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The impact of motivating and demotivating factors on students in the process of learning a foreign language

Вплив мотивуючих і демотивуючих факторів на студентів у процесі вивчення іноземної мови

Summary. *Motivation as a factor that encourages individuals to pursue and achieve goals plays a key role in a person's life. This article is dedicated to various aspects of motivation in the context of foreign language learning by students at various stages of the educational process. The study aims to examine the concepts, principles and factors influencing students' motivation and demotivation in the process of learning a foreign language, as well as providing practical advice for optimizing the learning process. The article highlights the theory of behavioral learning (principles of reward and reinforcement), Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (motivation to act primarily driven by needs that need to be satisfied), attribution theory (receiving feedback regarding success), and expectancy theory (motivation dependence on success). The authors analyze the peculiarities of learning a foreign language in adulthood. The study focuses on the difficulties that arise during the learning process and ways to overcome them. Cognitive difficulties related to the functioning of the human brain and certain cognitive processes, psychological challenges, language difficulties directly related to the structure of the foreign language, as well as objective challenges, are discussed in the research. As a result of the research, key aspects of successful foreign language acquisition have been identified, including motivation, realism, systematic approach, consistency, and self-discipline. The article emphasizes that motivation can be reinforced by various factors such as personal goals, professional prospects, interest in culture, and social connections. The authors also highlight factors contributing to demotivation, such as lack of visible*

progress, fear of mistakes, and time constraints. Understanding these aspects allows teachers and students to work together effectively to overcome difficulties in learning and studying a foreign language.

Key words: *educational process, motivation, demotivation, foreign language learning, psychological challenges, cognitive challenges, language difficulties, objective challenges.*

Анотація. *Мотивація, як фактор, що спонукає до дії та досягнення цілей, відіграє ключову роль у житті людини. Дану статтю присвячено різноманітним аспектам мотивації у контексті вивчення іноземної мови студентами на різних етапах освітнього процесу. Дослідження спрямоване на розгляд концепцій, принципів та факторів, що впливають на мотивацію та демотивацію студентів у процесі вивчення нерідної мови, а також на надання практичних порад для оптимізації навчального процесу. У статті приділено увагу теорії поведінкового навчання (принципам винагороди й підкріплення), теорії ієрархії потреб Абрагама Маслоу (спонукання діяти, головним чином, потребами, які треба задовольнити), теорії атрибуції (отримання зворотного зв'язку щодо успішності) та теорії очікувань (залежність мотивації від успіху). Автори аналізують особливості вивчення іноземної мови у дорослому віці. У дослідженні звертається увага на труднощі, які виникають упродовж навчального процесу, і шляхи їхнього подолання. Розглядаються когнітивні складнощі, пов'язані з роботою людського мозку та деякими розумовими процесами; психологічні складнощі; мовні складнощі, пов'язані безпосередньо зі структурою іноземної мови; а також об'єктивні складнощі. В результаті дослідження виявлено ключові аспекти успішного освоєння іноземної мови, включаючи мотивацію, реалістичність, систематичність, послідовність та самодисципліну. Стаття наголошує, що мотивація може бути підкріплена різними факторами, такими як особисті цілі, професійні перспективи, інтерес до культури та соціальні зв'язки. Автори також виділяють фактори, що сприяють демотивації, такі як відсутність видимого прогресу, страх перед помилками та нестача часу. Розуміння цих аспектів дозволяє викладачам та студентам спільно працювати для ефективного подолання труднощів у навчанні та вивченні іноземної мови.*

Ключові слова: *навчальний процес, мотивація, демотивація, вивчення іноземної мови, психологічні складнощі, когнітивні складнощі, мовні складнощі, об'єктивні складнощі.*

Introduction. One of the factors that prompts any person to do something, to achieve a set goal, is motivation. The term "motivation" is related to the psychological field and has long been widely studied by both foreign and domestic scholars. Motivation is needed by a person to inspire him, to act persistently and achieve goals. It provides energy and direction to achieve success in life and work.

