

A False Motivation: Another Way to Encourage Students to Learn

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和文要旨：英語学習者にどのようにしてモチベーションを与えるかという議論は、英語教育史上絶えることがない。国民のすべてが英語を学習する時代になって久しいことから、学校教育においては、特段英語学習に強い関心を持たない学習者も少なくないと言える。個々の学習者が具体的な学習目標を持って教室にいることが望ましいが、実際にそれを実現することは困難であろう。本論では、成績の記録用紙を与えるというきわめて簡素な方法で、学習者に擬似的なモチベーションを与える方法を紹介し、結果を報告する。

【キーワード】モチベーション、学習意欲

Abstract : How can teachers motivate students to learn English? This is a question which is as old as the history of English education itself, but has never been answered. All citizens of Japan are required to study English at school, which has led to the situation where quite a few students have no clear goals in learning English. It is, in fact, extremely difficult to literally motivate students to learn. In this article, I report on an attempt to give students quasi-motivation by using a simple grade record sheet.

【Keywords】motivation, learner autonomy

1 . Introduction

In some countries in Europe, it is usual that people use English as their communication tool in everyday settings. The situation where different people of different languages live and work together naturally requires a common language. People involved in English education have made a lot of effort to design better textbooks or teaching methods. It is time to assume the non-working of English teaching in Japan may have nothing to do with teaching itself. How teachers can motivate their students should be discussed. As a familiar proverb says, you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. In this article, I report on how teachers can false-motivate their students, which consequently leads to authentic motivation.

2 . What Makes Students What to Learn

I have asked the same two questions to all of my students over the last 15 years. One of which is "Why do you study English?" And the result is what you see in the Table 1.1. The total numbers of the students involved is now 5125. It is impressive that as many as 71% of the whole group answered

that term exams are the main reason for them to study English, whereas the latter two desired replies stay at low levels.

Table 1.1

term exams	.71
required for college entrance exams	.68
want to acquire English fluency	.25
necessary for future career	.08

Another question asked to the same group is "When or what occasions do you feel it is good to study English?" If you were asked to name just one purpose of learning foreign languages, it wouldw-2(r)20009Tett11't1(s)-2(r){.f29.1(o)-3.7(f)-32418.7692 in less populated areas like Tottori, you seldom have opportunities to use English. If you were not teaching English there, you could spend one whole week without saying a word of English. Words like internationalization and globalization

Table 2

Year	n=10	n=20	n=30
2004	.20	.24	.38
2005	.30	.35	.49
2006	.37	.40	.48
2007	.41	.44	.53

After the announcement, the students did better than before, but still many students seemed to be indifferent to the quizzes. The path may have been right, but the whole strategy was on the wrong track.

A very simple record sheetⁱⁱⁱ for the quizzes did help a lot. The sheet allows the students to know how many points out of 30 they have earned at any period of the term. Thus the students are always aware of their status, and this means the students are reminded of their starting points before the term exam. If you have earned 20 points, for instance, your starting point should be 90, which clearly indicates that you cannot make up for the 10 points you have lost in quizzes.

This is another story, but I figured out that 30%^{iv} of the whole grade is somehow a very appropriate portion for quizzes. If it is 10% or 20%, your students may not be willing to prepare for the quizzes. They seem to believe they still can have 80 or 90% if they do very well in the term exam, which usually turns out to be a really bad idea.

After the record sheet was introduced into the classes, students suddenly began to work harder than they did before. Table 3.1 shows the average points in a series of quizzes. The figures in the "Period A" columns are the averages in percent scale before the record sheet system was introduced. And the figures in the "Period B" columns are from the period when the students were asked to record their points on their sheets.

Table 3.1

Year	Period A	Period B
2004	.24	.61
2005	.35	.63
2006	.40	.75
2007	.44	.82

p < .05

In each different year, I had different students of different ages in a high school. The numbers of students varies year to year. So, a direct comparisons may not be justified. In each year, however, you can see the progress in

the students' scores. The total number of students involved is 263. The number of quizzes given is 256.

