Encouraging learners to Involve more in English Lessons

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Abstract

Encouraging the involvement of the learner is an obvious goal for the teacher which makes the learning process more effective and interesting in the classroom.

Strategies for maintaining and increasing student involvement are essential elements of creating successful learning. The student's involvement in the lesson consists of time listening to his teacher, contributing to the discussion, doing activities and spending productive time together by asking and answering questions to practice what they have previously learned. These activities assist the learner to increase their cognitive ability and create more incentives rather than just limiting their time listening to the teacher.

The purpose of this paper is to outline how the teacher motivates the learner to be involved in the lesson.

In the second section, I will highlight ways to involve learners in the classroom and how to keep them interacting during doing activities.

In section three, I will write about how the teacher takes into account reasons why learners do not become involved in the lesson, individual differences and needs among the students who are learning another language.

key words: involvement, learners ,encouragement, teachers ,lessons

مُلخص:

يُعَدُّ تشجيع مشاركة المتعلم هدفٌ واضحٌ للمعلم؛ ممَّا يجعل عملية التعلم أكثر فاعلية و إثارة للاهتمام في الفصل الدراسي، كما تعتبر استراتيجيات الحفاظ على المشاركة الفعّالة للطلاب وزيادتها عناصر أساسية لخلق تعلم ناجح، وتكون مشاركة الطالب في الدرس من خلال الاستماع إلى معلمه، والإسهام في المناقشة، والقيام بالأنشطة، وقضاء وقت مثمر معه، من خلال طرح الأسئلة والإجابة عليها؛ لممارسة ما تعلموه سايقًا، حيث تساعد هذه الأنشطة المتعلم على زيادة قدرته المعرفية، وخلق المزيد من الحوافز بدلاً من استماعه للمعلم فقط ، والغرض من هذه الورقة

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هو تحديد كيفية قيام العلم بتحفيز المتعلم للمشاركة في الدرس، وفي القسم الثاني سوف أُسلط الضوء علي طرق إشراك المتعلمين في الفصل وكيفية الحفاظ على مستوى تفاعلهم أثناء القيام بالأنشطة، أمَّا في القسم الثالث سأكتب عن الكيفية التي يأخذ بها المعلم في الاعتبار أسباب عدم مشاركة المتعلمين في الدرس والاختلافات الفردية فيما بينهم، وكذلك احتياجات بعض المتعلمين إلى لغة أخرى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المشاركة ، المتعلمين ، التشجيع ، المعلمين ، الدروس

0.1. Introduction

The students acquire successful learning when they feel the teacher is responsible for challenging, inspiring and stimulating them and facilitating their goals. "Effective learning in the classroom depends on the teacher's ability to maintain the interest that brought students to the course in the first place" (Emilia, 2010 quoted from Ericksen (1978). p:3). Any kind of motivation the students come to class with will be altered, either better or worse, depending on how the teacher sees his/her role.

Teacher in the classroom aims to engage learners in their work by making them feel invigorated by using four stimuli; namely, success, satisfying collaboration with other students, inquisitiveness and creativity. (Emilia, 2010.p:1).

1.1. Activities that achieve motivation in the classroom

Lightbown and Spada (2006) also indicate that "motivated students are usually those who participate actively in class, express interest in the subject matter, and study a great deal". Lessons that always contain the same routines, plans and designs lead to increased boredom and a decrease in motivation. (Lightbown & Spada 2006.p; 64,65).

Harmer (2011) notes that when the students are asked to take part in activities it makes them inquisitive which promotes communication and assists them to stay involved in the lesson (Harmer, 2006. p:20).

This communicative approach in the classroom includes several types of classroom activities and exercises to encourage the learners to participate in the lesson, which is different from the traditional lesson plan.

As Moss & Ross-Feldman (2003) found out in their research into second

language acquisition "more learning takes place when students are engaged in relevant tasks within a dynamic learning environment rather than in traditional teacher–led classes" (Moss & Ross–Feldman, 2003.p:41).

Two activities that are used in the classroom to motivate learners are role play and pair work. For example, a lesson about learning sports vocabulary could involve two students drawing famous sportsmen on paper and guessing the sport, while another pair could be expressing their ideas orally and a third group could be participating in a role play about sport. Thus these various tasks will assist them to develop their learning processes as well as learn to listen to their partner and respect their classmates .

Mckay (2003) states "it (role play) reinforces values such as respect, responsibility, teamwork". Moreover, the learners become independent because they are collaborating which helps them not only to decide on their learning processes without the teacher being involved and stressing them but also work without feeling pressure if the whole class was listening to them. .(Mckay, 2003.p:144).(Harmer , 2007.p:43).

