



Show-Me

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Two Negatives DO Make a Positive

This article was submitted by June Dillard, AEL Instructor, MO Career Center, Ozarks Region in Springfield, MO.



Greene County Justice Center GED Graduates

When you are in jail, and you don't have your GED, those are two negatives that are hard to overcome. However, five young men in their 20's proved that those two negatives do make a positive when they tested and passed their GED October 31, 2009. What makes their story different from other incarcerated men is the road it took for that to even happen.

It started in August 2007 when OTC AEL Instructor, Mary Delfin, began teaching AEL classes twice a week at the Greene County Justice Center (GCJC) in Springfield, MO. The inmates at this particular facility await trials, often for long periods. In the months ahead, Mary saw a lot of growth in her students. They worked hard, were willing to do anything to improve their skills and they developed a serious attitude to get their GED. What Mary and volunteer tutor, Ron Enos, found the most frustrating though was the fact that these young men were preparing for a test that they would not be able to take as long as they were incarcerated. The reason? The GCJC was not an approved GED testing site. So in July 2008 Mary and Ron set out to make that happen.

Their first step was to talk with OTC AEL Director, Ramona George who in turn contacted Bill Poteet, State GED Administrator. In the meantime, Ron set out to find a source to help these inmates pay for their authorizations and sitting fees if they did not have the resources, as well as the test administration fee. He found that source through The Society of St. Vincent DePaul. Another obstacle to overcome was to come up with IDs for these young men and Officer Troy Ruch, Programs Director, played an important role in this. A special ID was created for each inmate that would be used for the GED test only.

Then in August 2009, Ron personally contacted Bill on behalf of the inmates. In that letter he campaigned for the GCJC to become a GED test site. He and Mary also had five of the inmates write letters as well. Those letters were the catalyst that set things in motion. One young man wrote in his letter, "I feel being able to obtain my GED while here would greatly help me upon my release in getting my life started in the right direction." Another wrote, "Being able to take and pass the actual GED test would make me feel my time spent here is not in vain." Bill was so impressed by what all the young men had written that within two weeks he personally came to Springfield to visit them and the GCJC. Both Bill and Kevin Wilson, MSU's GED Test Administrator, checked out the facility and Bill gave it his final approval for it to become an official GED test site.

The mission of the "Show -Me Literacy Newsletter is to provide professional information-sharing, resources and news about adult education and literacy.



Mary Delfin and graduate Anthony Thompson

The next step was to find a date for the test. That date needed to be soon since three of the five had been convicted and would soon move on to other correctional facilities in the state. In class the students worked harder than ever realizing their dream to take the GED was going to be a reality and soon!

October 31st arrived and Officer Ruch brought in Krispy Creme donuts and coffee for the five testers; a real treat for the inmates. Mary was there all day in the next room for moral support as Kevin administered the test. Upon completion, he prepared the packets to be mailed from the facility itself. All there was left to do was wait for the results. Three weeks passed and everyone was on pins and needles, but the wait was worth it and all five inmates passed their GED test. In fact, four of the five scored at scholarship level or above! With their GEDs under their belts, the three sentenced to prison will be able to start college courses at the next facility

The collaborative efforts of local and state AEL, Greene County Justice Center, Missouri State University, not to mention a dedicated instructor and tutor, turned two negatives into a positive for Antonio Draper, Sean Thesing, Chris Cryderman, Jamaris Mosby and Anthony Thompson. Regardless of what lies ahead for them, they will leave the GCJC with a positive under their belts in the form of their GED Certificate.

What ESL Teachers Need to Know Facts About ESL Students

By [DeLene Sholes](#)

Reprinted from <http://classroom-management-tips.suite101.com>

Teachers of ESL students have resources online, in print materials, and training in ESL strategies, but there are a few facts that are especially important to remember.

According to statistics provided by the [National Center for Educational Statistics](#) for school year 2001-2002, almost four million students in the United States and its territories receive ESL services. Teachers who are certified to teach these ESL students have gone through specialized training designed to prepare them to meet the special needs of students learning English as a second language.

While most of these teachers have special training and access to many resources, some who will teach ESL students will not have all the resources they need. It's sometimes easy to forget some of the basic facts about ESL students. Teachers who remember the following facts can make learning English easier and faster for ESL students.