This article is devoted to the study of the processes of motivation and demotivation of students during the study of a foreign language at various stages of the educational process. The purpose of the article is to explore

the concepts, principles, methods, and factors related to the motivation and demotivation of students during the study of a non-native language, affecting the success of language mastery. The main task of the article is to provide a series of practical tips for teachers on optimizing the learning process, taking into account motivating and demotivating factors.

Methodology and Research Methods. The research in this work was conducted in the following directions: studying scientific works and summarizing the ideas of researchers who directly investigated the issue of motivation in the learning process, and developing practical approaches to teaching foreign language to students. In this research, the method of critical analysis of scientific and methodological literature, practical experience, and observation was applied.

Presentation of the main research material. Motivation refers to an internal process that activates, directs, and sustains individuals' behavior over an extended period [1; 2; 4; 7; 8]. Undoubtedly, motivation plays a crucial role in encouraging students towards education and determines their academic achievements. Various theories have been developed by researchers that can help educators better understand student motivation in learning. These include behavioral learning theory, Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, attribution theory, and expectancy theory.

Behavioral learning theory is based on the principles of reward and reinforcement. Teaching methods involving reinforcement are employed by many educators to help students stay motivated throughout their learning period. For instance, some encouragement and reinforcement methods widely used in the modern education system include the use of games and quizzes in educational activities. Educational games help activate students' engagement, facilitate the perception of the material, make the learning process more interesting, and can also reduce boredom in the classroom, thereby increasing student motivation and interest [12].

Abraham Maslow's theory is based on the idea that individuals are typically driven to act not only by external factors but primarily by needs that must be satisfied. Maslow identified 5 groups of needs: physiological needs, safety, social needs, esteem, and self-actualization [9, p. 203]. The research based on Maslow's concept [8] has shown that most students understand the importance of education, but for them, learning, especially the study of a foreign language, is seen merely as a tool in their lives, for example, for finding a better job or advancing in their careers. In other words, students are motivated to learn when they have deficit needs. However, it should be noted that powerful tools are needed for sustained learning to consistently ignite a student's motivation to study hard over a long-term period. Taking into account the students' needs and providing a clear presentation and description of specific services provided to them

in the educational process, enable the planning of learning following students' demands, leading to greater efficiency in knowledge acquisition.

The attribution theory emphasizes the importance of students receiving feedback on their performance and how this feedback influences motivation in learning. Expectancy theory states that students will be more motivated when their chances of success are high. If students believe that the probability of their success is zero, then their motivation will also be close to zero. Research results have shown that students are motivated when the probability of success in learning is possible, even if it is challenging to achieve [3; 5; 6; 10; 11; 13].

In this study several aspects related specifically to learning a foreign language will be considered, aiming to help students to make the learning process more successful. It could be recommended that students to start their work with the self-definition of "who they are and why they want to learn a foreign language." Motivations for learning a foreign language can vary widely: passing an exam at a specific level, studying abroad, working in a foreign company, traveling, communicating with new friends, relatives, and partners, the desire to understand TV series, singing songs in a foreign language, and so on. Each student needs to choose his own motivation. The stronger it is, the more chances there are for success. For one person, a strong motivation may be the desire to feel comfortable ("not to be mute") in a foreign language environment, while for another, passing an exam and getting a desired position might be the driving force. To boost motivation at the initial stage, the instructor may advise the student to visualize their desired achievements and a successful future. For instance, a student can imagine himself in the countries he dreams of visiting, in an international company where he wants to work, and so on. The next step a student takes will depend on the choice made because strong motivation needs to become a kind of "long-term" goal that requires developing a specific path or setting "short-term" goals. The instructor can guide the student on how to create a detailed plan: what they should do today, in 3 days, in a week, in 2 weeks, in a month, and so on. For example, learn 5 new expressions every day, master Present Continuous grammar this week, etc. To ensure that the plan does not remain just a plan (as it can quickly become challenging to work diligently, the textbook may be dull, and time may be scarce), it is important to reinforce language learning with positive emotions. To stay motivated, a student can devise a reward system for each achievement. It's worth noting that at this stage visualizing the global goal, a successful but distant future can become a demotivating factor. For example, after working diligently for 2 months a student watches a movie in English and might understand very little. In this case, the instructor should teach the student to focus not on

how far they are from their main goal but on how much they have already accomplished, highlighting things they couldn't do recently but can now.

