Innovative Tips and Astuces to Acquire English as a Foreign Language in Parakou Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

In the teaching-learning processes, motivation is one of the main factors that can determine the learners' objective. Hence, the objectives of this study are to show English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and learners of Albarika secondary school (Parakou) the necessity to understand the components of motivation and to examine widely how teachers can influence students' skills through motivating astuces and tips. To reach that goal, the field study was conducted in secondary school of Albarika, relying on class observation, interviews and questionnaire sheets that were distributed to 45 learners and 06 teachers. The results of the data analyses firstly revealed that all the EFL teachers are aware of the great importance of motivation and secondly; most of them usevarious tips and astuces such as re-phrasal songs, dialogues, storytelling to motivate their learners for effectiveness. Some suggestions and recommendations are formulated for improvement of such mechanism in language classes.

Keywords: *Innovation – astuces - tips – English as a Foreign Language – Learning.*

INTRODUCTION

Learning English is doubtless essential since it is the most common language spoken everywhere and which intervene in almost all fields (Akbari, 2015). However, learning English in a country where it is taught as foreign language with little opportunities for learners to practise it within or outside the classroom is perceived as a hard task and highly challenging process for learners. Once they have to master the four skills of the target language and mainly the speaking activity. Indeed, speaking is often considered as the most important in language learning and compulsory for effective communication. Cited by Madsa, T. (2012), Harmer (2001) even indicates that learning English means learning how to speak it as a language. Thus, knowing a language is associated with speaking of such language fluency by using language orally for different purposes in global fields of life.

However, in the whole process of teaching, teachers encounter many problems among which students' lack of motivation to learn the language appears as the most common. In fact, motivation is one of the key elements which determine the success of learning a language and its importance in teaching-learning process is no more to demonstrate. As Rost (2006) noticed, it is important to think about motivation as the essence of language teaching because of the stark realities of learning English for most of our students. Because, apart from the intellectual capacity and language aptitude, it is necessary for teachers to help their students as even recommended by the Competency Based Approach system to identifying their difficulties during the lessons and finding some effective motivating strategies and techniques in order to facilitate language learning among learners and encourage them to communicate in the target language.

Thus, this paper aims to show EFL teachers and learners of Albarika secondary school the importance of motivation in teaching-learning process and to examine widely how teachers can influence students' skills through motivating astuces and tips. Besides, in order to achieve those objectives, research questionnaires are formulated.

- What is the most important factor in EFL learning which can influence beginner learners' performance?

- What are the astuces and tips teachers could apply in order to boost learners' motivation?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Clarification

Motivation

Motivation is a Latin term splitted into "*moveo-movere*" which means "to move" in English. Indeed, motivation in foreign language learning context refers to the effort learners put into learning the target language. In the same vein, Mahadi and Jafari, (2012) demonstrated that motivation is the effort which learners put into learning an EFL as a result of their need or desire to learn it. Thus, in classroom setting, motivation can be considered as the degree to which students invest attention and effort in various pursuits, which may be most of the time influenced by the teacher. According to Hapsari (2013), "motivation itself is a multifaceted aspect of dynamic interaction between teachers and students". That is to say, both teachers and students are partners in this process (Shousha, 2018).

Astuce and Tips

From Latin *astutĭa*, the "astuce" is what is clever or cunning. It is a clear ability to deceive someone or to avoid being deceived, or the ability to achieve one's ends by artificial means. The astuce can also be a trick. It is not generally associated with intelligence or academic skills, since it is understood as a person's ability to act in a certain way. A clever person can foresee when he or she is about to be victim of a trap or can himself develop a scheme to deceive others. In the teaching-learning context, astuce refers to any manner or way to achieve a particular goal in terms of acquisition of knowledge. While tips are suggestions and propositions formulated for someone to solve a problem. They are recommendations given to someone in a particular situation to lead him or her to success. To that end, the term 'tips' deals with of the assets and tools provided to teachers to motivate EFL learners in classroom activities. These tools can be immaterial like children teaching method or material such as visual instruments Cucinotta (2018).