Cooperative tasks, such as problem–solving tasks, used in the lesson will encourage students to interact naturally. This learning process builds the spirit of collaboration between the students and motivates them to increase the opportunity for communication and interaction rather than being a competitive task. This is called negotiation of meaning. (Lightbown & Spada 2006.p:65) .

The learner's motivation tends to increase when they are in cohesive class groups, working together in a comfortable environment. Dornyei (2001) reiterates this belief " in such groups students share increased responsibility for achieving the group goals, they 'pull each other along and positive relations among them make the learning process more enjoyable in general".(Dornyei ,2001.p:43) .

Another factor in motivating the students to be involved in the lesson when

applying another activity which is the information –gap allows the learners to negotiate information to complete the task. Jig saw activities are an example, this is when the class is put into small groups where one group has the information to answer the questions of another group, thus they must use their ability to communicate in a meaningful way. (Richards 2006.p:19).

Arranging the tables in the classroom is crucial for the success of communicative activities, and the way the learners are seated will often determine the dynamics of the lesson. One preferred seating plan by teachers is where the students sit in the form of a semi–circle on the chairs or they sit on the form of horseshoes which means the decks will be in a U–shape with the teacher at one end so any seating patterns enable the students to talk with each other. (Website" ways of motivating EFL/ESL Students in the Classroom").

Moreover, the teacher should take into account some simple principles to make sure that the lesson will always be successful and keep all the learners involved. First, the teacher should make sure that all the students are seated in comfortable chairs and not let one student be alone or outside the group of students.

The second step is that the teacher tries to keep eye contact with the students and the students must look at each other. If the learner is speaking but does not have eye, contact with his classmates then the students are not interested in listening. This could lead to a low–key involvement from the students and slower participation making the learners less active in the classroom. As stated "the teacher needs to look at the students to notice their reactions and to be in touch with the mood of the class" (Gower, Philips and Walters, 2005.P:9). (ibid).

Error correction is the third step that the teacher should be conscious of so that they corrected the errors without causing humiliation. The teacher should not stop them at every single mistake as this leads the learners to feel afraid of making mistakes and so self–conscious that they lose interest and sit

back in the lesson. There are several techniques to correct the mistakes based on the type of task they are doing. The teacher could choose from these; namely, self-correction, teacher correction, and group correction. (Website" ways of motivating EFL/ESL Students in the Classroom").

Dornyei (2001) goes on to say that the" classroom is not only a psychological but also a physical environment", the teacher can be decorated the classroom with several things: flowers, posters, funny objects, and bulletins which will impact the learners' themselves and create a relaxed atmosphere. (Dornyei, 2001.P:41,42).

 A further tool to encourage the learners to participate fully in the lesson is the use of authentic materials that expose the students to the real language which can develop their interest and motivation in the lesson. Winke (2005) states that " teachers often see it as their job to motivate students by creating classroom tasks that are interesting and engaging and by using authentic materials to stimulate further interest" (Winke, 2005.p:1)

The visual materials should include appropriate ones for the lesson that the teacher has planned, for instance, flashcards can be used to explain new vocabulary. Audio-visual aids used in listening tasks could be taken from DVDs, YouTube, the Internet and magic boards.

Lee (1995) reports that authentic texts are likely to be more exciting to the learners instead of texts from books because they are current news, and things happening around the world and locally which are generally interesting and exciting to all students and so motivating (Lee 1995. P: 324) .

The teachers may also use such materials to improve their students' reading skills by using specially selected texts with graded questions to help them understand new vocabulary and expressions .

Berardo (2006) suggests that listening to authentic speakers enables the students to have the chance to listen and recognize and practice real discourse

language which assists them to have the confidence to use this language outside the classroom (Berrado 2006. P: 62).

Rubio (2010) identifies that "good planning organizes the material which allows doing more and better during a session", subsequently; the natural materials play an essential role in involving the learners in the classroom and enhancing their overall learning (Rubio, 2010.P:37).

An additional point to increase student participation in the lesson is by using both verbal and non-verbal prompts, such as well done or a gesture, thumbs up. Moving around the room the teacher becomes more aware of quiet learners so she/he can smile at them and maintain positive eye contact with them because it assists them in gaining confidence and losing shyness through this action. In other words, some students have difficulty understanding but seem to understand if their eyes are looking at the speaker's face rather than looking at a board. This promotes confidence in a learner so that the students speak up and participated as well as talk meaningfully to each other. (Gower, Phillips & Walters, 2005.P10).

