Identificación de las motivaciones y actitudes hacia el inglés como lengua extranjera


Title: Identificación de las motivaciones y actitudes hacia el inglés como lengua extranjera.

Abstract
A lo largo de este artículo nos referiremos al enfoque centrado en el alumno ya la motivación y actitudes hacia el inglés. Por un lado, debemos considerar que el método centrado en el alumno se basa en el enfoque comunicativo. En este método, las actividades se llevan a cabo de acuerdo con la información que proviene de los estudiantes. Por esta razón, el estudiante es considerado como el personaje principal del proceso de aprendizaje. El objetivo para nosotros como profesores de lenguas extranjeras debe ser situar al niño en el centro del sistema educativo.

Keywords: Lengua inglesa, motivación, actitudes.

Título: Identification of motivations and attitudes towards English as a foreign language.

Resumen
Along this article we are going to refer to the learner-centred approach and the motivation and attitudes towards English. On the one hand, we should consider that the learner-centred method is based on the communicative approach. In this method, activities are carried out according to the information that comes from students. For this reason, the student is considered as the main character of the learning process. The aim for us as foreign language teachers should be to place the child in the centre of the educative system.

Palabras clave: English language, motivation, attitudes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Along this article we are going to refer to the learner-centred approach and the motivation and attitudes towards English. On the one hand, we should consider that the learner-centred method is based on the communicative approach. In this method, activities are carried out according to the information that comes from students. For this reason, the student is considered as the main character of the learning process. Moreover, the language learning is considered as a process of acquisition rather than a process of knowledge, and the contents must be relevant and motivating for students. On the other hand, motivation is an important aspect to bear in mind, because it can make easier the learning process, by means of positive attitudes.

Therefore, the aim for us as foreign language teachers should be to place the child in the centre of the educative system, without forgetting that they go there to acquire knowledge, and not only to talk and dialogue.

2. EVOLUTION OF THE LEARNER’S ROLE

The role of the learner in the classroom, and especially in the language one has suffered out visible changes over the years.

In the first place, Traditional methods, such as the Grammar-Translation method focused on the teaching process, leaving aside how learning took place, and everything related to the learner. In fact, the student was not taken into account.
Later on, Structuralism considered learning to be based on series of stimulus-response-reinforcement. It didn’t take into account learners in isolation, didn’t contemplate the individual differences that each one has. The students were there the receivers of what the teacher provided.

Finally, with Generativism and Cognitivism the student becomes the centre of the teaching-learning process. This idea is more like that of nowadays, because we consider students as active and participative members of the learning process, and as a result, activities are organized and developed accordingly. In fact, this theme is based on the learned.

First of all, we should take into account what do we understand as motivation. Harmer defines motivation as “some kind of internal drive that encourages somebody to pursue a course of action”. For this reason, motivation implies perceiving a goal, and considering it sufficiently attractive.

Nevertheless, students can be motivated in many ways. For this reason, what origins motivation?

- The own learning activity (in technical terms called intrinsic hypothesis). For instance, the characteristics of the place, the teachers’ personality, the method they employ, etc.
- The own success (resultant hypothesis). Successful students keep working hard, whilst students with bad results can get disappointed and they can lose the necessary persistence.
- Motivation as something that already exists naturally (internal reason hypothesis).
- And finally, Incentives (external influences).

Once we understand what determinates motivation, we should take into account that, from a psychological point of view, there are two general theories about motivation. One is success necessity theory, and the other is the attribution theory.

- On the one hand, the success necessity theory divides people in two big groups:
  - Those ones who, basing on their previous experience, which has been successful, consider that difficulties of learning can be solved with their effort.
  - And those ones who, basing on their previous experience, which has not been too much successful, consider that difficulties are impossible to solve.
- On the other hand, the attribution theory considers that people attribute causes to events, and suggests that people vary in the way of doing it. For instance, students can attribute success, or failure, to four different causes: personal abilities, the characteristics of the activity (difficulty, etc.), personal volunteer behaviour (effort, etc.) and luck.

Another important thing we should take into account concerning motivation are the different components that, according to Gardner, integrate motivation: effort and attitudes.

- Effort: It also has different components such as: desire of pleasing the teacher or the parents, a great necessity of being successful in the study, good study customs, social pressure through exams or prizes not necessary connected with a language learning, etc.
- Attitudes: a student does not learn if he is not motivated, if he doesn’t want to.

Of course, all those aspects in relation with motivation are interesting, and necessary to bear in mind, but, how can the teacher motivate his students?

- One way to motivate students is not revealing the whole stimulus immediately so students can learn language for predicting, matching, sorting or re-ordering.
- Another way is personalization of the stimulus. If we provide students with stimulus which connect with them, they will be more motivated.

But his activities deal with the extrinsic aspects of the subject. It is also very important to consider the students’ feelings about their competence and the difficulty of the task they are involved, showing the students how much they already know.
3. CONCLUSION

As we have been able to see along this article, the learner-centred teaching method can be very interesting and motivating for children, as they realise that they are part of the process, and that activities are based on their characteristics and needs.

In this kind of method, activities can be carried out in different ways: as the only element used in the classroom or as a complement of the textbook, etc. But an important aspect to consider is that activities must be communicative, learned-centred, and obviously, interesting and motivating. Only in this way we will achieve a communicative competence in our students, making the learning of a foreign language a nice and amusing experience.