Motivation and Learning Effectiveness

In EFL learning process, motivation and its components are understood to be crucial, and actually as an aptitude, intelligence and attitudes. It is an important factor which plays a vital role in the achievement of learner's foreign language acquisition or learning. Dornyei (2001) asserts "in education contexts demotivation is a regrettably common phenomenon". Students are present in class physically but not mentally (Hapsari 2013), because they are not interested in the lesson taught. As Mahadi and Jafar (2012) have quoted, motivation is an essential part in learning. In addition, Cook (2000) observes that the performance of a number of motivated learners in their learning of a second or foreign language is more improved than others. In fact, language teachers often believe that the learners' success or failure in EFL is related to motivation. According to Öztürk, (2012) motivation along with the language aptitude is a main element which determines success in learning another language in the classroom setting. Therefore, motivation facilitates learning a language for a large number of learners(Dörnyei 2001).

METHODOLOGY

Frame Work

The present study was held in Albarika secondary school of Parakou. Parakou municipality belongs to District of Borgou in North of Benin. Limited to the south, east and west by Tchaourou municipality and to the north by N'Dali munici-pality, it is situated between 9° 21' of latitude North and 2°36' of longitude East (Afrique Conseil, 2006).

Target Population

The participants are students and teachers of Albarika secondary school. The sample is purposive because it serves the objectives of the study to "gain insight" in the selected phenomenon (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000) which is the motivating astuces and tips used by teachers and student motivation during the English language classes. Forty five (45) students (26 males and 19 females), from 6ème and 5ème and 06 teachers (4 males and 2 females) were interviewed.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

For data collection, visual technique was used and has consisted in class observation, and questionnaires were used as instruments. Class observation took place in two different EFL classes (6ème and 5ème). After acceptance and with the teachers' decision to participate to the survey, each class was observed for sixty (60) minutes. The aim of such technique is to get informed about the atmosphere in which English language is taught and to see the classroom organization, and astuces and tips used by teachers to motivate their learners. Thereafter, questionnaires have been distributed to teachers and learners selected in order to get their point of view about the issue.

Statistical Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was used to find consistent patterns in the various perspectives revealed in the questionnaires data and the classroom observation notes. Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software is used for statistical analysis and has consisted in calculation of descriptive statistics (Shousha, 2018).

RESULTS

At this level, the qualitative results of the class observation are presented and the quantitative results of statistical content of questionnaires are also addressed.

Class Observation Results

This help to get informed about the atmosphere in which English teachers succeed in motivating their learners during class sequence. In fact, what is perceptible immediately is the class size. Learners are numerous and are around sixty (60) in some classes. They have been placed in group as the CBA requires. Moreover, some of the students are not interested in speaking English; most of them are chatting with their classmates in French or local languages. Other learners are very brittle and stubborn because of their young age. These lead sometimes the teachers to get angry and punish learners those who misbehave. Furthermore, some teachers do not give regularly positive feedback to their students who express themselves by answering some questions.

Results from Questionnaires

The following tables 1 and 2 showed the teachers and learners' answers on motivation issue.

Table1. *Teachers' perceptions on the issue of motivation*

N°	Variables	Answers	Number	Percentages
1	Teachers teaching experience	More than five years	2	433.33%
		Less than five years	4	666.67%
2	Ways teachers motivate learners	Through songs	4	66.67%
		Through story telling	2	33.33%
		Through games	0	00%
3	Number of time teachers use warming up	Always	5	83.33%
		Sometimes	1	16.67%
		Never	0	00%
4	Teachers use of visual aids	Yes	5	83.33%
		No	1	16.67%
5	Ways teachers give learners opportunities to speak	Through dialogues	2	33.33%
		By working in pairs or groups	3	50%
		By giving them interactive activities	1	16.67%
6	Different ways teachers congratulate learners	By offering pens or pencils	0	00%
		By asking the class to clap for them	3	50%
		By giving them additional marks	2	33.33%
		By giving them positive feedback	1	16.67%

