strengthening the behaviours related to self-determination and competence); decision-making; solving problems; self-presentation/supporting (personal point of view, needs, interests etc.).

The attitudes and values associated with learning development are those that facilitate the adoption of student actions and behaviours to develop personal autonomy and competence, the relationship with others and confidence in their own ability to develop skills through exercise (sustained effort, learning strategies etc.).

Finally, we will briefly characterise some methods that contribute to effective learning:

- Learning through cooperation/jigsaw-puzzle, a method developed by Aronson in 1971 (as cited in Jigsaw Basics, 2012), which allows conceptual understanding to a greater extent than passive involvement (meaning learning to be tested/ graded for the learned material) and facilitates mutual cooperation, communication and support among students. They are divided into groups of 4-6 people and each group learns the lesson as follows: each student in the group chooses a part (1/4, 1/5, 1/6) and thus learns it to teach to group colleagues. In this way, each student feels responsible not only for his/her own learning, but also for his/her colleagues; also students with the same lesson can group together with colleagues from other groups, so they can collaborate/cooperate in learning, exchanging impressions, ideas, personal understanding.
- Using the students’ personal portfolio as a means to record their university progress, in order to facilitate self-monitoring, self-evaluation in achieving the learning goals assumed/proposed by the student; using this tool also for monitoring and modifying emotional states.
- Perceptual-cognitive classification of evaluation and self-evaluation, in the sense of explaining, illustrating their usefulness for monitoring progress in achieving the learning objectives personally made and proposed; the relevance identification of grades obtained in examinations to assess their own progress in learning (beyond compliance with national assessment standards imposed to all students).

- Facilitating the inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approach increases the possibility of pooling ideas and information, allowing more grounded and sustainable learning; the resumption of information and the creation of functional links between information.
- Providing optimal learning challenges – new tasks/exercises that are more difficult to solve than the current skill level (only after the teacher has the certainty that the student has already reached the understanding precedence/necessary level required in terms of knowledge and skills), but which can be solved; thus, the student comes out of the comfort zone, assumes risks, adaptively addresses uncertainty/insecurity.
- Ensuring a learning environment that permits failure, facilitating adaptive co-operation with it through learning by mistakes; here, informative, constructive feedback plays a substantial role.
- Using learning information resources available online, free of charge.

7. Conclusion

The subject of student motivation is studied by most of the professors at the Department of Modern Languages in the State University of Physical Education and Sport (SUPES). That is why, at the methodical assemblies of the Chair of Modern Languages, in common with the High School colleagues, we have exchanged experience in the field, concluding that most foreign language teachers opt for the use of modern methods and different means of motivating students to learn systematically and creatively. We have developed an algorithm of questions that helps us in forming motivation. For example: Why does education differ from one student to another? What are the most important reasons the student learns? Why is it important to identify what motivates students to learn? What are the strategies for motivating students? Answers to the question algorithm are more often designed to help teachers optimally motivate their students to achieve the modern (or English) language learning process.

So, motivation is something “sine qua non”, and to address this theme is like to say by itself – if you are not motivated, then you do not have anything to embrace the teacher-coach profession.

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