

Factors of Providing English Language Learners' Motivation while Teaching General English to Freshmen Students of American Studies Program (Case of IBSU)

Irina BAKHTADZE*
Nino DANELIA**

Abstract

Nowadays, English has become a global language and it is spoken in more countries than any other languages. One of the first motivating factors for the students who wish to continue study of English language on advanced level - is its wide applicability. Moreover, each student understands that being a citizen of the country with population over 4 million, most widely used foreign language will give them the best return for their efforts, and particularly in terms of employment opportunities. English has become the language of media, business, science, and international relations, and it is a working language of the majority of international organizations in the world. The careers that involve lots of travel or international exposure, such as the airline, tourism and film industries, use English as their official language, and many employers require evidence of a certain level of proficiency in English before they consider employing young people. This means that if students can speak English, they will have wider choice in terms of possible careers after finishing the university (Crystal, 2003). With the help of increased English language competences, the undergraduates have an access to some of the world's best universities at all levels of education. We live in the digital age; 55% of the world's web-pages are written in English (Graddol, 2001). "Facebook", "Google" and other social networks are basically in English. The young language learners perceive the role of English learning through their personal experience when they use computer, brows in the internet, try to find some specific information they are interested in, watch films, listen to the music, read journals and newspapers, or try to communicate with foreign friends. This raises internal motivation which helps them to set the goal which is connected with the language study on a higher level.

Keywords: American studies program, English Language learning, extra-curriculum activities, factors of motivation, freshmen, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, motivation, students, teachers' motivation

Introduction

While talking about the students' self-motivation we should also focus on the role of the teachers and lecturers and their role in motivating the person in his/her endeavor to study language. It is evident that the teachers and lecturers are one of the main motivational factors for them; we must also take into consideration, that the educators need some motivational factors for themselves for maintaining their enthusiasm. This is related especially to those lecturers who are not intrinsically motivated to teach, but it is just their job. Being intrinsically and extrinsically motivated increases job satisfaction, so, motivation plays an important role in the process of teaching, as well as in learning.

While merit pay and career ladders are dealt with in the first two theories, the third one studies distinguished staffing and "reform-oriented staff development" (Naen,

1999). There is a high correlation between intrinsic motivation and teaching. Internal desire to educate people, to give knowledge and value is always in teaching as a vocational goal. Intrinsic reward is divided into most satisfying views of teaching as a profession: a) the educational process itself, and, b) the subject matter. The first one is about the teacher's performance affected by working with students and perceiving the changes in the students' performance and behavior. The second one is related to studying a valued field and new information in it so it leads to increase one's own level of professional skills and knowledge. Such intrinsic rewards make teachers forgo high salaries and social recognition (Dornyei, 2001). Intrinsic rewards take an important role in teachers' lives. Seeing the growth and development of students makes a teacher more satisfied, en-

* Prof. Dr., Faculty of Education and Humanities, International Black Sea University, Tbilisi, Georgia
E-mail: ibakhtadze@ibsu.edu.ge

** M.A., Faculty of Education and Humanities, International Black Sea University, Tbilisi, Georgia
E-mail: danelia@pochta.ru

thusiastic. Competence and teachers' autonomy, also feedback, communications, rewards cause feelings of competence and enhances intrinsic motivation. Generally, positive climate at the university, good relations with colleagues and the students are very important for increasing and sustaining the educators' enthusiasm.

The management culture and climate at IBSU can be characterized as rather positive and could be qualified as "family type" management. Positive climate at the university, also wide autonomy in choosing contents, teaching methods, additional materials, raises lecturers' eagerness and motivates them to become more enthusiastic and achieve higher standards in teaching process. The changes recently offered by the Georgian Ministry of Science and Education are introduced into the University through quality management structure. The requirements have been rather demanding and the time – pressing, but still the lecturers faced the challenges with a high dose of enthusiasm and the process of change is progressing for the time being. Though it requires from the lecturer hard work to introduce some innovations into the syllabus, which also means changing the textbooks, and teaching strategies, it is evident that reforms, in general, raises the teachers' motivation.

