An Investigation of Motivation in Children's Foreign Language Learning Process — A Case Study on the Basis of Needs Analysis

Na Wei

School of Foreign Languages, China West Normal University, China

Abstract—**Affective elements in foreign language teaching area involve motivation, anxiety, self-confidence, self-image, inhibition, empathy, etc., all of which lead to differential success among second language learners. However, among all of them, motivation is often recognized as the first major factor. This article makes an investigation of children's learning motivation on the basis of Needs Analysis and the primary objective of this research is to find how the five needs (according to Maslow) are satisfied in child language learning process and how to stimulate and maintain their motivation to learn through needs satisfaction.**

Index Terms—**motivation, needs analysis, investigation**

I. INTRODUCTION

A large number of language teaching researches and papers have dwell upon how to encourage children's interest for English learning, most of which focus on the principles of classroom activities and lay special emphasis on how to promote a good relationship between the teacher and the students during the child students' English language learning process on the basis of teaching experiences like Zhao (retrieved in 2016) and Song (2015)'s consideration and emphasis in their articles while affective teaching is being advocated in child language learning process. Henning indicates that successful SLA may be dependent on the interests that a language learner brings to the learning situation (cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2000). But we have to notice that interest and motivation are two different affective factors that may influence foreign language learning. Owing to children's popular biological and psychological features, their attentiveness to English language learning process is not fixed. But if we teachers pay attention to this kind of interest and keep encouraging their interest in language study, this kind of temporary interest will be converted into constant interest (Yu, 2004), which means the constant love and enthusiasm for English language learning. Therefore, learning interest might not last as long as the motivation. It just plays as a prerequisite for learning motivation, while motivation is an important guarantee for the interest.

Previous studies have generally laid stress on how to promote children's interest in learning English so that children can learn spontaneously to some extent. As mentioned above, interest and motivation are two different affective factors that may have certain effect on child English language learning, our present study will emphasize the maintenance of child language learning motivation through the satisfaction of five needs stated by Wang (2004). Four teachers and their child students are chosen to participate in our study, whose lessons are video captured and observed carefully, and interviews with whom are also illustrated, which provides us with great implications for child English language teaching.

II. MOTIVATION AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

A. Motivation to Learn

Motivation is the factors that determine a person's desire to do something (Richards, Platt & Platt, 2000). According to Williams and Burden (1997), it is made up of four parts: 1) The desire and determination for an action; 2) The interest for an object or an activity; 3) The energy one holds; 4) The maintenance of the interest and participation. Motivation is a subjective reason that can directly promote and preserve the study of the students, that is, learning motivation can make the students keep and carry out the study activities. Motivation is commonly viewed as an inner drive, impulse, emotion, or desire that moves the learners to a particular action (Brown, 1980).

It is proved that one of the reasons why students can't get good marks is due to the fact that the students have not formed a noticeable motivation. If a student has got a positive learning motivation, he will study more initiatively and actively, and his or her language learning will become a spontaneous process. If a student who has no learning motivation, his study can only depend on external factors. It is a mutual relationship between language learning and motivation to learn.

B. Review of Motivation Research

Motivation has been taken into account in foreign language learning research in the past decades. It serves as an

important prerequisite for language study, of which intensity determines different performances in learning process. American researchers Uguroglu and Walberg have already proved positive correlation between motivation and performance in language learning process through plenty of studies and research analyses (cited in Li & He, 1999). Higher level of motivation leads to higher achievement, while better achievement in return stimulates and strengthens the motivation.

Genesee, Roger and Holobow(1983) have also studied the relationship between motivation and context, from which they concluded that socio-psychological models of SLA need to consider the role of intergroup factors more seriously (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 2000). In other words, inner factors from the learners like the desire to learn a language should be taken into consideration. To maintain learner's motivation, Alpetkin(1981) recommends an ESP(English for specific purposes) approach in which the language is taught according to learner's specific language learning fields, and it is proved that instrumental motivations are greatly encouraged and strengthened in such a way. Thus, in child English language teaching, teachers should place more emphasis on learning motivation and try their best to foster and maintain the students' motivation that has a great influence on their language study result.

C.   A Brief Introduction of Needs Analysis

American humanistic psychologist Abraham, H. Maslow (1999) has set up a hierarchic theory of needs. Physiological need generally refers to the homeostasis of the body, and this need is mainly satisfied in the way of eating. Safety need mostly indicates security, stability, dependency, protection, freedom from fear, anxiety and chaos; need for structure, order, law, limits; strength in the protector, and so on (Maslow, 1999). Belongingness and love need means a person may feel keenly the absence of parents, friends, lovers, or children. He will hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely, for a place in his group or family, and he will strive with great intensity to achieve this goal, or he will feel sharply the pangs of loneliness, of ostracism, of rejection, of friendlessness, of rootlessness (Maslow, 1999). The esteem need approximately includes man's eager for self-respect, or for the esteem of others. And lastly, the need for self-actualizing points out that a man can be what he wants to be, just as Maslow (1999)said, what a man can be, he must be. He must be true to his own nature.

