

Motivational Dynamics: Exploring ESL Teaching Practices in Lower Dibang Valley's Primary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The study intended to investigate the effects of motivation among the primary school English teachers in the Lower Dibang Valley District of Arunachal Pradesh. Teachers and the social environment in which students live have a significant influence on young learners' motivation to learn English at the primary level. To investigate teachers' perceptions and strategies for motivating young English language learners, a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interview were conducted. The results of the study indicate that teachers have a favorable attitude towards motivation and utilize various motivational strategies to motivate young language learners.

Keywords: Motivation, Primary level, language learners, motivational strategies.

Introduction

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), 'To be motivated means to be moved to do something and to have chosen to do it in the absence of any external inducement'. Motivation is something that directs us to act, learn, and instruct in a desirable way (McDonough, 2007). 'Motivation is the one variable in the absence of which no learning can happen' (Deepa 2020, p. 40). Hence, motivation encompasses why people do something, how hard they strive to achieve it, and how long they are willing to continue the effort. In learning a second or foreign language, motivation is essential. 'The motivated individual is goal-directed, expends effort, is persistent, is attentive, has desires (wants), exhibits positive affect, is aroused, has expectancies, demonstrates self-confidence (self-efficacy), and has reasons (motives)' (Gardner 2007, p. 10). 'Motivation needs to be actively nurtured' (Dörnyei 2001, p. 71) in the learning of a second/foreign language. Since 'motivation cannot be viewed as a stable attribute of learning that

remains constant for several years' (p. 19), maintaining long-term motivation is a difficult task. English Language Learners (ELL) are motivated to learn when given the right environment. A supportive setting encourages their engagement and enthusiasm in the learning process. Thus a teacher plays a crucial role in motivating language learners by being motivated themselves, reflecting empathy, patience, warmth, and positive reinforcement (Spithill 1980). Creating a comfortable, anxiety-free environment and emphasizing the attainability of language learning for young learners is essential.

Young language learners are thought to have a relatively higher level of motivation in any type of learning. The motivation of young language learners is mostly shaped by their classroom experiences, which are based on the influence of their teachers, their friends, and peers (Dörnyei 2001). Young ESL learners do not grasp the value of learning a second language; thus, teachers must ignite their students interest by sharing their enthusiasm for the language (Dörnyei 2001). As

they are still in the early stages of their learning, young L2 (second language) students are more reliant on their L2 teachers. Teachers must form a strong bonding with their students in order to comprehend the significant challenges they face. According to Dörnyei (2001), ‘teachers who share warm, personal interactions with their students, who respond to their concerns in an empathic manner and who succeed in establishing relationships of mutual trust and respect with the learners, are more likely to inspire them in academic matters than those who have no personal ties with the learners’ (p. 36). Therefore, teachers need to apply certain methods and techniques to make the learning environment ‘stimulating and enjoyable...breaking the monotony of classroom events’ (Waddington 2018, p. 167).

Background

Lower Dibang Valley is one of the 26 districts of Arunachal Pradesh, and it is home to two tribes: Idu-Mishmi and Adi. Both tribes communicate in their native tongue. Hindi is the most widely spoken language, having superseded *nefamese* a pidgin of Assamese that served as a contact language in the state, emerged through the frequent engagement between the people of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh (Kumari 2021). In Arunachal Pradesh, Assamese has been the medium of instruction. The Assamese language was replaced by English during the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) student union’s fervent protest in 1971-72 (Begi 2007). Increasing demand for English compelled the government at the state to introduce English as a language from the beginning of school education (Kumari 2021). Accordingly, every committee and commission on education advocated teaching in the mother tongue. However, since there were no scripts for the various ethnic groups. Thus, English was

used as a medium of education (Begi 2007, p.46). But the teachers preferred to teach in Hindi, so the present situation of ELT (English Language Teaching) in Arunachal Pradesh has not changed considerably (Meto and Mishra 2022). Eventhough Language proficiency is expected since English is used as the medium of instruction in Arunachal Pradesh a lack of motivation affects teachers’ and students’ ability to improve their English.

The following research questions guided the present paper:

1. What is the perception of teachers regarding the role of motivation in teaching English to young ESL learners?
2. What are the key motivational strategies that teachers use in their English language classrooms at the primary level?

