



Improving learners' Motivation through Shaping Attitude

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Abstract

Research shows that Motivation is influenced by the learners' attitudes towards the target language, its speakers and culture. Therefore, it is necessary for language teachers to be familiar with ways through which they can shape students' language-learning attitude. This article concerns some ways which can influence students' attitudes positively. In the first part, literature is reviewed to show how positive and negative attitudes can affect learning. In the second part, the author present some effective ways and strategies which can help learners to take a more favorable attitude towards the target language. Through considering factors such as literature, music, computer games, initial learning experience and stereotypes, language teachers can assist learners to adopt a more positive attitude and bring vitality to English classes.

Keywords: Attitude, motivation, language

Introduction

How do we form attitudes?

Perhaps we are not aware of it, but attitudes are formed very quickly. One of the commonest ways in which individuals form attitudes is through information they receive in their environment. For instance, children usually adopt their initial attitudes based on the attitudes of their family members, especially those of their parents Sanderson [1]. In addition, there is another important way for attitude formation which is called Observational Learning or Modelling Sanderson [1] in this type of learning, people attitudes are formed by watching how others act toward a particular thing or an object. Parents, celebrities and television advertisements are very important cases which can serve as models for our own learning.

Attitudes and Language Learning

Perhaps the single greatest ability of humankind is the ability to use language. Language is the key that opens the door and allows us to look into the minds of others Chastain [2]. Students' inclination to learn has always been a significant factor for L2 development. Several variables called

Affective Factors portray learners' disposition, and the most important of which are attitudes and motivation Kumaravadivelu [3]. Motivation is considered to be affected by the learner's attitudes toward the L2, its speakers and culture, toward the social and practical value of using the L2, and toward his or her own language and culture (Siegel, 2003, as cited in Kumaravadivelu, [3]). Attitudes are one's evaluative responses to a person, place thing or an event [3]. Moreover, an attitude is a hypothetical construct, that it to say, it is not directly observable but can be inferred from observable responses [4]. Like all dimensions of the development of cognition and affect in human beings, attitudes are rooted in our childhood and are the result of parents' and peers' attitudes, of relationship with people who are different in any number of ways, and of interacting affective factors in the human experience. These attitudes construct a part of one's understanding of self, of others, and of the culture of the community in which one is living [5]. Social psychologists believe that attitudes are individually driven, that is, they are one's personal thoughts or feelings based on one's beliefs or opinions; therefore, different individuals develop different shades of attitudes toward the same stimuli [6]. Attitudes are also socially grounded, that is, they must be experienced as related to subjects or events in the external world.

Learners come to the English class with a variety of attitudes about second language learning. While some of them may think that it is impossible to learn the new language, others think that knowing the language will be beneficial to them in the future. They have positive, negative or mixed attitudes about the language, the people who speak it and the culture [2]. In addition to opinions and beliefs, attitudes towards learning have an obvious influence on students' behaviors and consequently on their performance [7]. According to Second language acquisition experts, motivation, because of being a multi-faceted, complex and composite construct, is