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Motivation in the ESL/EFL classroom:

Strategies and ways of motivating students

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1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching-learning process is affected by many factors which can determine the development of such process. These factors can depend on both teachers and students, and also on the context. Some of these factors are the methodology, the teacher's attitude towards the classroom, the climate of the classroom or the type of students, among others. Each school setting has its own characteristics and this will determine the teaching-learning process in a way or another. But there is one factor which is particularly important: motivation.

Many critics and theorists have studied the importance of motivation when learning and acquiring a second language. Undoubtedly, motivation plays an essential role in the classroom. In order to learn a language, a student has to show predisposition and interest from the beginning, otherwise that student is not going to develop and increase his/her learning. Teachers need to find ways and strategies to increase motivation and develop learning among students. As Zoltán Dörnyei and Kata Csizér claimed that motivation when learning a second or foreign language is one of the most important factors which determine the success of that learning because “it provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the L2 and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process.” (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998: 203) They add that even students with high capacities may not develop their learning if the teacher does not encourage him/her to learn.

It is important to innovate in the classroom and not to follow the same methodology for years. In order to do this, different resources and new techniques might be applied. The use of Information and Communication Technologies and the new methods which allow more interaction and cooperative work (such as Communicative Language Teaching) are examples of that. However, although the benefits of CLT and ICTs are very well known, there are many teachers that do not make use of them. The two projects chosen are related with CLT and ICTs. One of them analyses the top ten websites to use in an ESL/EFL classroom as an example of how the use of ICTs could increase motivation, and the other one is a research and innovation project of how the use of games, cooperative work, inductive activities and interactive activities increases

students' motivation and learning. In this case, as it is a research project, there are evidences and data collected to support the hypothesis.

The purpose of this dissertation is, therefore, to give an account of the importance of motivation when learning a language, something that this master's degree has taught me and that I think it is very important in the teaching-learning process. To do that, a theoretical framework with a general review of the most important theories about motivation in the teaching-learning process is provided, and then, a reflection on two of the projects I have carried out during this year is going to be made to show their connection with motivation. Both projects provide practical examples of how to foster motivation and interest among students, and also, in the case of one of those projects, which is a research project, a study on how implementation actually affected students' motivation and learning.

2. JUSTIFICATION

As it has already been said in the introduction, many factors affect the teaching-learning process. From all those factors, I have chosen motivation as the main focus of this dissertation. Different reasons have led me to take this decision. On the one hand, my own experience and what I have learnt in this master have helped me realize the importance of motivation in order to have more effective lessons. On the other hand, the most recent educational laws and the Aragonese Curriculum also mention motivation frequently as an important issue to be taken into account. Therefore, I strongly believe motivation is something essential when learning and teaching and it can influence other aspects of teaching, as it will be explained later on.

I must say, talking from a personal perspective and from my own experience, that motivation was not given any particular relevance in the English classes when I went to school. As a general rule, the dynamic of the classes usually followed what is commonly known as the PPP model (presentation of rules, practice of those rules with different exercises and activities, and then production using those grammatical structures). In fact, almost all the teachers I had followed what could be described as conventional approaches to the teaching of English: they explained all the grammar and

vocabulary and then students had to practice with exercises and finally students produced a final activity which often consisted of a composition or something related to what the teacher had explained before in that lesson. Sadly there were not any cooperative work or interactive activities which would be aimed at increasing our motivation. It goes without saying that we, as students, all suffered from lack of motivation. If the learner is motivated, the results in his/her learning are going to be better too. Our results and our general interest in the subject, obviously, were not the best.

Lack of motivation is still an issue in many schools nowadays. Many students do not participate in the classes as much as they should, and it is difficult to engage those learners in the learning process because they do not feel any interest in what the rest of the class is doing. One possible reason for this is that if the teacher always follows the same approach, students may get bored and tired of it. In addition, it is usually the case in Spain that students review the same structures year after year (for example the verb “to be”, the present simple or the present continuous, etc.) and therefore, they are not motivated to learn. Teachers tend to blame students on their lack of motivation and interest but obviously students are not the sole responsible agent in the teaching-learning process. Teachers and their use of motivating approaches and techniques must take their own share of the blame. Engaging students in a class and making them participate and learn more actively is obviously the teachers’ responsibility, and therefore teachers have to be conscious of the different ways in which motivation can be promoted. Then motivation will be transmitted to students and they will be the ones who show their attitude and interest towards learning a language or any other subject.

