

## The Role of Collaboration in the Development of Students' Motivation in the Process of Learning English at Tertiary Level

Anna Artamonova

**Abstract.** This article reviews collaboration as a useful means of developing students' academic skills in the process of learning foreign languages and English in particular. Collaboration is investigated within adult learning, which differs from that of teaching in many ways. Students' motivation is analysed as an inevitable part of their learning on the basis of the following approaches:

- cognitive,
- constructivist,
- socially contextualised,
- dynamically interactive.

The author of the paper presents surveys on students motives of their learning in general and learning in a higher institution. The results obtained show that in order to be successful in a chosen speciality it is necessary for students to acquire both academic and collaborative skills.

**Key words:** collaboration, motives, motivation, adult learning, academic skills.

### Introduction

A good command of foreign languages is understood as a means for professional growth and communication.

What is the motive of studying foreign languages and English in particular?

Nowadays students' attitude to learning the English language is pragmatic: it should help them in their career. Teachers need understanding of the development of students' motivation to carry out successful application of corresponding methods of teaching in higher institutions. The other important problem the author of the paper would like to discuss is the collaboration as a means of students' motivational development.

**The aim of this paper:** to investigate students' motives in the structure of their motivation in learning the English language.

**The object of the research:** students' motives of learning a foreign language.

### The methods of research:

1. Theoretical: a study and analysis of methodological, pedagogical, psychological literature.
2. Empirical:
  - 2.1. Quantitative methods: analysis of the results obtained from distributed questionnaires and conducted interviews.
  - 2.2. Qualitative methods: participant observation.

### The objectives of the research:

1. To investigate students' cognitive motives in their learning English.
2. To introduce collaborative model into learning process.

In order to investigate students' motives it is necessary to understand how motivation, motives are revealed in

psychology, and why students begin learning foreign languages. A lot of investigations of this problem have been carried out and are being made. Berdichevski (Бердичевский, 2000:29) states that according to the results of psychological research motives are incentives to activity (here-to learning a foreign language), which are connected with the satisfaction of person's needs. His opinion coincides with Freud's (1940:5) concept of unconscious motivation: we may often be motivated in ways that we don't even understand ourselves, it means that motives can be conscious and unconscious, and they are closely connected with each other.

According to Berdichevski, interests, beliefs and aspirations belong to conscious motives, and the emotional manifestation of cognitive needs is the basis of interests. Subjectively interests are manifested in a positive attitude to the process of cognition and lead students to know more about the subject they study. In order to arouse interest it is necessary for lecturers to create a motive and then to show students the possibility to find the goal. A subject becomes interesting for students when it is the area of their goals and is connected with an arousing motive.

Arousal doesn't belong only to the initial stages of motivation, causing initial interest and turning this interest into a decision to engage in some activity; a state of arousal needs to be maintained to enable someone to put in the necessary effort to complete an activity satisfactorily. Berlyne (1965) believed that in order to be motivating, it would appear to be important to ensure an optimum level of arousal and complexity. If a task is too complex or incongruous, it is likely to induce confusion and an avoidance response rather than prove appealing.

In recent years the notion of optimal arousal has been extended by Csikszentmihalyi and co-workers who developed the concept of flow or "flow experience" which means that there are situations in which people perceive

themselves as having a high level of skill and are posed with challenges that stretch those skills.

On the basis of the research carried out by M.Csikszentmihalyi a manner of people's activity can be described as highly motivated and aroused:

- all their minds and bodies are completely involved;
- their concentration is very deep,
- they know what they want to do,
- they know how well they are doing,
- they are not worried about failing,
- time passes very quickly.

(Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura, 1989)

Thus, motivation appears if the interest causes a concrete activity and has become its motive.

At the same time scholars distinguish between integrative and instrumental orientations in motivation. Gardner believes that orientation is not the same thing as motivation, it represents reasons for studying the language. We speak about an integrative orientation when the learner studies a language because of a wish to identify with the culture of speakers of that language. An instrumental orientation includes factors connected with motivation arising from external goals such as rewards, exams, etc.

Gardner states that languages are unlike any other subject taught in a classroom in that they involve the acquisition of skills and behaviour patterns which are characteristic of another community. (Gardner, 1985:146). He created his socio-educational model of language learning which includes the learners' cultural beliefs, their attitudes to the learning situation, their integrativeness and their motivation. Gardner stresses that the primary factor in the model is motivation and defines it as referring to a combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language. Attitude to the learning situation and integrativeness can influence these attributes.