What ESL Teachers Need to Remember

- Some ESL students may already know two languages other than English. Each parent may have a different native language, so the student and possibly both parents are learning a third language.
- Students and their families should be encouraged to use their native language at home, at least part of the time. Using the native tongue makes it easier for a child to grasp some concepts like manners, cultural traditions, and what's expected at school.
- Reading and math skills learned in the native tongue transfer easily to English.
- Customs and traditions in the student's country may be vastly different than in the U.S. This can be confusing for new ESL students and their teachers.
- ESL students need opportunities to share their heritage with other students.
- ESL students need respect and appreciation for their different cultures and traditions. Other students should be encouraged to appreciate the differences.
- It's a good thing for ESL students to be paired with other students who speak the same native language and placed in groups with English-speaking students.
- Explain concepts slowly, and repeat when necessary. Check for understanding often.
- Use pictures and nonverbal cues often. Encourage students to collect pictures and help file them.
- ESL students go through four stages of progress when they are learning English.

Although students use English well in social situations, they may not have mastered academic English.

From www.iteslj.org

Motivation Factors in Language Learning

By Makiko Ebata, Digital Hollywood University (Tokyo, Japan)

Introduction

Motivation in language-learning plays a vital role. It is motivation that produces effective second-language communicators by planting in them the seeds of self-confidence. It also successfully creates learners who continuously engage themselves in learning even after they complete a targeted goal. In order for English instructors to motivate them, a number of methods are needed both in and outside of class. According to Hussin, Maarof, and D'Cruz, "positive self-concept, high self-esteem, positive attitude, clear understanding of the goals for language learning, continuous active participation in the language learning process, the relevance of conductive environment that could contribute to the success of language learning" (2001). They state that six factors influence motivation in language learning: attitudes, beliefs about self, goals, involvement, environmental support, and personal attributes (2001). Above all, three specific elements are strongly believed to build motivation towards language-learning: self-confidence, experiencing success and satisfaction, and good teacher-learner relationships as well as relationships between learners. All three factors are believed to be correlated to each other in the process of motivation development. This paper demonstrates analysis of three factors that have a solid connection with motivation.

Investigation of Three Factors

Self-confidence

Self-confidence is the most significant in language-learning. It provides learners with the motivation and energy to become positive about their own learning. It also creates the drive in them to acquire the targeted language, enjoy the learning process, and experience real communication. "At the heart of all learning is a person's belief in his or her ability

to accomplish the task” (Atsuta, 2003). “In general, successful language learners appear to have higher self-esteem than those who are unsuccessful” (Richard-Amato, 2003). Lack of belief in one’s ability hinders him from achieving that task—pursuing a targeted language accomplishment. Moreover, it is widely believed that once students gain self-confidence, it progressively expands, in conjunction with experiencing success and satisfaction as well as good relationships.

Experience of Success and Satisfaction

Experience of success provides students with more power to pursue a new goal. It allows language learners to understand the purpose of trying and have pleasure in communicating with others. Some people might feel successful when they can communicate their thoughts to people; others might feel the sense of success when they complete a challenging task in a targeted language. The feeling of success time and again emerges specifically when he realizes the degree of his improvement and achievement. Some people, on the other hand, appreciate compliments from others. Subrahmanian suggests that external praise for one’s improvement is strongly related to fomenting the sense of success (2001). There is a similarity between the experience of success and satisfaction; the experience of success at all times satisfies people not only in language-learning but also in anything. To make it short, it is strongly believed that the experience of success comes hand in the hand with the sense of satisfaction.

According to Lile, “a student will find it difficult to perform in a stressful environment” (2002). He also mentions that “the lessons must be very simple, yet fun and interesting, with a lot of changes from a writing exercise, to a speaking, listening, back to writing, and so on”. Nunan states that “students need to be able to use the skills taught in the classroom to do things other than those that they had been specifically taught” (1999). This implies that in order for language learners to experience success and become satisfied, it is essential for instructors to create a relaxing learning environment so that students can perform successfully. Moreover, a language class needs to contain a variety of materials and activities focusing on all necessary skills. By encouraging students to practice not only one skill but all, the class will become more challenging and effective.

Good Relationships Among Learners and Between Teacher and Students

According to Hussin, Maarof, and D’Cruz, “teachers need to find creative ways to teach the language and increase the student’s motivation to learn the language and to eventually appreciate the language” (2001). There are a number of methods that English instructors can use to motivate students in class, and instructors should flexibly employ the most suitable method for the class. Furthermore, Kabilan indicated that “Teachers should develop a mutual relationship with their learners” (2000). In order to develop a mutual relationship with their learners, teachers need to understand students who are from different backgrounds, have different interests, future goals, aims for English learning, and most importantly, different personalities. Once they understand them better, teachers are able to apply specific teaching and communicating strategies tailored to each student, thereby creating a trusting relationship between a teacher and student. Once a relationship develops, the classroom will become comfortable and enjoyable enough for students to learn positively from the teacher without any hesitation.