In this master’s degree the issue of how to promote motivation in the classroom has been given a lot of prominence in many subjects. Since the beginning of the academic year, teachers have reinforced the importance of motivation in subjects like “Procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje”, “Interacción y Convivencia en el aula” or “Fundamentos de diseño instruccional”. Effective teaching and the Communicative Language Teaching approach are, among many others, two of the concepts which also stand out whenever someone related to this field of education think about teaching English, with all that they entail. They are not simple concepts, because many other things take form too: context, interaction, purpose, outcome, and of course, motivation,

to give some examples. In these subjects it has been learnt that what is important is the learner, and that the teachers' role is not only to transmit knowledge, but also to act as guides in the learning process. This is also essential to have a relaxed classroom atmosphere and to maintain a good relationship between teacher and students, and also between students. To do so, innovative activities and methodologies have to be used in order to motivate students so that they have a more active role and participation in the class. And thanks to subjects of the second semester like "Design of activities" or "Evaluation, Innovation and Research" we have learnt how to put this into practice in this specific subject of English. For example, the use of cooperative learning strategies, which are innovative, interactive and communicative activities or the use of ICTs have usually been highlighted as useful techniques to increase students' motivation and interest in the subject.

The different laws on education in Spain also mention the importance of motivation in the classroom. The Organic Law of Education (LOE) of 2006 already stated in the first article that motivation is one of the main principles of education (17165). More specifically, in the Aragonese Curriculum of ESO (Order of 7th May 2007), article 12 states: "la concreción del currículo permitirá incorporar procedimientos diversos que susciten el interés del alumnado y que favorezcan diversos tipos de agrupamientos para facilitar la motivación de los alumnos y el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje." (Currículo Aragonés, 2007: 13) This means that, if students feel motivated when learning in a classroom, their interest and their attention will be higher, and therefore, they will learn in a more effective way and they will retain more information and knowledge.

The new law of the Aragonese Curriculum of 15th May 2015 puts an even greater emphasis on motivation than the previous curriculum. Two of the methodological principles claim: "se promoverá la motivación intrínseca de los alumnos, vinculada a la responsabilidad, autonomía y al deseo de aprender" and "la actuación del docente como ejemplo en lo referente al saber y al saber ser y como impulsor del aprendizaje y la motivación del alumno." (Currículo Aragonés, 2015) The student becomes a more active participant in the teaching-learning process, and the teacher has to be the one who encourages the student's learning and motivation.

Regarding the subject of English the new curriculum insists again on the increase of the intrinsic motivation, because “la lengua inglesa es, además, la puerta a un mundo de posibilidades en el terreno laboral y profesional.” (Currículo Aragonés, 2015) All this can give a general idea of how motivation is acquiring more and more relevance and how it will be given more importance in education in the next few years.

Motivation is significantly increased when students do activities which they find enjoyable and, in this time and age, there are few things that contemporary students may enjoy more than using the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the classroom. ICTs are not a recent resource because, for many years, they have been included in the teaching-learning process or, at least, they should have. In the Organic Law for the improvement in the quality of education of 2013 (LOMCE), the section XI of the preamble states that “la tecnología ha conformado históricamente la educación y la sigue conformando.” (LOMCE, 2013: 97865) The Aragonese Curriculum (2007) also mentions that “con el fin de que la sociedad de la información y el conocimiento esté presente en las aulas aragonesas, se potencia la utilización de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación como recurso didáctico para los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje en todas las materias.” (Currículo Aragonés, 2007: 3) As a result, ICTs should be present in all the subjects in order to show students different ways of exploring and analyzing information. In the specific case of English it is particularly relevant that students know how to use ICTs as nowadays many people communicate through the Internet, and, moreover, much of the information found on the Internet is written in English. The use of technologies is quite helpful in order to facilitate the adaptation of learning to the needs of the different individuals and in learning by doing. It is important that students learn while they do things, not just listening to the teacher or watching. Thanks to this resource, they are also able to work on their own, thus promoting autonomy and self-study. In addition, students like using them in the classroom: nothing seems better to them than playing with things with buttons. Therefore, practicing with ICTs in the classroom will certainly bring an increase in the learners’ motivation.