Gardner claims that motivation is a dynamic process where many other variables play a part, and that this model can accommodate broader views. Gardner's socio-educational model has been very influential in the theory of motivation in foreign and second language learning.

But nowadays educators called for a broadening the research base to incorporate cognitive approaches to motivation in education.

Dornyei (1994) proposes his model which consists of three levels:

1. **The language level** contains such aspects of the second language as culture and the community, and the usefulness of the language. They influence learners' goals and choices.
2. **The learner level** involves individual characteristics that the learner puts to the learning task.
3. **The situation level** includes elements related to the course, the teacher and the group dynamics.

From a cognitive view, choice is the central part of motivation, why people decide to act in certain ways and what factors influence the choices they make. But this

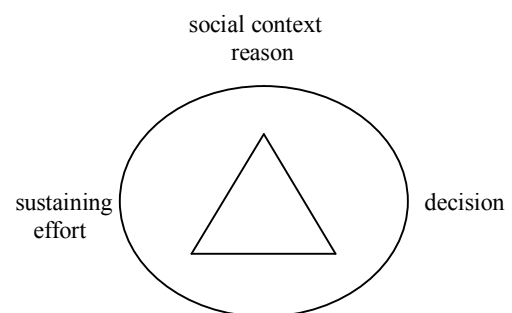
view fails to take account of the influence of affective factors, or of social and contextual influences. The following definition of motivation, which is basically cognitive, fits within a social constructivist framework.

Motivation is a state of cognitive and emotional arousal which:

- leads to a conscious decision to act,
- gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals).

(Williams and Burden, 1997:120)

A model of motivation (Fig. 1) includes reasons for doing something, decisions to do something and sustaining the effort, or persisting. This model cannot be linear as it exists in social context: reasons for doing something will influence persistence, sustaining effort can give rise to further reasons for action.



**Fig. 1.** An Interactive Model of Motivation (Williams and Burden, 1997:122).

A new approach to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation has been expressed by Berdichevskiy (Бердичевский, 2000). Those students who set global goals and regard language learning as a means of the cognition of the country possess extrinsic motivation, which is typical for adults. Intrinsic motivation is connected with the organization of the learning process during which a foreign language is taught. This type of motivation is connected with motives of pupils who learn a foreign language according to school curriculum.

As the topic of the paper concerns adult learning it is necessary to pay attention to the following extrinsic motives of learning a foreign language:

- its use throughout the world since it has the status of an international language,
- a means of a foreign culture investigation,
- its "aesthetic value"- its beauty attracts people of different countries,
- a means of communication in a person's work.

(Бердичевский, 2000:31)

These definitions presented within the social context can be regarded as the base for the investigation of students' motives in the process of learning the English language.

To investigate students' motives of their learning questionnaires were distributed among fifty part-time students of English Philology at the University of Latvia.

The first questionnaire covered sixteen motives five of which should be chosen by students, e.g.: to become a highly qualified specialist; to receive a diploma; to continue successful study in next courses; to get good marks at the examinations; to get profound knowledge; to be constantly ready for classes; not to neglect a study course; to be the model for the group-mates; to avoid punishment for bad study, to ensure the success of the future professional activity, to fulfil pedagogical demands, to gain teacher's respect, to receive intellectual satisfaction, etc.

The questionnaire was rated on a seven-point scale according to the value of motives for students: one point is the minimum of the value and seven points is the maximum of the value of the motives. Students showed the following attitude towards the motives of learning:

7 points – to become a highly qualified specialist; to receive intellectual satisfaction.

6 points – to receive a diploma; to receive profound knowledge.

5 points – to ensure the success of the future professional activity; to fulfil pedagogical demands.

2 points – to seek for parents and surrounding people's approval, avoid blame and punishment for bad study; to be successful and get good marks at the exams; not to be behind the group-mates.

0 points – to be constantly ready for the class; not to neglect the study-course; to gain the teacher's respect; to be the model for the group-mates.

The second questionnaire on the motivation of learning in a higher institution containing 50 statements aimed to investigate students' attitude towards receiving knowledge; receiving profession, receiving a diploma.

In this questionnaire there are three scales each of them possessing maximum points:

1. getting knowledge – 12,6 points;
2. getting profession – 10 points;
3. getting a diploma – 10 points.