Participant Background

The current study targets a group consisting population consists of fifty (50) primary level English teachers. These teachers were chosen from thirty-two (32) different schools. Participants came from both government (twenty three) and private schools (nine) in the Lower Dibang Valley District. The goal was to gather information on their perceptions and practices about motivation in English language teaching and learning.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was based on studies and research that have reviewed the role of motivation in English language teaching and learning. The questionnaire was distributed to a non-random group of fifty (50) primary school English teachers. They were selected from four blocks, namely Koronu, Dambuk, Roing, and Tinali of Lower Dibang Valley District of Arunachal

Pradesh. The questionnaire was given to teachers at their respective schools. The questions were explained, and they were given adequate time to complete the questionnaire.

The first part of the questionnaire gathered personal and professional information about the teachers (e.g., gender, age, teaching experience, school status, name of the school, professional training). The second part of the questionnaire aimed at understanding teachers' perspectives about the relevance of motivation in English language teaching and learning. The third part of the questionnaire included thirteen statements. These statements addressed how frequently primary-level ESL teachers apply various motivating strategies to engage young language learners. The questionnaire was written in English, and all respondents responded in

English. A five-point likert scale was used in creating the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to place a tick mark (✓) in the appropriate boxes.

Semi Structure Interview

The interview was also based on existing literature and surveys on motivation in teaching and learning English. The interview consisted of seven (7) questions designed to elicit useful information regarding the importance of motivation in teaching and learning the English language. Following the completion of the questionnaire, interviews were conducted. Teachers were asked to participate based on their willingness and thirty-eight (38) did. The interviews were recorded on a mobile phone and transcribed in English later by the researcher.

Table 1: Profile of Teacher Participats

Item		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	17	34%
	Female	33	66%
Age	20-30	13	26%
	31-40	24	48%
	41-50	8	16%
	51-Above	5	10%
Educational qualifications	Higher Secondary School leaving Certificate	1	2%
	Bachelor of Arts	30	60%
	Bachelor of Science	1	2%
	Bachelor of Commerce	1	2%
	Master of Arts	17	34%
	No comment		

Professional training	D.EL.ED	26	52%
	B.ED	24	48%
Teaching experience	1-5	18	36%
	6-10	14	28%
	11-15	10	20%
	16-20	2	4%
	21-25	2	4%
	26-30	2	4%
	31-35	1	2%
	36-40	1	2%

Findings And Analysis

Research Question 1: What is the perception of teachers regarding the role of motivation in teaching English to young learners?

On investigating teachers' perceptions of the importance of motivation in teaching English to young English learners the results of the survey show that 39 (78%) respondents rated it as very important, 8 (16%) believe it is quite important, 1 (2%) rated it as somewhat important, and 2 (4%) consider it is not really important. The results show that teachers agree

that motivation is critical while teaching English to young learners. Motivation of teachers and learners is crucial to the success of teaching and learning. Because young ESL (English as Second Language) learners are oblivious to the importance and necessity of learning English, also the learning environment must be engaging and motivating. Since it influences the rate of learning in young learners, motivation is a crucial factor in the success of teaching and learning of English as a second language. As a result, teachers must comprehend the function and importance of motivation in primary ESL classrooms.

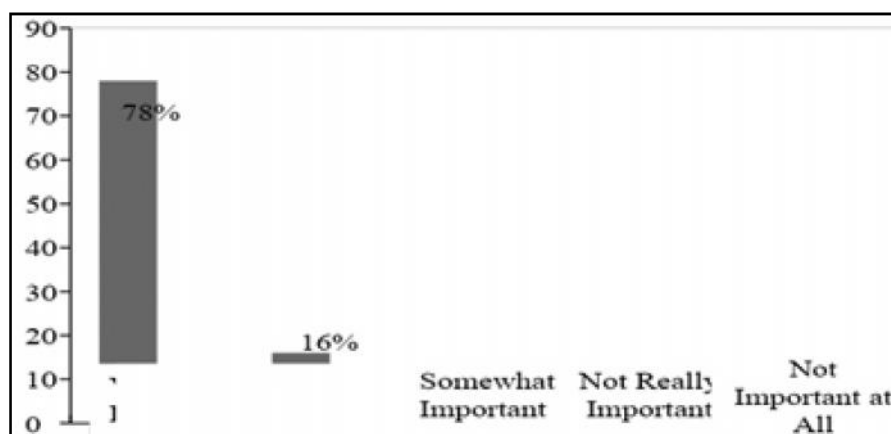


Figure 1: Teachers' perceptions of the role of motivation in teaching young learners English

On investigating the key motivational strategies used by teachers of English at the primary level, the following strategies were identified. Table 2

shows the different strategies used by teachers for motivating young ESL learners in rank order of frequency.

