Teachers’ Use of Motivational Strategies in Tertiary Level ESL Classrooms

Saranraj L
School of Social Sciences and Languages
VIT University, Vellore, India
saranraj.l@vit.ac.in

Shahila Zafar
School of Social Sciences and Languages
VIT University, Vellore, India.
shahilazafar@vit.ac.in

Zaved Ahmed Khan
School of Biosciences and Technology
VIT University, Vellore, India.
zavedkhan@vit.ac.in

Abstract—The use of motivational strategies is of immense significance to English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching. Teachers have a decisive role to play in the selection and implementation of these strategies. The current study aimed to investigate the use of motivational strategies by a group of 19 technical writing instructors at VIT University, Vellore. Apart from conducting semi-structured interviews, the Motivational Strategies Questionnaire (Cheng & Dornyei, 2007) was adapted to study the frequency of use of 27 strategies by the instructors. Statistical analysis was carried out through descriptive statistical procedures such as frequencies, means, standard deviation and reliability test. The results show that the mean values of ‘Give clear instructions about how to carry out a task by modeling every step that students will need to do’ and ‘Give good reasons to students as to why a particular activity is meaningful or important’ strategies, under the Present task properly category, were higher than that of the other motivational strategies. Based on the results and responses to the interview questions, the paper concludes by suggesting some modifications to the strategies with specific reference to the Indian context.

Keywords—ESL; motivational strategies; second language learners; technical writing classrooms; second language acquisition

I. INTRODUCTION

Motivation has been broadly recognized by scholars and researchers ([1], [2], [3], [4]) as one of the major factors that determine the level and success of second language learning. Motivation is identified as a combination of internal and external factors that arouses desire and forces us to be continually interested in attaining a certain goal. Motivation is believed to determine “why people decide to do what they do, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it”[5]. Teachers are the most vital sources of second language learners’ motivation to learn a language ([6], [7]). They act as initiators, facilitators, mentors, consultants and moral supporters. So teachers have a huge responsibility to enhance learners’ motivation and keep it alive throughout the learning process. To create and sustain motivation, implementation of motivational strategies and the role of the teacher is recognized as being highly significant at all stages of the motivational process.

Dornyei [6] developed a theoretical framework of L2 motivation, which was categorized into three aspects: a) the Language Level, b) the Learner Level and c) the Learning Situation Level. The language level concerns cultural-affective, intellectual, ethnolinguistic, pragmatic, attitude towards the target language. The learners level concerns need for achievement, self-confidence, encompassing language anxiety, and self-efficacy. The learning situation level concerns of three motivational sources like course-specification, teacher- specification, group-specification, which are rooted in various aspects of second language learning in a classroom setting. An empirical study was conducted on English teachers from various institutions to know the importance of 51 motivational strategies and to know how frequently they used them in their teaching. The authors deliberately included several variants of particular macrostrategies to increase the questionnaire’s reliability. In total, ten scales were following the procedure but remaining eight strategies were individual item variables. So, the first ten strategies were found to be important to teachers from a motivational point of view. Based on the results, the authors compiled a set of ten macrostrategies called the “Ten Commandments for motivating language learners” [1].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Chastain [9] initiated a study to determine whether Iranian EFL teachers use motivational strategies to promote motivation among students. They concluded that ineffective motivational strategies were used in the classroom. Similarly, Khan and Zafar [10] in their study to measure language anxiety found that inducing anxiety was an important motivational strategy in second language learning. Motivational strategies include different methods and techniques, to generate and maintain the learners’ motivation and promote the individual’s goal in language learning. A language teacher should be skilled and willing to increase students’ motivation for second language learning [11].

Dornyei and Csizer[3] conducted a study on two hundred Hungarian teachers that revealed behaviour to be a powerful tool of motivation in classroom. The role of classroom dynamics and the learning environment are important to motivate the learners. Motivation provides “the primary impetus to initiate the second language and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process” [12].Dornyei [5] in his study identified that several factors could obstruct learners’ motivation including poor infrastructure, lack of self-confidence, and terrible opinion