Needs analysis is the process of gathering and interpreting information on the uses to which language learners will put the target language (TL) following instruction; and what the learners will need to do in the learning situation in order to learn the TL (Byram, 2001). The results of needs analyses are used in language program planning to make decisions about appropriate learning objectives, syllabus content, teaching and assessment methods, learning materials and resources (Byram, 2001). In this paper, results of needs analysis got in the research are used aiming at making decisions about instructional plans and teaching methods in English language teaching process in order to encourage students' motivation to learn.

The first model of needs analysis promoted by Richterich (1972) was carried out in the settings where learners would use the language, the people whom they would communicate with and the language exponents (syntax, lexis, functions, etc.). This type of needs analysis was later known as "target situation analysis" (TSA) (Chamber, 1980). The most influential model of TSA was John Munby's Communicative Needs Processor (Munby, 1978), an analytic implement with which language instructors build up a summarized account of a learner's communication needs. These needs were then translated into a list of language skills and micro-functions which formed the basis of the target syllabus specification (Byram, 2001, p.439). During the 1970s and 1980s, critics questioned the ignorance of learners' learning needs such as the learner's attitudes, motivation and learning style in Munby's model despite its concern with individual language needs. Subsequent approaches to needs analysis have therefore addressed Munby's model by focusing data collection on information about leaner's current deficiencies, learners' wants and expectations of the course, etc. (Dudley-Evan and St John, 1998). Thus, motivation is gradually taken into account in needs analysis.

III.   RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study provides information concerning how the research has been carried out and tries to verify a hypothesis that will provide a better and optimal way to maintain motivation to learn and encourage effective child English language learning which is based on classroom observation and interviews.

Although there are lots of studies on affective teaching in children's English language learning process, there have been relatively few studies on specific psychological factors that may affect children's learning motivation for foreign language learning, and how to encourage their language learning motivation. Due to the lack of investigations on children's needs in their English learning process and studies on the relation between needs and learning motivation, the purpose of this study aims at identifying the existence of the five needs in children's language learning and finding the reasons why most of the child students lack motivation to learn.

A.   Subjects

The subjects observed in this study are students who are aged 7 to 12 from Grade two through Grade six, studying in the Cambridge Young Learners English (CYLE) School in the city Nanchong and in Langzhong. The teachers involved in this research are the teachers working in school of foreign languages of China West Normal University. They all have three or more years' experience in English language teaching, and teach the students on every weekend. The textbook

used in CYLE School is "Cambridge Young Learners English Pupil's Book", which includes three levels: starters (primary 1-2), movers (primary 3-4), and flyers (primary 5-6).

B. Instruments

Video capturing device and interviews are the main instruments used in this study as the subject is child students and questionnaire is a little difficult to handle.

1) Video Capture

Some useful and important class presentation pieces were noted as often as possible, including the teacher's strategies used for promoting children's leaning motivation and the reactions the students showed in order to make the study more reliable. Additionally, three lessons of each teacher were examined in detail in the hope that they can help illustrate the specific strategies used in English language classes to encourage and maintain children's motivation for learning English.

2) Observation

As one of the teacher participants is the researcher herself, most of her class presentations were mainly observed carefully by herself instead of video capturing. During the observation, not only the students' performances in class were particularly noticed, but also the strategies used and the reason for using them were noted clearly. To do this is just for the purpose of making sure the reliability of this study.

3) Interviews

Interviews with the four teachers and their students were conducted throughout a whole year. What the students said was taken down by the researcher during the interview in order not to miss any useful information for the research. The main questions concerning the satisfaction of needs in child English language learning and motivation maintaining are given in the next part.

IV. Results of the Study

Data collected in the observation and transcriptions are carefully analyzed in this part. We are going to centre on the activities the students took part in and their reactions after an English lesson. The analysis and discussions will focus on the results of learners' needs analysis based on the data collected from the observation and interviews.

A. Analysis of Needs in Child English Language Learning

In order to investigate how the five needs are satisfied in child English language learning, the researcher has tried to identify the characteristics of the children during the study.