The verbal expressions can attract the students' attention via using simple language which makes them become easily involved; for example, Everybody, Listen! Look at the board. Also positive expressions of praise encourage them to engage in the lesson; for instance, Brilliant! Very good! That is a good point. The teacher should avoid sending messages which would reinforce his/ her power, such as, "You must "I need" and be more encouraging "I think you can find", or "You will be interested". (Bass,1993 cited from Lowman, 1990). (ibid. P40).

2.1. Reasons why learners do not become involved in an activity

Many reasons prevent the students from being involved more in the lesson which the teacher needs to avoid. The first one is when students do not have a clear idea of what to do or the teacher does not respond to the learners' queries. The second thing is that the lesson or task is too difficult or too easy and as a result, the learners fail to complete the task successfully, through

finishing too early or not at all, by not understanding instructions or simply, by feeling frustrated by the difficulty of the task and not knowing how to solve the task. Finally, noise or behaviour problems occur when the teacher does not have authority or respect from the learners in the classroom. Some activities might provoke too much noise as Mckeachie (1999) indicates "including boredom, lack of knowledge, general habits of passivity, cultural norms but most compelling is a fear of being embarrassed" (Hollander, 2002 quoted from Mckeachie, 1999.p:54; Carless, 2002.P:391).

The solution to the previous issue could be where a discussion can be planned by the teacher in the lesson which enables the learners to express their ideas, improve cognitive ability and increase self-confidence whilst it relies on the student's self-motivation as well as the teachers' encouragement. For example, if the teacher allows a few minutes to introduce new concepts on the board before explaining a lesson to allow questions or discussion and take notes then the learners will have a better idea of the new language and listen more actively to the teacher. Frederick (1994) showed that "the fundamental value of discussion is that through them students develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning" (Hollander, 2002.P:318).

There are also different factors that the teacher should take into account in the learning process. These include sensitivity elements, for example, shyness, self-confidence, and introversion/ extroversion. It might influence the learner's involvement in the lesson so it requires the teacher to find appropriate dynamics to reach their needs (Tudor, 1996. P: 99).

Supporting individual differences is another point that should be considered in the classroom gender, curiosity, attitudes and ages. The students are usually inquisitive about anything that occurs if it is different, funny or strange in the classroom. Then they start to ask questions; for example, why does Martia wear old clothes? Why does Jane talk funny? Or why does Ali have to be in a wheelchair? Thus the teacher wants to answer these questions precisely and in this way support the learner with individual differences. It is also important

that the teacher respond immediately if one student says a negative comment to another student (Francis, 1988. P,5,6).

The other one is that gender and age differences are based on many aspects such as like, dislike, dress, and behavior. Children, for example, consider that gender can alter because they think it can change depending on what they wear and who they play with. The teachers are needed to assist them in understanding the idea that "gender is a constant, it is not influenced by what you wear or what you do."

To help with this problem, the classroom should be organized into a procedure that requires both boys and girls to use each other's interests, by matching them accordingly in groups. In addition, the teacher can read a story to expand the role of gender such as a female firefighter, invite different people to visit the classroom or boys might play with girls' toys and girls can play with boys' games. (ibid).

In the classroom, the teacher should recognize that there is a large range of learner abilities and aptitudes. Some learners learn through being exposed to learning opportunities whereas others need direct teaching and guidance by their teachers before they produce what is required of them. "Effective teachers should be able to personalize the learning for their students". By using the methodology, lessons can be adjusted to the learners' needs (Rubio, 2010.P:39).

When the teacher has many ideas to make the learning process more meaningful for the learners, their enthusiasm increases the creativity and learning in the lesson Gourneau (2005) claims that "the effective teacher willingly shared emotions and feelings (enthusiasm, affection, patience, sadness, disapproval) as well as a sincere interest and care about their students" to achieve good relationships with their students. The students would like their teachers to motivate them both inside and outside the classroom and to correct their errors without hurting their self–esteem. They also want the teachers to create a comfortable environment in the lesson so that they react

positively and feel motivated (Gourneau, 2005.P:3; Verma, 2005.P:7).

Conclusion

It can be concluded that an effective teacher and good planning are two factors that influence stimulating and interesting the learners to participate effectively in the lesson. They assist the students to improve their knowledge and enjoy their learning at the same time. Moreover, this creates more achievement and positive development for both the teachers and the students. The students feel comfortable when they are studying in a warm, friendly environment in the classroom. Besides this, the teachers feel great satisfaction when all their students are working happily together. The teachers have to be innovative, and creative in their management and organization of lessons as well as promoting the students learning process, always hoping to achieve a good response from their learners. It is also essential to know what the learner's needs are; namely, personality, learning style, and ability so that they will be able to assist them profitably.

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