The Importance of Extra-curricular and Campus Activities

Most parents and students do not realize the importance of extra-curricular activities. Many lecturers have to persuade students to participate in extra-curricular activities. Parents think that these activities distract their children from their academic work. They express this idea either when a student is struggling academically or when a student wants to focus totally on academics, to the exclusion of everything else. Some students and their parents think that extra-curricular involvement is a waste of precious time, in reality, they complement each other and develop a well-rounded, socially skilled, healthier student.

There are many possible activities at the International Black Sea University, the faculty of Education and Humanities in particular, offer a wide range of activities and each student can choose one that appeals to him or her personally, such as, visits to US embassy, public lectures delivered by foreign professors, participation in the students' scientific conferences, publishing students' newspaper, joining university club activities (drama club, literature/poetry club, music and dance club), participating in concerts and excursions.

When talking about the extra curriculum activities, particularly those which involve meeting with the distinguished scholars, writers, renowned professors from America and other well-known universities of the world, the theory of self-efficacy by Bandura (1977) come to mind according to which individuals' beliefs about their capabilities to perform well raises their level of motivation. He stated that people's self-efficacy beliefs determine their level of motivation, as reflected in how much

effort they will apply in an attempt and how long they will persist despite of obstacles. The stronger is the belief in their abilities, the greater and more persistent are their efforts. When a student meets, talks, asks questions, exchanges opinion, and even argues with such celebrities; (and even take photos with some of them), unconsciously it effects on development of his/her self-efficacy. According to the theory, the people with high self-efficacy are more likely to become highly motivated, more ambitious and self-assured which is one of the strongest driving forces in the process of progress. Efficacy beliefs are future oriented. They are conceptualized as expectations for personal mastery of subsequent achievement tasks, and in case of language mastery, it is more than necessary because the psychologist attribute the language learning process to the life-long achievement task.

Researchers like Massoni (2011) and others have listed many benefits derived from participation in extra-curricular activities at school. Participants benefit academically, socially and emotionally when choosing meaningful extracurricular activities. Keeping the importance of extracurricular activities in mind helps students choose and stick with groups that match their interests.

Extra-curricular activities provide participants with an immediate benefit socially. Students in a particular group or on a team share at least one common interest and spend a lot of time together. The extracurricular involvement allows students to make new friends, build relationships and develop social networks, helping them to relax and make learning process easier.

Obvious choices for the undergraduates are those that match their current skills or passions, which give chance to test out their potential interests. Joining the debate club, for example, is a way to test out his/her public speaking skills (Massoni, 2011). Time management is one of the most important skills developed by joining groups or teams. Other general skills include teamwork, problem-solving and leadership. Extracurricular activities also build specific skills related to the focus of the group.

Learning is linked to intellectual development, but emotional competency of the undergraduates also plays a major role in how he/she performs at university. Young people must learn to cooperate, control their impulses, manage their feelings and continue working even when there is no immediate gratification, such as pay or recognition. Those emotional characteristics are necessary to effectively study and learn (Frost, 2011). Developing good relationships with their peers and lecturers motivates students to concentrate their efforts on learning.

At IBSU, the students are encouraged to be involved in different club and sport activities which extends their knowledge in the areas of interests and leads to active communication with the students of different nationalities, so they have to communicate in English which, in its turn become one of the external and internal motivating factors. Extra-curricular and campus activities serve as strong motivating factors for the students because they identify the function of the language and necessity to enhance the level of language proficiency.

Five Key Factors for Improving Students' Motivation Based on the Case Study of Freshmen Students of the American Studies Program

Five key factors: the student, lecturer, content, method/process and the environment are proved to be the strongest students' motivators based on the survey results of freshmen students of the American Studies program. The goal of the study was to identify whether those factors have been effective in case of freshmen students of the American Studies, Faculty of Education and Humanities of IBSU. We assume that even those students who are intrinsically motivated to learn well when they enter the university, need strong extrinsic motivation factors to support and increase their enthusiasm.

Since motivation is often defined as a goal-directed

activity according to the goal setting theory, one of the key questions in the survey was a question which addressed the students' personal motivation.