Source: *Investigation data, (2019)*

Table2. *Learners' perception on the motivation issue*

N°	Variables	Answers	Number	Percentages
1	Learners appreciation of English course	Yes	45	100%
		No	00	00%
2	Number of time learners speak English in class (astuces-tips)	Always	27	60%
		Sometimes	13	28.88%
		Rarely	05	11.12%
3	Factors motivating learners during English course	Dialogue between students	34	75%
		Playing games in English	00	00%
		Singing songs in English	16	16%
4	Learners methods to improve English fluency	Speaking every time with my classmate	17	37.70%
		Participation during the course	24	53.30%
		Visiting an English club	04	09%

Source: *Investigation data, (2019)*

DISCUSSION

Class Observation

Class observation results showed more about what happens with teachers and learners such as teachers' and learners' attitudes during courses, the atmosphere in the class…etc. For instance, the number of students in the classes is really extended and this does not allow teacher to control the movement of his/her students, to draw their attentions and to get an eye on their learning acquisition progress. This means that the class size constitutes an important factor within the teacher's teaching progress and the learners speaking skill enhancement. As far as learners' neglectful attitudes are concerned, it can be justified by their young age and also since they are beginner learners. These results arise the classroom management problem which is common to many teachers namely for beginning teachers, according to (Macías, 2015). This means that teacher should be flexible in order to maintain the class atmosphere good for all.

Questionnaires

The results of the tables (1 and 2) above show through different percentages of the higher necessity of motivation in EFL teaching -learning process.

Teachers' Consideration

From the data related to teachers, *variable 1* revealed that only 02 teachers have a great experience in teaching and 04 have not. This means that most of them are not accustomed to the beginner learning context. In fact by asking this question, the aim is to make the difference between the attitudes of teachers who have more than five (05) years experiences of teaching in beginner classes and those with less than five (05) years; since experience is an important factor in teaching. Then, those who have a great experience had acquired some knowledge that may be helpful for them when dealing with beginner class. Similar findings are made by Gold, (1996) and Gratch, (1998) who thought that the experiences of the new teacher in her/his first year of teaching determine the concepts and beliefs of what it means to be a teacher, what teaching is, who the learners are and what the school environment comprises. *Variable 2* has shown that 66.67% of the teachers, that means (04), motivate learners by making them sing local songs translated into English, while 33.33%, that means (02), keep telling stories translated into English. This practice is very important and useful because

songs and stories catch young students' attention and help to achieve teaching - learning goal. However they may use other methods like games and slogans which can raise their motivation. The study has corroborated Cucinotta, (2018) who claims that the use of authentic cultural products like magazines, newspapers, songs, commercials, ads, etc., originally made for native speakers can serves as motivational tool to get students motivated in foreign language learning. As far as *variable 3* is concerned, it was revealed that(05) teachers out of 06 affirmed using warm-up to motivate their beginner learners. Then, all teachers must adopt it because it is a good way to keep the class atmosphere vivid; since they deal with beginner learners. Hounhanou, (2017) made similar conclusions while investigating the way part-time teachers conduct lesson in EFL class. She attested that part-time teachers systematically rushed learners. "Quickly quickly", and "hurry up!" are the slogan used. This motivational technique is against the fundamental principles of the CBA programs (Hounhanou, 2017). From *variable 4*, it has been shown that five (05) teachers, that is (83.33%), use visual aids. Generally, pictures help learners to understand well what teachers are teaching. In addition, before learners produce sentences either oral or written, they need a good vocabulary background. Thus, the use of local visual aids like African family life pictures can be very useful during vocabulary acquisition. Similar observations are made by Akbari, (2015) in India. For him, Indian students had better access to English audio-visual aids (e.g., listening or watching English TV news or programs), they read English newspapers and magazines and majority of them find the contents of their English textbooks interesting. By so doing, student shows strong motivation in EFL classroom activities.