In addition, it must be stressed that although motivation plays an important role in all the subjects, the role it plays in English is even more important. Nowadays learning a foreign language is almost a must in everyone’s lives. Nobody can hardly

avoid having to deal with a foreign language at one time or another. When surfing the Internet, there are many websites written in other languages, mostly in English. Many jobs require some knowledge of a second language, which in most cases is English. That is the reason why students need to see the value of learning other languages; they never know what the future hold for them and how English is going to be useful for them. In the ESL/EFL classroom, students are in contact with another language and with other cultures, and this will help them to manage abroad if one day they have to travel to or live in another country. Also, knowing a second language opens more possibilities when looking for a job. So it is necessary that students are motivated to learn a language and that they see the positive aspects of learning it at school.

To sum up, my personal and academic experience, supported with what the different laws on education and the Aragonese Curriculum say about motivation, have made me realize the importance of motivation, which is a key element to take into account. It is important to do it in all the subjects, but especially in English, as learning this language is very useful nowadays. That is the reason why the topic of this dissertation is motivation. Motivation is essential in the teaching-learning process and it is more complex to promote than it might look at first sight. If students are motivated, other aspects of teaching will be enhanced too, and the acquisition of a foreign language will progress faster and in a deeper and more lasting manner.

3. CRITICAL REFLECTION

Motivation has also been the focus of study of many theorists and researchers in the field of education. In order to frame within solid theoretical concepts, a brief review of what different experts think about motivation in the teaching-learning process is provided in this section of this dissertation, to be followed by an analysis on how two of the projects I worked upon are informed by those ideas.

Penny Ur states that motivation is a difficult term to define. She prefers to work on the concept of “motivated learners”. She defines this type of learner as “one who is willing or even eager to invest effort in learning activities and to progress.” (Ur, 1999: 274) Motivation is, therefore, not just something that moves the individual to pursue a

single and particular objective, such as getting good marks, and therefore to achieve a single result. It can also, in the case of the teaching-learning process, have positive effects on many aspects of the students' learning, as it will be later explained. On the whole, motivation should lead students to see all the value of learning a foreign language and the positive aspects of integrating themselves in the culture of that language, with the opportunities that this provides.

Robert Gardner has been one of the researchers who have dedicated more time and effort to investigate the issue of motivation when learning a second language. His work has influenced many other critics and has led them to focus their work on motivation. He, among other experts, believed that "attitudes and motivation are influential in second language acquisition because they orientate the individual to seek out opportunities to learn the language." (Gardner, 1985: 56) His work on motivation has to be regarded from a social psychological perspective, that is, how motivation affects students' behaviour and thoughts. He also established four main characteristics of motivation: "a goal, effortful behaviour, a desire to attain the goal and favourable attitudes toward the activity in question." (Gardner, 1985: 50) Having a goal in mind influences the behaviour of that particular person in order to achieve that goal, and this will influence everything this person does and every decision he/she makes to get it. In the case of education, the pursuit of a goal will influence the student's learning process. Depending on the attitudes and behaviour that a student has, his/her acquisition of a second language will be favoured or not.

Gardner has always distinguished between two different types of motivation in the context of education: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. Integrative motivation occurs when the second language learner wants to integrate him/herself into that second language culture. In contrast, instrumental motivation occurs when the student only wants to learn a language because he/she needs to do that in order to get a job, pass a subject or to get a certificate, for example. It has been claimed that "integrative motivation has a more positive effect on student success than instrumental motivation". (Harmer, 2012: 98) In my own experience, nowadays most of the students of English in Spain study it because they have to do it, and not because they like to study it, although there are some exceptions. This might be one of the reasons why lack of motivation is so widespread in Spanish schools today.

There are also other approaches to motivation such as the behaviourist perspective, which “stresses the importance of rewards and reinforcement” (Brown, 1994: 73) in order to trigger motivation. It is based on the fact that motivation takes place when students are given a stimulus or an external reward or reinforcement, which makes them react in a specific way. For example, if students know that if they behave well the teacher is going to finish the class a little bit earlier, they are going to be conditioned by that and they are going to have a good behaviour only to achieve that purpose. This perspective was first developed by psychologists as B. F. Skinner (1938) or John B. Watson (1928).