To avoid losing motivation at any stage of learning a foreign language, it is crucial for students to be realistic and honest with themselves. With the assistance of an instructor, assessments, or self-selected materials, individuals should determine their language proficiency level. Following this, students need to assess their abilities to work at their own pace. A student's intention to master a foreign language too quickly can be a demotivating factor. A lot of courses advertise mastering a language in a very short period (within a month or 10 sessions). A student starts learning a language but realizes it is impossible to achieve fluency within the specified time frame. A deadline runs out, and the desired language proficiency level is not reached. It is important to help students realize early that the promise of rapid foreign language learning is a marketing strategy used by some companies. Students often perceive their inability to master a foreign language in a few months as a reflection of their own abilities. They may believe they have a poor memory or lack the intelligence to understand certain language constructions, and so on. Negative emotions can arise, leading to stress, panic, and a hindrance to the effectiveness of the learning process. Unfortunately, at this stage, some students may even give up on learning a foreign language altogether.

Once a student has identified their long-term and short-term goals, and determined his language proficiency level, he may wonder how much time he will need to learn a foreign language. For example, having an A2 level, a student wants to pass an exam at the B1 level. There are free programs online with the help of which by setting the initial and target levels, one can calculate the number of hours required for self-study. It is important to draw the student's attention to the fact that not only the hours spent with the instructor are considered but also the hours for self-study. If you input the start date and the exam date into the program, it will calculate how many months (weeks) and how many hours per month (week) the student needs to dedicate to learning a foreign language. For instance, 41 weeks with 6 hours each. Having these figures, the student should assess their own capabilities. If they see that achieving a C2 level before the start of the next month is not possible, they can consider how realistic it is to reach a certain level within the proposed time frame. The instructor can help the student realize that learning a foreign language will be more effective if it is divided into small but frequent time intervals (e.g., studying the language for 1 hour every day is much more effective than studying for 6 hours once a week). It is crucial for the student not to deceive themselves and to review their schedule, finding the time between studies, work, household chores, social meetings, etc., that can be dedicated to learning a foreign language. In order

to stay motivated, each person should be confident in the realism of achieving their goal. It is advisable for the student to feel the speed at which he learns and memorizes new material, and accordingly build a plan to work at a comfortable pace, without overloading himself and avoiding stress. A demotivating factor at this stage may be comparing oneself to other students. For example, if other students of language courses master the material much faster, it is better not to compete with them but to give oneself more time to learn grammar, memorize new words and expressions, etc., and work at one's own pace.

Certainly, it would be great if a student could schedule a specific hour every day for English language study. However, adhering strictly to such a plan is practically unrealistic. Therefore, that one hour can be divided into smaller intervals throughout the day. For example, listening to audio materials while walking the dog or commuting to work or school (phonetic practice can even be done by singing English songs in the shower). In other words, self-study does not mean the student has to sit with a textbook for an hour. Still, learning should be systematic and consistent.

In order to reach the level that a student aspires to, he needs to identify gaps in his own knowledge. There are different ways to do this. He can apply to the teacher for help, or highlight unfamiliar words, expressions, and constructions during independent work. For example, while reading a text (listening to a song, or watching a video), a student comes across the phrase: "She has just seen him." Knowing the past tense construction with the verb "saw", he checks the meaning of the new phrase on the Internet, discovers that this construction relates to the grammar topic Present Perfect, and sets a short-term goal (grammar topic Present Perfect) to work on according to his own chosen schedule today, during several days, week, etc. Analyzing the subject of Present Perfect, the student becomes interested in the question of the differences between Present Perfect and Past Simple, Past Perfect. Thus, one question leads to another, creating subsequent goals for the next few months. Similar processes occur with phonetic and lexical aspects at any level of learning a foreign language.