The *variable 5* dealing with the ways teachers give learners opportunities to speak in class, presented 50%, that is (03) teachers, who give learners opportunities through pairs or group works; whereas 33.33%of them make use of dialogues and only 16.67% give interactive activities. This means that most of the teachers prefer making learners work in pairs or groups as opportunities for learners to speak among themselves. However, that may be an opportunities for others to chat in French or to concentrate on other issues since teachers cannot be in every groups at the same time. These results corroborate Nagaraju (2013), who found that group activity doing is very important in class proficiency. Therefore, other interactive activities should also be used by the

teachers. These results prove the EFL teachers' great effort to fit with CBA requirements which place learners in the center of knowledge building process. According to Azoua Hounnou (2019), interactive activities bring some advantages to students such as when students are working together in English they talk more, share their ideas, learn from each other, feel more secure and less anxious, and use English in a meaningful way. Participating to classroom tasks is the best way to motivate students in teaching-learning process, mainly the foreign languages are concerned.

Finally, *variable 6* revealed that 50% of teachers, that means (03) asked the class to clap for the brilliant one; 33.33% of them, that is (02) use to give bonuses marks whereas only one(01) teacher gives short stories books. These are good kind of rewards for learners because they give them happiness, make them feel confident; consequently raise not only the motivation of brilliant learners but also for the others.

Learners' Apprehension

As far as learners' perceptions are concerned, four variables have been analyzed. ***Variable 1*** has shown that all the beginner learners, that is (100%) in English course are motivated to speak. So, students are finding English language important in nowadays' life. Similar results are carried out by Rubio Gómez (1997) who had concluded that the dominant factors in the students' motivation are the importance of languages in present-day society and classroom tasks. He added that parental influence and integrative motivation are much weaker. The results have proved that if all teachers are well trained and apply the appropriate methods to their class, the goal of learning and speaking English as a foreign language will be easily achieved. From *variable 2* dealing with number of time learners speak English in class, it has been noticed that 53.30% of them participate during the course to improve their English fluency; 37.70% reveal that they speak every time with their classmate while, 09% visit English club. Thus, teachers have a great responsibility in the improvement of their learners' fluency. ***Variable 3*** revealed that 75% of learners are mostly motivated through dialogue. However, 35% prefer singing songs in English. It results that teachers must create interactive activities which can allow learners to have dialogues or songs that they can easily sing. Dealing with the question about how learners improve their English speaking skill

after class, 49% of them asserted that they listen to native songs, 31% declared that they perform short stories or tales; whereas 11% speak English with native speakers and 09% participate to English clubs activities. This means that extra-curricular activities still have influence on their speaking skills.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

EFL beginner learners are mostly motivated by their own curiosity to get into contact with a new language and enjoyment due to their age. Thereafter, that desire could disappear because of the lack of motivation, stimulating activities, teachers' harsh and discouraging attitudes, which affect their speaking acquisition performance. The purposes of this study are to show EFL teachers and learners of Albarika secondary school the necessity of motivation in teaching-learning process and to examine widely how teachers can influence students' skills through motivating astuces and tips. Then, results analysis of teachers and students' questionnaires have shown through different percentage the strong and positive influence of motivation in encouraging beginner learners to speak the language in the classrooms since they like it but still encounter some difficulties. Moreover, as the main objective of many teachers is to make their students speak, they need to use some astuces and tips for creating a comfortable learning atmosphere where learners feel at ease without the fear of being criticized when they participate in the class and also supplying interesting, challenging and encouraging lessons including speaking skills. Consequently, it is from teachers res-ponsi-bilities to find appropriate ways in order to solve any difficulties their beginner learners faced in course of language performance.

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