Motivation can also be analysed from the angle of cognitivism. Cognitivist ideas began to take hold in the field of education in the 1990s. Motivation can be understood, according to cognitivist principles, as having its origin in the student him/herself. Mental processes would acquire a more important role in motivation than external or internal rewards. According to Zoltán Dörnyei:

Motivation is no longer seen as a reflection of certain inner forces such as instincts, volition, will, and psychical energy; neither is it viewed in strictly behavioural terms as a function of stimuli and reinforcement. Rather, current cognitive approaches place the focus on the individual's thoughts and beliefs (and recently also emotions) that are transformed into action. (Dörnyei, 1998: 118)

In this sense, motivation is seen as something that has its origin in the self. As one of the characteristics of motivation is to have a goal in mind, the individual will act in a specific way to achieve his/her goal.

Another set of categories which can commonly be found in studies dealing with motivation is the differentiation between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is not propelled by any external reward or reinforcement. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is triggered by an external reward: “Extrinsically motivated behaviours, on the other hand, are carried out in anticipation of a reward from outside

and beyond the self. Typical extrinsic rewards are money, prizes, grades, and even certain types of positive feedback.” (Brown, 2001: 76) This type of motivation would also be related to the behaviourist perspective of motivation, as it also claimed that individuals are influenced by an external stimulus or reinforcement. Intrinsic motivation, however, might have better results in the long-term because students might get used to receiving external reinforcement and that may stop being motivating once that kind of incentives cease. As Brown puts it:

Jerome Bruner (1962), praising the “autonomy of self-reward,” claimed that one of the most effective ways to help both children and adults to think and learn is to free them from the control of rewards and punishments. [...] We can become dependent on those tangible rewards. (Brown, 2001: 76)

It seems clear then that, at the end, in order to motivate students intrinsic motivation techniques will be more effective than external rewards. That does not mean that teachers should not give positive feedback or praise students when they show a good attitude, behave well in class or show good ability, because that is also something essential in order to motivate students. Students should see that they are valued and this may encourage them. The work of the teacher, however, should not be limited to praising, the teacher should also foster the students’ intrinsic motivation and willingness to learn on their own, and that will hardly be achieved through external rewards that might make students dependent. Accordingly, the best option is to combine both types of motivation.

Dörnyei is another of the well-known names which comes readily to mind when thinking about motivation when learning a foreign or a second language. According to him, “motivation is one of the determinants of second/foreign language (L2) learning achievement (Dörnyei, 1994: 273). He developed his work from a more educational perspective than that of Gardner and paid a special attention to the role that teachers play in motivation. He, among other critics, considered that Gardner’s distinction between instrumental and integrative motivation was too simplistic and he added that the “socio cultural context has an overriding effect on all aspects of the L2 learning process, including motivation.” (Dörnyei, 1994: 275) This means that there might be

many other reasons why someone is learning a foreign language, and socio cultural aspects stand prominent among those reasons.

As it has already been said, Dörnyei was not the only expert who regarded that the distinction between instrumental and integrative motivation was too simplistic. Gardner himself had already noticed that this distinction required further development. (Gardner, 2007: 19) Gardner also pointed out the relevance of education and cultural contexts. Thus, Gardner states that “when we discuss the motivation to learn a second language, we have to take both contexts into consideration.” (Gardner, 2007: 15) In any subject, the educational context of the specific school, or more particularly, of the specific classroom, has to be taken into account in order to know its influence and to make the lessons effective. That is, teachers should have in mind the type of learners in each class, their level, their behaviour, what they like and dislike, because all this is going to influence the rhythm of the classes, and some techniques will work better than others in the different classes. In the case of a foreign language subject, the cultural context has to be considered too, because elements from a culture which is not the students’ own are dealt with in the class. Regarding the English subject, students are in contact with the customs, attitudes or beliefs of English-speaking countries, which are also part of what entails learning a foreign language. These two contexts work together and have effects on the student. The fact is that each student is different and the influence of these two contexts can have different effects on each of them. It is necessary, therefore, to know students individually and to know their experiences, their attitudes, inclinations and aspirations.