At this stage, a demotivating factor can be the enthusiasm for a particular type of language activity. For example, a student may prefer grammatical constructions, is aware of the theory of using different tenses, but cannot use them in communication. It is advisable for the teacher to assist a student in preparing a work plan that proportionally combines various language activities: listening, speaking, writing, and grammar; organize the learning process in a way that avoids overloading with one type of task, and systematically works on each one; create a clear structure for the student, reflecting important topics (e.g., in a hotel, at a supermarket, at the airport) where all types of language activities can be practiced.

Another aspect of learning a foreign language that we would like to draw attention to in this study is the method of full language immersion. A lot of courses recommend learning a foreign language "like a child," motivating students by emphasizing that every child acquires their native language regardless of its complexity. Undoubtedly, confidence in the ability to achieve the goal is a significant motivating factor. However, there are psychological differences between children and adults that are widely studied and described by many researchers. Understanding the peculiarities of learning a foreign language in adulthood can be both a motivating and demotivating factor for students, depending on their attitude toward the difficulties that may arise during the learning process and the ways to overcome them.

Firstly, a student may fear cognitive difficulties associated with the functioning of the human brain, such as certain cognitive processes (e.g., age-related memory decline). This fear can be overcome by understanding that learning a foreign language actually contributes to maintaining a healthy brain function even in older age. It is worth noting to the teacher that, unlike a child, an adult can more easily classify information, which is a crucial part of acquiring language as a system. Since adults and children perceive language differently, teaching approaches and methodologies should also be different. Learning a foreign language for an adult should be systematic and comprehensive rather than fragmented.

Secondly, students often have to overcome psychological difficulties, including the fear of making mistakes. If a child doesn't dwell on the consequences of saying something incorrectly and simply speaks, an adult may be more inclined to refrain from speaking altogether rather than say something with a potential error. It is advisable for the teacher to create or suggest finding a comfortable environment for students where they can practice speaking without feeling embarrassed about using words or constructions that may not adhere strictly to the rules.

Thirdly, students face linguistic difficulties directly related to the structure of the foreign language being learned, as it imposes itself on the structure of their native language. Background knowledge of the overall language system can be an advantage for an individual learning a foreign language in adulthood. This simplifies the understanding of linguistic elements and features. For example, there is already knowledge about nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, and so on. These concepts do not need to be mastered; they just need to be combined with elements of the foreign language. The teacher's task is to help the student understand and structure the most important points.

Finally, there are objective difficulties in learning a foreign language, such as a lack of free time. For an adult to find time to study a foreign

language, something has to be eliminated from their busy schedule or given up something else. To optimize learning time, the teacher can recommend various interactive resources, textbooks, and applications that can be used even while commuting. It is important for the student to experience positive emotions during this process: learning useful vocabulary, completing interesting tasks, engaging with pleasant people, and so on.

Conclusions. Therefore, key aspects of mastering a foreign language include motivation, realism, systematicity, consistency, and self-discipline. Various factors can motivate individuals during the learning process, such as personal goals, professional prospects, love for culture, social connections, and the desire for self-development. These and other factors can impact a person's motivation differently, aiding them in continuing to learn a foreign language over an extended period. Motivational factors for students include positive emotions, confidence in their abilities, and self-assurance. Demotivation during the process of learning a foreign language can be provoked by several factors: a lack of visible progress, fear of making mistakes, insufficient time and resources, monotony, and dullness in the learning process, lack of support, and external motivation. A demotivating factor could also be the absence of structure, a desire to quickly master a foreign language, negative emotions, and stress. The understanding of these factors by the teacher allows to orient each student, assisting in creating a convenient learning plan, explaining the nature of difficulties, and teaching how to overcome them. The collaboration between the teacher and the student is the key to efficiency and success in the educational process.

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