Along with the group I mentioned, I had another group of students without the record sheet system. They were told that 30% of the grade is from the quizzes again and again. Actually every quiz sheet had that statement on it. Table 3.2 shows the change or progress of the group without the record sheet system. Period A and Period B are the same of those in Table 3.1. As you can guess from this table, the students take a longer time to realize 30% of the grade meant much to them. Some students realized it, and started to work harder, but others still did not see how much the 30% meant to them. This is why this group made slower progress than the group in Table 3.1.

Table 3.2^v

Year	Period A	Period B
2004	.22	.36
2005	.38	.42
2006	.39	.51
2007	.40	.53

I need to let you know that at the end of the school year, a period for the last term exam, which is for two months, I terminated the system, and observed how the students reacted to it. The students were not asked to keep a record sheet, but were kept reminded that 30% of the final score for the term grade was from quizzes. In short the situation went back to that of period A in Table 3.1. The same figures for Period A and Period B are also shown in Table 3.3 for your reference. Period C is the period after the record sheet system was abolished. As you can see from the figures in Table 3.3, the average scores in Period C did not drop to the level that they were in Period A.

Table 3.3

Year	Period A	Period B	Period C
2004	.24	.61	.49
2005	.35	.63	.55
2006	.40	.75	.70
2007	.44	.82	.68

6 . Conclusion

The results from the experiments imply that once students understand what they need to do, many of them do not stop doing them as long as their efforts are evaluated. In the questionnaire^{vi} afterwards, many students said "They got interested in doing the work while they are doing it." It was the very time when their "false" motivation turned into their authentic motivation or autonomy; their willingness to learn.

I repeatedly told my students that English fluency will be of importance in their future in many different ways, but it was not convincing enough. By just adding a peck of pepper in the evaluation system, it suddenly began to work, which was a quiz record sheet.

Other unexpected results were collected in the other group without record sheets. In this group, I assumed that the scores would fall down to the level that they used to be in the Period A, but actually they didn't. But the average scores were still far below those of the other group with a record sheet. I assume that some students in this group as well as the ones in the other group may have got interested in studying the given materials, which is to have acquired motivation or autonomy, but the slow traffic can be accelerated by using record sheets which keep students aware of how they are actually doing in the course.

7 . Further Steps to Take

In the settings of English teaching at school, it may be difficult to involve all of your teaching staff in the system you suggest. If so, your students would be free from chances to control their grades outside your classroom. My results show many students will continue working on once they get interested in what they are doing. How you can involve your colleagues in your attempt is another big problem to overcome.

The second question here has been, to some extent, answered; Can the record sheet system work with older students? I applied a very similar system to the class at Tottori University, where I teach part-time. The difference was way more visible and clear. I have collected data from the students there for three years, but the number of students is not enough for the report here. College students worry more about passing/failing things, and that is why they show a larger difference.

I'm currently working on collecting data in the long run. It is now clear that students are more false-motivated when

they know how much work deserves how many points. For example, in each quiz they earn more points than when they know nothing about evaluation policies.

Here is the last question to be answered; if we give students the same quiz after a long period of time, will it still show a difference? If it wouldn't, the strategy suggested here would work just temporarily. Items taught should be in the students' long-term memory.

Reference

Sinclair, John, et al. (1995) COBUILD English Dictionary, HarperCollins

ⁱ 532 high school students in Tottori-shi were involved in this research.

ⁱⁱ Questionnaire asked to all the students involved in this survey. The total number of students is 532. The questionnaire includes the following two questions:

1) Do you think you worked hard for the quizzes? (answer in four scales)

2) Why? (answer in free-writing style)

ⁱⁱⁱ See Appendix.

^{iv} $n=40$ resulted in slightly better than average scores. On the other hand, the students made less effort in preparing for the term exams. The questionnaire results show 38% of all the students gave up because they thought they would be able to make up for the lost scores in quizzes, which implies between $n=30$ and $n=40$ is a well-balanced figure to keep students encouraged to work both on quizzes and term exams.

^v Period A and Period B are the same as those indicated in table 3.1, and the quizzes given are also the same.

^{vi} 32% of the students made similar comments in the free writing column.

(2009年1月7日受理)



Student #

Quiz 実施日	4/12	4/19	4/26	5/10	5/17	5/24	5/31	6/7	6/14	6/21	6/28	7/5	7/13	7/14
Quiz/PD 番号	---	---	L1/WB L											

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