

A Qualitative Study of the Motivational Factors in Learning English of Hong Kong Vocational Students

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Motivation is one of the main elements directly related to success in developing a second/foreign language (L2). It determines the extent of active and personal involvement in language learning at different stages. This presentation discusses the research methodology; and the motivational factors in the English language learning, since primary school, of 10 participants and what causes them to like or dislike learning the English language.

Motivation is a complex and multifaceted concept. Recent research in the field, from Dornyei (1998), asserts that no single theory can possibly explain the complexity of foreign/second language learning motivation in different contexts. Likewise, the researcher believes that no single methodological framework can possibly capture this complexity, the research design, therefore, does not adhere to one specific framework. This study employed the qualitative research approach of case study (Merriam, 1998) with self-completion questionnaire, semi-structured interview, diary notes and informal talk as research tools. The research was carried out in one academic year between October and June.

The findings show that participants have intrinsic and strong instrumental motivations. It was apparent that in the process of learning, participants regarded English as a functional language which was associated with their careers. This finding is the same as that of previous research on attitudes towards learning English of Hong Kong students. In addition, participants' motivational factors involved in learning the English language were found to be influenced and encouraged by many factors, namely: influences of significant others (Gardner, 2001) on motivation; educational influences on motivation; and self-achievement (Schunk et al., 2008) and self-esteem (Maslow, 1954). The most important agent is, in fact, the students' own ability of learning. To succeed, students need to learn to maintain interest, set goals, exercise self-efficacy and manage their own

learning responsibilities. The role of others, like teachers is to present a quality and strategic instruction which can encourage the less motivated students to improve their English learning behavior; and promote an active learning environment. The present study will enable English teachers to better improve teaching strategies and teaching materials; and, thus, enhance more effective learning of English in the vocational setting of Hong Kong.

Further research on student's motivation in learning English is suggested after this study. It is worth exploring learner's autonomy among vocational students to enrich the analysis of motivation and, in particular, to illuminate the interaction between the individual learner and social influences in shaping motivational growth and regulation.

References :

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