Dörnyei, in another article called “Motivation and Motivating in the Foreign language classroom” (1994) also stated that, in motivation, there are three aspects to be considered. These aspects could constitute a three-tier scale, each tier being a level or framework of reference to be considered. The first level is the Language Level. It is related to the acquisition of the L2 as such and to the social dimension of acquiring a foreign language, that is, the benefits of acquiring the culture of that L2 or the usefulness of learning it. In this level, the differentiation between instrumental and integrative motivation could be also considered. The second level is the Learner Level, which deals with the L2 learner, that is, the personal dimension of acquiring a second language, the knowledge and thoughts which form the personality of the learner.

Finally, the third level is the Learning Situation Level, which deals with the L2 learning environment and the educational subject matter dimension of language. It consists of three different areas: course-specific motivation (which is related to the syllabus, materials or methods used), teacher-specific motivation (which takes into account the teacher's personality and teaching style) and group-specific motivation (related to the learning group). He then suggests 30 different strategies to motivate students within each level. One of the most important of those strategies is the inclusion of socio cultural components in the syllabus, so that students are aware of different cultures and in contact with them. Teachers can do this through L2 films, music, or telling experiences of native speakers. Furthermore, the development of students' self-confidence and self-efficacy to achieve attainable goals is also important. Some other important strategies are making a relevant and attractive syllabus, discussing with students the choice of some teaching materials, trying to arise their curiosity, grab their attention, catch their interest and involve them in the tasks. Moreover, some other strategies are related to promoting the teacher's role as a facilitator, as a promoter of the learner's autonomy and as a provider of feedback. Finally, some of them are related to the role of the learning group, fostering group cohesion and cooperative learning techniques. (See Appendix 1) (Dörnyei, 1994: 279-282).

Dörnyei and Csizér also established 10 commandments for teachers in order to increase the motivation of language learners. These commandments are concerned with being a good model for students, developing good relationships with the learners, making lessons interesting, promoting learner's autonomy, personalizing the learning process or familiarizing learners with the target culture, among others. (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998: 215-218) (See Appendix 2)

In 2001, Dörnyei classified these strategies into four categories. These categories are very helpful in order to make clear what it is necessary in order to motivate students in a foreign language classroom. The first category is connected with the role of the teacher as a model and the relationships between teachers and students. Teachers have to set an example in terms of interest, involvement, enthusiasm and willingness to work. Furthermore, teachers also have to establish good relationships with students, maintaining a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere and providing norms in order to foster group cohesion. The second category concerns the increase of students' goal orientation

and the creation of realistic and relevant materials so that students work with interesting and appealing materials. The third category involves the promotion of learners' autonomy and self-confidence. If students have the opportunity to learn to work on their own and to organise their own study, their learning is going to be more effective. Therefore, their self-confidence is going to be higher too, as they would be aware of their progress. The fourth category deals with furthering self-evaluation, praising effort rather than ability, providing feedback and increasing learner satisfaction. If students are able to self-assess, they are going to notice their own mistakes and what they have to improve. This is going to promote their autonomy too and they are going to feel more motivated. The same happens when the teacher gives feedback and praise students' effort. Students are going to see they are valued and this is going to promote their satisfaction and their desire to learn. (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008: 388)

Penny Ur, in *A Course in Language Teaching* (1999) also establishes 9 ways of generating interest in the tasks. She claims that teachers have to present clear objectives for their students. The tasks to be done and topics to be covered should also be varied and relevant, so that students do not get bored. Visuals should be used in order to catch the students' attention. The use of games is also quite effective, a bit of entertainment and fun in the lecture room does not make any harm and may help to promote a communicative situation. Role plays and simulations may also provide communicative contexts and they may also push students to use their linguistic resources. Information-gap activities are also relevant to increase students' interest. In addition, students like activities which are related to their own interests, opinions and experiences. There are, to cut long story short, lots of techniques and ways teachers can follow in order to do interesting and motivating activities in the ESL/EFL classroom.

After having a look to all those strategies and ways of arising interest in students, some conclusions might be reached. It can reasonably be concluded that in order to motivate students, it is necessary to include in the different lessons some socio cultural aspects of the language which students are learning. Many critics also agree that it is essential to promote students' self-confidence and self-efficacy. Furthermore, creating relevant and interesting topics, materials and tasks for the students is also an essential strategy in order to increase their motivation and interest. With this purpose in mind, visual support should be included to make materials more appealing and attractive, and

games, role-plays and information-gap activities should be used to add some entertainment, fun and to get students involved in the different learning tasks. The role of the teacher has to be that of a model of involvement and positive attitude for the students. Teachers should also promote students' autonomy and provide them with feedback whenever it is possible. And, on top of all this, teachers should also try to keep a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom and a good relationship with students. Finally, cooperative learning should also be promoted as a way of facilitating interaction so that students can learn from each other, and also to foster group cohesion.