Extract of the Interview with Students:

1. Why are you learning English?
   A1: I like English cartoons.
   A2: Parents ask me to study English.
   A3: I have no idea.
2. Q: Do you think English is a very useful language?
   A1: Yes.
   A2: I don't know.
   A3: No.
3. Q: How do you feel when your teacher speaks English in class?
   A1: Fantastic.
   A2: I cannot understand.
   A3: Interesting but difficult to understand.
4. Q: What are your favorite class activities?
   A1: Group discussion.
   A2: Story reading.
   A3: Game playing.
5. Q: Do you like English? If do, how much do you like?
   A1: Yes, very much.
   A2: Yes, a little.
   A3: No.
   A4: I don't know.
6. Q: How do you think of your English teacher's teaching in your language classroom? Are you satisfied or not?
   A1: Satisfied.
   A2: Relatively satisfied.
   A3: No, not satisfied.
   A4: No comment.
7. Q: Do you usually become nervous when you are studying or using English?
   A1: Yes.

A2: Sometimes.

A3: No.

8. Q: If you compare yourself to your classmates, what will your self-rating English proficiency level be? You can choose one from the following: Very bad; bad; medium; good; very good.

A1: Good.

A2: Medium.

A3: Bad.

9. Q: Do you often review or preview English lessons no matter the teacher asks you to do or not?

A1: Yes.

A2: No.

A3: Never think of.

10. Q: Have you ever tried to practice English with other students?

A1: Yes.

A2: No.

A3: Never think of.

11. Q: Do you want to learn about the culture of English speakers?

A1: yes.

A2: Never think of.

A3: No.

TABLE 1
FREQUENCY OF THE ANSWERS (TOTAL NUMBER: 27)

Answers / Questions	A1	A2	A3	A4
Q1	8	15	4	
Q2	22	3	2	
Q3	6	12	9	
Q4	3	6	18	
Q5	8	7	7	5
Q6	14	3	3	7
Q7	12	10	5	
Q8	5	17	5	
Q9	11	9	7	
Q10	7	9	11	
Q11	8	13	6	

After observing the students in classrooms and talking to those specific child language learners, the researcher found some common characteristics of most of the subjects according to **Table 1**:

1. They are not curious enough as a young child should be and most of them have passive interest in language learning. (See Q1, Q11)

2. Ambiguity of language learning motivation exists. (See Q1, Q5, Q9, Q10, Q11)

3. They are not satisfied enough with the learning environment and the methodologies teachers employ in their classroom teaching. (See Q3, Q6)

4. Interactive activities are popular with child students. (See Q4)

5. Fear and anxiety are the main obstacles in child English language learning. (See Q3, Q7)

6. Lack conscious desire for success due to the class activities in which cooperation is emphasized while personal identification is neglected. (See 4, Q8, Q9)

The investigation into child students identifies the existence of the five needs, i.e. safety need, belongingness and love need, esteem need, apprehension need and the need for self-actualization in child language learning which have not been satisfied enough. For example, most child subjects avoid answering questions raised by the teacher in classes as well as practicing English with their classmates which implies their needs for safety and love are not well satisfied. Child students are also afraid of failures like adults, so to get more students motivated to involve in their classroom language learning, praise and encouragement from the teachers are required and designs of questions and classroom tasks need more careful consideration.

B. Causes of Lack of Learning Motivation

The author has probed into the causes of lack of motivation in child English language learning through the classroom observation and interviews with the specific four teachers involved in the study.

Extract of Interview with Teachers:

1. Q: Do you think English is necessary and important in your daily life?

T1: Yes.

T2: Yes.

T3: Yes.

    T4: Yes.
  2. Q: Have you taken notice of the use of native language in your teaching process?
    T1: Sometimes.
    T2: Yes.
    T3: Sometimes.
    T4: Yes.
  3. Q: What do you think is the major reason for lack of motivation in child English language learning?
    T1: Age.
    T2: Teaching approaches.
    T3: Classroom activities.
    T4: Unawareness of the value of English.
  4. Q: What are your purposes of using interaction patterns in your classes?
    T1: To arouse children's interest in language learning.
    T2: To achieve effective English teaching.
    T3: To facilitate English teaching.
    T4: To make language learning more interesting and relaxed.
  5. Q: What are the characteristics of interaction in your classroom?
    T1: Not effective enough.
    T2: Group work is usually taken.
    T3: Whole-class work is often taken.
    T4: Not effective enough.
  6. Q: What are your favorable classroom activities?
    T1: Pair work.
    T2: Game playing.
    T3: Story reading.
    T4: Group work.