### **The results of the research and discussion**

According to the results of the questionnaire 46% of students prefer getting knowledge (intrinsic motivation), 44% of students prefer getting a diploma (extrinsic motivation), 10% of students prefer receiving profession.

The findings of these surveys demonstrating students' desire to get profound knowledge show that they are not interested in attending classes, they are ready to neglect a study course at the same time wishing to receive a diploma.

Informal interviews revealed that they were not going to work as teachers of English and did not intend to be philologists. This attitude to the process of study is reflected in low academic competence of students and sets the task for lecturers: to use collaborative learning to help students understand the necessity of active work at classes together with their group-mates for acquiring academic and collaborative skills.

If recognition is to be meaningful and useful, it must be based on learning, not on teaching. After all, what really matters is what students can *do* as a result of knowledge gained and attitudes changed, not what university teachers *do* to them.

What are the characteristics of higher quality learning? On the basis of research inquiries, literature studies, and informal discussions Frazer worked out a long list of characteristics of higher quality learning. The author of the paper agrees with all of them and regards the following characteristics to be relevant to the theme under investigation:

- Love and respect for scholarship; integrity in the use of knowledge.
- Communication skills, including meaningful reading and accurate writing for various audiences; ability to listen with attention and comprehension and to make oral presentations.
- Problem solving skills, which include problem recognition and definition, and the formulation of solutions or approaches to solutions.
- Ability to work in a team; understanding of how to co-operate with others at work and society; open-mindedness about the views of other people.

(Frazer, 1996)

It is probably true to say that second year part-time students do not possess such very important skills as working in teams, cooperation, and this is one of the reasons of their unwillingness to attend classes. Basing on the opinion that tertiary level students are not taught, but they learn, we should imply that assumptions about children as learners may not be valid for adults as learners.

In the past two decades a model of human learning, termed andragogy, has been developed. It means self-directed learning and learning in andragogical education is "problem-centred" rather than "subject-centred". As it emphasizes the link between the world inside the classroom and the world outside, its criteria, methods, and techniques are readily applicable to the language classroom.

The adult learning philosophy is based on N. Chomsky's theory that children are born with language learning abilities that take the form of a language acquisition devise (LAD) which functions by making and testing hypotheses about the form of the grammar of the language. (Chomsky, 1965:25-26). This theory has led to the "natural language learning" approach the fundamental principle of which is found in the theory of second language acquisition (SLA) formulated by Krashen (1981): adult second language learners have two different ways of developing skills in a second language-learning and acquisition.

In the past most language learning classrooms emphasized learning more that acquisition, the latter was defined as the process which "appears to require participation in natural communication situations". (Krashen, 1982:10).

Krashen's second language acquisition theory changed the concept of language teaching and encouraged teachers to put students at ease in the classroom, emphasized the need

to include vocabulary and activities for sharing values and expressing feeling and opinions. It addressed the questions of how we learn and who is responsible for learning. If motivation is a result of internal need meeting and the goal striving, then learning is internally motivated and the responsibility for learning lies within the learner.

Most of our students are products of a conventional educational experience, therefore it is difficult to develop new roles as co-learners in the classroom and use unique ways of learning and assessing.

In the process of collaborative learning teachers should help students think of them not as singular transmitters of knowledge, but as creative designers and empathic leaders who, by working with the students, help to compose compelling learning experiences for all. Lecturers share the ownership of knowing with all learners.

In collaborative learning lecturers are spending less time presenting information and more time as learning facilitators: checking progress, motivating students, developing students' learning, establishing peer support, holding lectures in response to student problems.

Collaborative learning is understood by Smith and MacGregor (1992) as a term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual efforts by students, or students and teachers together. In these situations learners are working in groups of two or more mutually constructing understanding, solutions, meanings, applications, or products.

Collaborative learning represents another value system, one that holds cooperation and community to be as important as academic achievement. Problem-centred instruction and learning community are often categorized as forms of collaborative learning. The author of the article believes that the following criteria impact on the collaborative learning process of students:

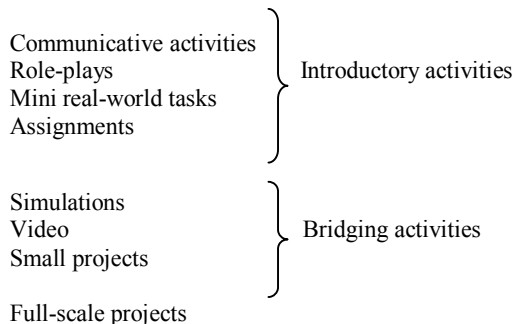
- Readiness to learn: a facilitator helps students to diagnose learning needs.
- Orientation to learning: problem-solving, problem-solving teams, learning by working on today's problems.
- Mature self-concept: reciprocity in learning transaction, helping relationship.