Turning now to the two selected projects from the “Máster del profesorado”, there are many instances in those projects which will show how, by applying some of the above mentioned strategies, motivation can really increase, and student's learning can be more successful. The first project is called “The ICTs: top ten sites and its use for motivating students” (See Appendix 3). The project undertook the analysis of some popular ESL/EFL websites in order to select the top ten which could be used in the English language class. In this ranking, motivation was one of the most important factors to be taken into account. In fact, motivation is such a broad concept and it encompasses so many aspects that it could easily be said that all aspects to be considered in the ranking of those web pages converge, in one way or another, on the issue of whether they motivated students or not.

The second project is a research and innovation project which was implemented and tested in schools. It is called “Using Innovation to Teach Grammar” (See Appendix 4) and, although it is centred on grammar, its main premise could be applied to the teaching of any of the four skills in which language is divided. The purpose of this project was to prove the hypothesis that if games, cooperative work, inductive activities and interactive activities are implemented in order to teach grammar, the motivation and interest of students will be higher and their learning will improve. The four authors of this project observed during our first placement period that, on the whole, teachers followed traditional methods in order to teach English, that is, they focused most of the lessons on learning grammatical structures following the PPP model which was explained above and on learning vocabulary about a specific topic. Little time was dedicated to the other four skills. Three of these schools were located in Zaragoza and the other one in Sabiñánigo (Huesca). Students worked individually most of the time,

and there were several students at the back of the class who did not participate or did not even bring the material to the class. These students seemed not to feel any motivation towards what it was done in class, not only in English, but also in other subjects. That is why different alternatives were thought in order to be implemented in the following placement period, so that the students would get involved and the project could be carried out. We considered that students often enjoy working in groups and interacting with other students. That is why we thought that we could motivate them by using games, cooperative work and interactive activities. The purpose of this was to see if by doing this type of activities, not only their motivation increased but also they learnt more. The different lesson plans and activities were designed taking into account the different students' needs, interests and level of readiness in the different schools, having classroom management also in mind. In addition, some of the students were given a questionnaire to be filled, in order to find out if they liked that type of activities and if they enjoyed learning English in that way. Students of other school were given a one minute paper with three or four questions related to what they liked most or least about the lesson or they were asked to write something they had learnt. This served as a way of getting feedback from students. Observation was also undertaken, and this also helped to monitor the students' improvement and progress. Moreover, those of us who had time, carried out an evaluation of the students of the school where we spent our practice period by means of setting a traditional test at the beginning and at the end of the lesson. This was done to see the difference between how they performed before and after learning through the implementation of these innovative techniques.

In the theoretical framework, several strategies were mentioned which contributed to increase students' motivation and to keep their interest in the ESL/EFL classroom. After having described the aims, contents and executions of the two master assignments which are the object of this study, it is easy to see how those motivational strategies were used in the assignments and how they could be applied in an actual class with the purpose of increasing students' motivation.

As it has already been said, the inclusion of relevant and attractive materials and topics in the syllabus is something essential for enhancing motivation. Teachers can easily prepare games, interactive activities, competitions, or use ICTs to make materials more interesting and attractive to students. The students' interest, attention, curiosity