According to the results, three main causes of lack of motivation in children's English language learning are generalized below:

1) Lack of awareness of the value of English: Most of the children are not really aware of the importance of English language learning. They learn English just because they are required to study the language in schools and their parents ask them to do so. Child students rarely realize the usefulness of English language in our daily life, thus their interest in English learning would mostly be found in classroom study period and can not last for a long time.

2) Lack of interaction: Interaction between teachers and students should be more emphasized. Most of the teachers could not remember all of the children's names, and because of the big size of language classroom, they could not always keep an eye on students, listen to their opinions and give immediate feedback. Besides, interactions among child students need to be paid attention to. Group work and whole-class activities are favored by most English teachers because it can help save time since hours for class teaching on weekends are quite limited. Then some of the students may keep in silence while others are discussing and the teacher could not immediately identify them and encourage them to join in the discussion.

3) Lack of creative use of teaching materials: Teachers tend to give a careful explanation of their teaching materials like words explanation and sentence translation when trying to make their children understand what they are talking about. Since most of them are working in their spare time, the time for teaching preparation is not enough. Therefore, creative use of teaching materials is seldom seen in classroom teaching because everyone of them lay more emphasis on the accomplishment of teaching tasks.

V. Pedagogical Suggestions

First of all, both teachers and parents should try hard to arouse the awareness of the importance of English. English is frequently used in our daily life, and English stories and novels are becoming more and more popular among Chinese children since there are fresh ideas and a lot of interesting happenings in those books which are quite different from what they have read in Chinese traditional legendaries and fables.

Secondly, a pleasant and enjoyable environment should be advocated while children are trying to follow their teachers in language classes. Immersion Teaching is a good way for children to acquire a second language, but the application needs to be considered closely according to different situations in China. Thus, native language is still needed in children's foreign language classes. Krashen also cannot give a definite answer to the use of native language in his Input Hypothesis which partly agrees with immersion and bilingualism, while more and more studies and researches show the favor for use of native language in foreign language teaching (Luo & Cheng, 2006) towards which positive view is held by teachers and students. A better understanding of teaching materials and classroom activities will help diminish children's anxiety in foreign language learning and encourage them to take part in the learning process.

Thirdly, language teachers have to pay attention to the improvement of professional teaching. Regular study and training should be promoted in schools. Moreover, they need to be concerned about new teaching theories and the

development of teaching methodology. Therefore, they may have ideas in creative use of teaching materials with the help of various teaching approaches, such as Immersion Teaching, Total Physical Response, Communicative Approach, Situational Language Teaching, and so on, since one single method could not be applied in different circumstances. Besides, student-centered teaching could be taken into account during language teaching process. Most of the child students are willing to display their feelings and tell their ideas, which may facilitate the teaching focused upon children's language production. At the same time, teachers should emphasize the interaction among the children and pay more attention to the communication between the child and themselves in order to get immediate feedback in language learning.

VI. CONCLUSION

As intrinsic motivation is mainly influenced by internal factors which indicate the five needs generalized by Wang (2004), i.e. safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem need, apprehension need and self-actualizing need, the primary objective of this study is to ensure the existence of learning needs, find how the five needs are satisfied in child English language learning process and how to stimulate and maintain their motivation to learn through needs satisfaction.

Firstly, needs exist in child English language learning process and have not been well satisfied. Therefore, there's an urgent demand for needs satisfaction in English language classroom teaching. Secondly, lack of child English learning motivation lies in three aspects: unawareness of the value of English, lack of interaction between teachers and students and the interaction among students themselves which function as the main obstacles of needs satisfaction and motivation maintenance. Thirdly, as most of the children are learning English in language schools, learning motivation should be emphasized in school teaching and teachers play an important role in maintaining children's motivation in learning. They have to reconsider the organization of teaching materials and encourage the children to interact more with each other and with the teacher at the same time.

Since the research was only taken in a very limited area (only in the city Nanchong and Langzhong) and in limited time (for just one and a half years), so the findings of the study also bear some possible limitations. The first limitation is that the four classroom settings under observation and the ideas of the teachers and child students cannot represent ideas of all the others. The second one is the interview questions may have predetermined the categories of responses. The third limitation is that because before the teachers and the students were interviewed, they were all informed that the study focuses on their perspectives towards English language teaching, the validity of their answers are under criticism. Actually, the satisfaction of the needs can not be fully achieved during a single lesson. So study under longer-period observation is needed and it could be taken in a larger scope.

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Na Wei was born in Langzhong, China in 1981. She received her master degree in foreign language teaching methodology from China West Normal University, China in 2006.

She is currently a lecturer in the School of Foreign Languages, China West Normal University, Nanchong, China. Her research interests include psycholinguistics and English language teaching.