24 freshmen students were interviewed, out of which 83% (20) answered that the American Studies program was their first choice when they applied for the university. Most of these students answered that the reason why it was their first choice - was that they wanted to learn English language very well (in sum 19 ticks out of 50; 38%) and to study America as a leader democratic country (14 ticks; 28%). (Chart 1.)

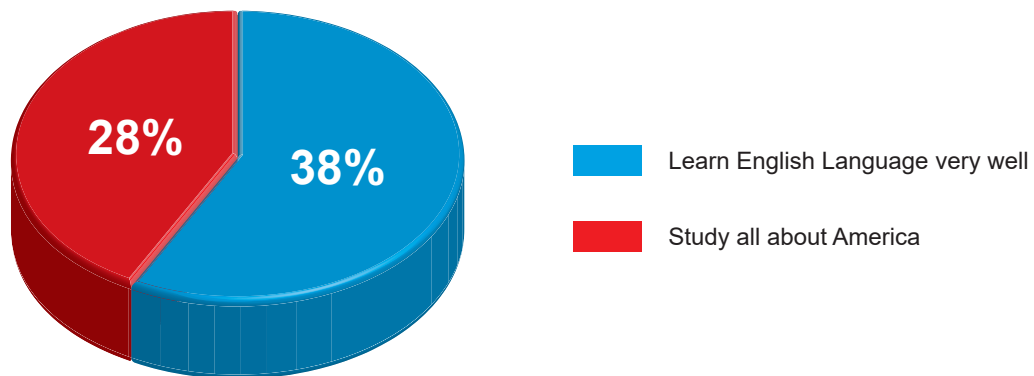


Chart 3.1.1. Reasons for Choosing AMS Program

Wide choice of the elective subjects offered by American Studies program gives additional emotional encouragement to the students and raises their self-efficiency. Student becomes far more motivated when a subject is not compulsory; instead it is optional, and can be chosen and not "imposed". To some extent, a control over the curriculum has an effect on their learning outcomes and raises self-assurance in students, w The survey showed that most of the students were intrinsically motivated when they entered the university this year, but still all of them distinguished different extrinsic motivating factors, such as teaching materials and lecturers that helped them to master English language during their first semester of university studies. 54% of the students stated that all teaching materials which are in English helped them to enhance their motivation, 33% said that lecturers were real professionals and 13% of the undergraduates emphasized the effective teaching methods which raised their interest and helped to achieve their goals.

In the result of the analysis of observation and questionnaires obtained from students, we identified that the students are goal-oriented, activity-oriented and Learning-oriented who seek knowledge for its own sake

and for personal growth; some students develop two or three types of motivation simultaneously, which, to our mind, yields better results. Today, one of the main functions of the universities is to promote socializing, so, Georgian students who are by nature very fond of setting up new connections soon become activity-oriented learners. The negative side of this type of students is that they invest too much time in social interactions with their new foreign friend also through the Internet which is very time-consuming, and spend considerably less time on learning which ultimately negatively affects their academic achievements. However, it should be mentioned that communicative students are mostly more successful in developing their foreign language competences than do others who are reserved and are only learning-oriented.

The teachers can and should help students to become learning-oriented focusing on the core values of the study materials, demonstrating his/her achievements as a result of knowledge he/she acquired, and the importance of learning in the global aspect. Also the teachers, using various teaching methods, such as group work and team-based class management, are able to assist the students in the socializing process.

One of the irreplaceable roles of the lecturers is to help students overcome “helplessness beliefs”, a disregard of one’s abilities which leads to low achievements and disillusion among students. In our questionnaires, the 4th question “Do your lecturers motivate you to advance in learning English Language?” referred to this problem. 83% of the respondents answered that the lecturers motivated them, 13% - was only partially motivated by their teachers and only 1 % said that they were not motivated by the lecturers. The lecturer not only has to encourage the student, but also show the ways how to overcome difficulties. The only factor of motivation for such students is to perceive the real solution to the problems and identify the connection between the change of their behavior (e.g. methods of learning, hard work, other), and their personal achievements and outcomes.