Hussin, Maarof, and D’Cruz mention that “what occurs in the language classrooms must be extended beyond the walls of the classroom so that a link is created between what is learned in the classrooms with what occurs outside of the classrooms” (2001). Languages cannot be learned merely in classrooms. Learning a language requires communication in real life situations. Thus, students need to acquire an array of communication skills that they can use with various kinds of people. It is essential that they learn not only how to communicate in the target language but also the background, history, and culture that defines it.

“Students who remain silent in groups of ten or more will contribute actively to discussions when the size of the group is reduced to five or three. Type of communicative task can also influence students’ willingness to speak” (Nunan, 1999). According to Richard-Amato, “In classrooms in which mutual respect is lacking, differing values can lead to conflicts between student and teacher, and between student and peer” (2003). The classroom size and the size of group are to be carefully considered. Language learners tend to feel frightened to make a speech in front of a big group. Thus, teachers need to aid students who need support and encourage them to understand that no one can be as perfect as native speakers. In addition, teachers are required to teach all the students the importance of having respect for one another in a classroom so that each of the students can actively participate in lesson.

Students Voices

I did a survey on motivation using the students in my class. Sixteen college freshmen were interviewed regarding the class contents, materials, and the ideal teacher. Half of them had already experienced studying abroad; the other half had not, but their English abilities were as functional as those of returnees.

More students preferred visual aids for new information and their memorization. This means that when teachers introduce new information, visual aids are necessary for students to grasp main points and details. In addition, the students enjoyed thinking rather than talking and individual studying more than group studying; this proves that even returnees who had more opportunities to participate in group studying abroad feel comfortable with a passive studying style. Furthermore, thinking comes before trial according to the survey. This means that students need to obtain time to use their critical thinking strategy before they actually start trying in language learning.

The students answered the question, "What kind of teacher do you prefer?" like below.

- A teacher who knows how to deal with students, especially teenagers.
- A teacher who does not force ideas on the students.
- A tolerant and responsible teacher with a sense of humor.
- A funny teacher who can be serious when necessary.
- A caring teacher.
- A friendly teacher.
- An active teacher.
- A teacher who can understand what students' expectations are.

A trustworthy teacher.

Teachers need to acquire what students pursue in teachers in order for students to be motivated in language learning. They certainly have a strong relation with students' motivation status. It is understood that a teacher's personality and behavior towards students have a strong influence. In order to produce successful language speakers, teachers should devote themselves to teaching.

Conclusion

Motivation is vital in language learning. It makes language learners positive about their own learning. It also creates the drive in them to acquire the targeted language, enjoy the learning process, and experience real communication. Moreover, experience of success and satisfaction has a strong connection with motivation. By realizing their improvement and achievement, students always gain the feeling of success. In order for language students to become satisfied with a lesson, it is required to produce a stress-free classroom and develop integrated-tasks lesson. It is necessary that there is a trust between a teacher and the students so that much communication in a targeted language is developed.

In conclusion, these three factors: *self-confidence, experiencing success and satisfaction, and good teacher-learner relationships as well as relationships between learners*, play an essential role in developing language learners' motivation.

Perceptions and Stereotypes of ESL Students

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Classifying and Stereotyping

Students who are obviously different from their instructors because of race, religion, native language, etc. are especially subject to categorization and stereotyping as instructors try to manage the various impressions they receive of all their students. While the need/ability to create a framework to organize our perceptions of others is a human trait (Gudykunst and Kim 1984: 84; Miller and Steinberg 1975: 6-7; Nelson 1998: 728; Sokal 1977: 185), if this categorization becomes stereotyping, it can harm individuals by denying them educational, work, and social opportunities.

Our concern here is the situation in which instructors hold stereotyped opinions of ESL students. Spack (1997: 768-772) addresses the issue of ESL instructors making unwarranted generalizations, finding some evidence that this does occur. A further question for research is what happens to ESL students once they leave our classrooms and enter mainstream education. Are they subject to generalizations made by educators in other fields? If so, what types of opinions do other educators hold about ESL students? Are those opinions ones which could hinder the students' education?

In order to determine whether professors stereotype nonnative English-speaking students, the researcher interviewed twenty-one professors at the College of Business Administration at a large university in the U.S. Southwest. The researcher targeted business professors because they are not specifically trained in language education and because within a university setting students take far more courses in subject areas such as engineering or business than courses in English composition. Thus, the reactions of professors in fields other than ESL are very important to the academic success of students.

The researcher asked the professors three questions:

- What are some personality characteristics of good students?
- What are some personality characteristics of bad students?
- What are the personality characteristics of foreign students?

To Be Continued in the March Issue

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