Table 2: Frequency of Motivational Strategies used by Teachers

Rank	Strategies	Frequency
1	I care for and respect the learners and their needs. I create a Supportive and friendly atmosphere inside the English language classroom.	4.62
2	I provide students with positive information and feedback.	4.5
3	I create an active classroom environment where I encourage learners to work cooperatively with their classmates and prepare them to develop team spirit and gain confidence.	4.5
4	I maintain appropriate behaviour and act as a role model to inspire and motivate the learner.	4.48
5	I constantly self-evaluate the effectiveness of my teaching strategies and accordingly bring improvement in my teaching.	4.4
6	I make the class interactive where the learners feel free to interact in English with the teachers and their classmates.	4.28
7	I try to find out the possible challenges faced by the learners and accordingly design my English language lesson.	4.28
8	I talk about my enthusiasm for the course and try to raise the learners interest in the learning process of English.	4.12
9	I use tasks and activities which are appropriate and suitable to the abilities of the learners.	4.06
10	I allow the learners to make mistakes and accept mistakes as a natural and crucial part of the learning process.	3.76
11	I use the play-way method and child-centric fun activities to keep the learners' active in the English language classroom.	3.6
12	I use technology (Audio-visual aids) to make the English language class interesting, engaging and learner-friendly.	3
13	I use authentic materials such as audio clips, magazines, radio, songs, comics, cartoons etc in the teaching of the English language.	3

Research question 2: What are the key motivational strategies that teachers use in their English language classrooms at the primary level?

The result shows that all teachers do the following very frequently:

- care and respect the learners and their needs
- create a supportive and friendly atmosphere
- provide students with positive information and feedback

The following strategies rank in the average; however, they are also frequently used if motivating the young ESL learners:

- create an active classroom environment
- encourage learners to work cooperatively
- act as a role model to inspire and motivate the learner
- reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching strategies
- find out the challenges faced by the learners
- use appropriate and suitable tasks and activities

Teachers use these strategies on a regular basis as most of them have been trained and have been teaching young learners for a considerable period.

The following strategies rank a little lower, but they are also used by the teacher, although less frequently compared to the other strategies:

- allow the learners to make mistakes
- use the play-way method and child-centric fun activities
- use technology (Audio-visual aids) to make the class engaging
- use authentic materials such as audio clips, songs, comics, cartoons etc.

It demonstrates that teachers understand the

significance of implementing these strategies. Yet, due to a lack of adequate materials and proper infrastructure, teachers may find it difficult to apply these strategies more frequently. Teachers feel that motivation is essential for young English learners. Teachers believe that they must be first motivated in order to encourage their students. Teachers must use a variety of motivating teaching strategies to keep their learners engaged in learning the language. They emphasized the importance of careful preparation of instructional strategies based on the real needs of the students. The difficulty level of the teaching and learning materials should relate to the learner's proficiency and level of comprehension. Teachers feel that the teaching and learning environment for young learners should be free of anxiety[; such as fear, discomfort, and hesitation, which may lead them to face difficulty learning English. Thus, teachers think it is crucial to make their teaching and learning materials familiar to young language learners. The use of tangible items and activities assisted learners in integrating with the learning environment (Semi structured interview).

Conclusion

In spite of limitations, this paper attempts to understand teachers' perception and strategies used at primary level with regards to motivating young English learners. There has not been any research conducted regarding the importance of motivation in teaching and learning the English language in Arunachal Pradesh. The results indicate that teachers have a positive attitude towards the role of motivation in the successful learning of the English language. Teachers believe that they must motivate themselves in order to motivate their students. Thus, teachers need to plan their strategies to reduce anxiety-inducing factors and motivate students by showing their own enthusiasm about learning the English language.

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