The freshmen students are often very particular about the teacher’s professionalism; pay much attention to the lecturers’ knowledge, teaching skills and qualification, and they are mostly motivated by this factor. This opinion has been verified by the students’ answers when they ticked in the questionnaire all the answers that applied to the lecturers’ qualification. 29% of the students stated that the teachers motivate them because they know the subject well. The lecturers must bring innovations in the classroom, students are bored with monotonous, the same lectures. 22% of the undergraduates are motivated by the fact, that most of the lecturers make learning interesting. The same quantity (7 ticks out of 63; 11%) of the students answered that the educators apply best teaching methods, that the majority of teachers are rather enthusiastic, inspiring and that they develop individual assignments for the student targeted to his/her interest. Few students (10%) emphasized the importance of conveying a real sense of caring from the educators to the students.

As for the question whether their lecturers’ enthusiasm motivate them, 17 (71%) students out of 24 agreed with it, only 4 (17%) stated, that it didn’t motivate them. 3 (13%) students replied that they didn’t know whether or not the lecturers’ enthusiasm motivated them. The question whether their lecturers were willing to assist them in many ways, the majority of the students (79%) answered positively. So, the survey revealed that the students identify the emotional condition of the lecturer as well as their willingness to help them achieve their goals and appreciate it, at the same time they are sure that motivated teachers inspire their students and “transfer” their optimistic attitudes to their students.

The mission of the faculty of Education and Humanities is to assist the students build up a strong desire and positive attitude toward the English language learn-

ing. The credo of our university is “International education, international employment”, so, it determined our decision to include into our questionnaire the following question: “Were the employment opportunities and well-paid job one of the motivating factors for choosing IBSU, AMS program?” 22 students (92%) out of 24 answered that it was one of the main reasons for choosing this program.

Content of the subjects, which meets the students’ needs and interests, are very important for enhancing the undergraduates’ motivation. At IBSU for 22 students (92%) out of 24, the content of the subjects is one of the most motivating factors for learning, 2 students (8%) answered that it’s not always very important for them- this means that for such students there are other motivational factors (Chart 2.).

Mark Lepper’s research (1988) concluded that intrinsically motivated learners tend to employ strategies that demand more effort and that enable them to process information more deeply. They also prefer tasks that are more challenging and are willing to put in greater amounts of effort to achieve learning goals. In the result of our investigation which included a long-term observation, we fully agree with Mark Lepper.

The IBSU students enjoy autonomy in learning, and value if teachers promote independent choice of projects, presentation topics. Through various contests and encouragement the students develop self-belief or self-confidence. This year, 10 students (42%) of AMS program have answered that their lecturers often allowed them to make some choices related to the content.

To the general question “Who, or what raises your motivation while learning English at IBSU?”, with arranging numbers from 1 to 5, most of the students gave number 1 to the content of the AMS program, this means that the curriculum arranged in a way which meets students interests, needs and diversity of it is crucial for enhancing the undergraduates’ motivation, even those who are intrinsically motivated. Number 2 was fixed for the lecturers, who can increase the undergraduates’ motivation. Method of teaching was the third choice, though variety and innovative teaching methods are very important for enhancing students’ enthusiasm. The undergraduates gave number 4 to the environment. Competition with group members took the last place (number 5), it seems that, other extrinsic motivational factors are stronger for this group, rather than competition with group members. On the one hand, competition is useful for the quality of learning, but on the other hand, it may damage the friendly relations with group members.

Content	1
Lecturers	2
Methods of Teaching	3
Environment	4

As for the importance of extra-curricular activities, 15 out of 24 freshmen students think, that such kind of activities are useful for them and 8 students stated that the

extra-curricular activities raised their enthusiasm, only 1 student answered that those activities were waste of time. These results are summed up in the chart below:

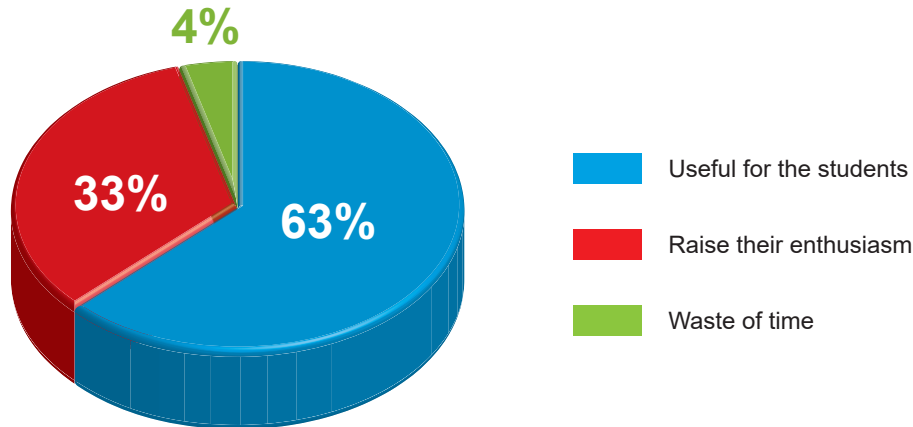


Chart 3.1.4. Importance of Extra-curricular Activities

Most of the students (42%) of the AMS program like visits to US embassy most out of many extra-curricular activities. While visiting the embassy, they have the chance to meet the US Ambassador, staff members of the embassy, attend different parties, meet a lot of new people, and have an access to the interesting books, magazines in the US embassy library. The same quantity of students (25%-25%) answered that they like public lectures delivered by foreign professors and university club activities. It's the great opportunity to have lectures in English delivered by the native speakers, club activities enable the undergraduates to enhance knowledge in the area of their interests. Few students, only 8%, preferred concerts and excursions to other extra-curricular activities. Though, they are also necessary for the students' relaxation, development of their knowledge and taste.

Though not all freshmen students are actively involved in the Annual American Studies Research Conference, their enthusiasm gradually increases, they forget fear and most of them participate in this conference. The students have the opportunity to attend public lectures delivered by foreign professors. They have the chance to listen to the native speakers and discuss a lot of issues together. This enhances students' enthusiasm to learn better, read a lot of things in English, get much information, so as to become active participant not only in class, but also during such meetings.

The American Studies direction has one more very popular program that increasing students' motivation, it's called "The U.S. Foreign Affairs" held together with the US Embassy. During six weeks the students participate in online courses delivered by different American lecturers from different US universities. The US Ambassador also participates in the program.

Education programs need to be innovated and target-

ed to the needs of the students. The lectures must be student oriented, also they should not study the subjects which are almost the same, the content should be challenging, interesting and updated. From the autumn semester in 2016, some different new subjects were introduced into American Studies program, such as: Hollywood, American Music and Cinema, American Business Law, Domestic and Foreign Politics of the U.S., NATO-North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and American Pop Music Culture. Starting from this year, the number of elective subjects will be increased which will provide additional motivation for the students. They will be able to choose the subjects they are most interested in and follow their educational goals.

Conclusion

The results of the study conducted on the example of IBSU, students of the American Studies program showed that in general, motivation is one of the most crucial factors which determine overall success of the student and helps them to successfully accomplish different tasks. Motivation is an essential factor which induces the student to be sustainable till reaching their goal. The problem is that different individuals with different mentality, characters, attitudes, aims and need to be motivated in different ways. This particularly applies to the students who undergo difficulties when they face new challenges in a new environment as freshmen. From the two types of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic, the first is more powerful and long-lasting than the second one. Lecturers, professors play very important role in enhancing the undergraduates' enthusiasm, also subject content, the diversity of study courses, different methods of teaching are useful and make the students

get interested in the subjects. The learning environment and friendly relations with the lecturers and peers help students enhance their motivation.

The results showed that the reason of choosing the American Studies program for most of the students was learning English Language very well, during their first year of studies, they identified that the most motivating factor for them the content of the AMS program. Also, for most of the freshmen students - extra-curricular activities offered by the faculty turned out to be very important, since they help the undergraduates to develop knowledge in the area of their interests and raise their awareness.

Students' motivation is a multifaceted problem and it requires further study because they could serve as a powerful tool for the students' inspiration and goal orientation. The University administration, deans and lecturers must do their best to enhance the undergraduates' enthusiasm. Complex approach to the problem from the side of university administration, deans, professors makes the student become more self-confident, enhance and sustain their enthusiasm to follow the chosen path – do their best to develop English language competences and raise general level of knowledge.

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