Collaborative groups should be organized to ensure active participation by developing such concrete outcomes as lesson plans, learning activities and sharing articles, books, media, and other resources. When members have established rapport with each other and are ready to continue their work together they are involved into participation of the collaborative solving of problems posed by the lecturer.

A very useful type of collaboration is project-work. Projects are likely to be collaborative, avoiding competition, and leading to analysis of global goals into sub-components which are then delegated to sub-groups, who take responsibility for completing them. This leads to the possibility of specialization within a project/ research and helps to develop realistic use of language.

Projects contain a final end-product, which makes them meaningful and purposeful. At the same time a public record of the project makes students focus on form. Students will regard such end products as public documents and as a result take their formal accuracy more seriously.

The following model by Fried-Booth (1986) enables learners to take responsibility and work actively and successfully:



Introductory activities help the lecturer to create more independent learning situations. Bridging activities lead students to independence, responsibility and the necessity to analyse the problem. At the same time the lecturer decides which tasks students should fulfil. The full-scale project, which is the culmination, contains three stages:

*Classroom based:*

- provision of stimulus material
- definition of project objectives
- analysis and practice of language skills
- design of written materials

*Carrying out of project:*

- group activities
- collation of information

*Review/monitoring:*

- organization of material
- final presentation

(Skehan, 1998:274-275)

In this model of learning language the lecturer makes thematic suggestions at the stimulus stage, helping organization at the objectives stage, providing specialist advice at the skills and design stages. Then the lecturer offers solutions to problems, acts as a referee in case of arguments, and evaluates students. At the final stage the lecturer helps students in organizing the material, preparing the final presentation.

Thus, in order to develop students' cognitive motives within a collaborative framework the lecturer should take a facilitative, responsive role, at the same time giving autonomy to the learners.

## Conclusions

Taking into consideration students' needs, motives of their learning the English language lecturers are able to use classroom not only as an artificial setting for academic learning, but also as a social group of different personalities where learners and the lecturer enter into equally real social relationship with each other.

Fulfilling problem-solving tasks collaboratively (project-work) second year students become good language learners, which means

- they are able to find their style of learning that suits them,
- they are actively involved in the learning process,
- they try to figure out how the language is used correctly,
- they learn to think in the language,
- they realize that language learning is not easy.

Learning collaboratively raises the “group IQ”: the sum total of the best talents and skills of each member of the group, who contribute to their fullest.

When groups learn doing their best, the results are multiplicative because the best talents of one student catalyze the best of others leading to their development of motivation in becoming English language specialists.

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#### Bendradarbiavimo vaidmuo ugdant studentų motyvaciją dėstant anglų kalbą aukštojoje mokykloje

Santrauka

Straipsnyje apžvelgiamas bendradarbiavimas, kaip naudinga priemonė ugdant studentų akademinįs įgūdžius mokant užsienio kalbų, ypač anglų kalbos. Bendradarbiavimas yra tiriamas mokant suaugusiuosius, kuris iš esmės skiriasi nuo kitų studentų užsienio kalbos mokymo daugeliu aspektų. Studentų motyvacija yra analizuojama kaip jų mokymosi neišvengiama dalis šiais požiūriais: kognityviniu, konstrukciniu, socialiai kontekstualizuotu ir dinamiškai interaktyviu.

Straipsnio autorius pateikia studentų mokymosi motyvų apžvalgą aplamai ir mokymosi motyvacijos apžvalgą aukštosiose mokyklose. Gauti rezultatai rodo, kad norint pasiekti sėkmės pasirinktoje specialybėje, studentams yra būtina įgyti tiek akademinis, tiek bendradarbiavimo sugebėjimus.

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#### The author

**Anna Artamonova**, M.A., English Language Department, Modern Languages Faculty, University of Latvia.

*Scientific interests:* pedagogy, methods of teaching English.

*Address:* University of Latvia, Visvalža Str. 4a, LV-1050 Riga, Latvia.

*E-mail:* annartamonova@yahoo.com