and involvement in tasks is going to be higher, and even their learning might increase. ICTs are particularly suitable for developing that kind of activities. In the case of our ICT project, “The top ten websites for motivating students”, this was one of the criteria to rank websites, and it was not difficult to find websites which would fulfil these criteria. Many of the materials that the analyzed websites offer are interesting and relevant for students. There is one website (www.Isabelperez.com) which has a section related to CALL (computer assisted language learning), and it has workshops, webquests and projects which students can put into practice both in and outside the classroom. Students, thanks to this, might see that learning English is not just doing always the same, and there are other alternatives which can also be enjoyable. This website has been set up and maintained by a real teacher and has some interesting materials which have been developed by the author herself and also materials from her own students (e-mails, projects, among others). The inclusion of these relevant and interesting materials in the ESL/EFL classroom is a very powerful strategy to increase motivation. Instead of working with handouts or with the textbook, students have the opportunity to deal with other materials which can be much more appealing for them, not only because they enjoy working with the ICTs, but also because that type of texts are more exploitable than simple exercises and students can extend their learning. Other websites have blogs and forums where students can interact in English with other students of different places. It is very important that students feel they can participate and give opinions and ideas, and this is going to have a positive impact on their motivation. They also have sections focused on English for different purposes, such as tourism or business and therefore they allow students to explore different topics which they may find interesting for their professional future. In addition, all the websites allow students to practice the four skills as well as grammar and vocabulary. If students learn grammar but they do not know how to use it in real communication, the student is not going to be able to speak English properly. It is important that learners develop all the skills. In fact, if they have a good command of all of them, they will increase their desire to keep on learning more. To sum up, these materials and activities can be effective when using them in the class as a way to increase learners’ motivation, but also to improve and extend their learning in a different way from what they are used to.

Regarding the second project, different innovative activities were carried out in the different schools. As Ur (1999) has rightly stated, the use of games, role plays and

information-gap activities increase student's attention and interest. Implementing that kind of activities during our placement period was a very enjoyable task. In the case of games, students practiced with some of them, as for example the game *Guess the place* when learning modal verbs or games where students had to use only mimic or drawings. Some of them also practiced with some quizzes related to the grammatical structure in question, in which they had to choose the correct answer among different options. Drawings were also used so that students could interact using the structures learnt. Role-plays were used, and in one of the cases, this was done through flashcards in which students were told what they had to do, or what they would do in a given situation. Information-gap activities were also put into practice. One of them consisted of filling the gaps in the lyrics of a song. In others, students had to look for the partner who had the other half of his/her sentence. To do that, they had to move around the classroom. All in all, it could easily be observed that the implementation of all those techniques, games and activities significantly improved the students' motivation and learning. The data collected through observation and the questionnaire showed that students enjoyed this type of activities, which were different to what they were used to. Learners, in general, find interesting activities in which there is interaction and communication, as role plays. An interactive atmosphere, where students are given the opportunity to talk as they would do in real life, it is going to influence their motivation too, because they are seeing that what they are doing is meaningful. They also like activities in which they have to move and not being static. Students are sitting in their classrooms for many hours a day, and this has an impact on their motivation and interest. As the day goes on, students lose their attention. Forcing them to move around the classroom can awaken their interest. They can see how it is also possible to learn while moving around. In addition, working in groups, competing between them looking for a reward is something they also like. They like being valued and rewarded if they perform well in class. Students also worked with information-gap activities such as filling gaps in pairs sharing the information each of them has, or putting cards up. They also like this because it is different to what they are used to do. And what is different often calls the attention.

Compelling visual aids is one of the factors which was previously mentioned as a key element which can increase students' interest and attention. They can also provide more information and faster comprehension than texts. So, using colours, images, and

even sound, may help to grab the students' attention and can even make them retain information in a better way. In the case of ICTs visuals obviously play an important part, because ICTs are visual by definition. In the second project, we tried to use coloured words and different images in our explanations, as students seem to enjoy more the activities which have an attractive visual component.

The data collected in the research project and its latter analysis (thanks to the observation, the questionnaires and the test) gave some evidences which showed that the interest and motivation of students had increased. Almost all the students got involved in the different games and activities and seemed to enjoy them, whereas in our first placement period some students had almost dropped out the class. Moreover the test also showed that generally almost all the students improved their grammar competence in a faster and deeper way than they had previously done in the course. To sum up, it could be said that both motivation and learning improved. This improvement was even more significant in those students who had difficulties or no interest in learning grammar through traditional methods. The students who already had good results, however, did not improve their learning as much as the demotivated students. This might happen because they are also good when practising with traditional methods, so the rise in their improvement was not as dramatic as that of the demotivated students. The improvement of those students in terms of motivation and interest, however, was as substantial and strong as in the case of the demotivated students.

Another aspect which has to be considered when thinking about motivation is the role of the teacher as provider of feedback. After my experience of teaching using the previously mentioned techniques I am convinced that the use of the above mentioned strategies gives more opportunities for positive and motivating feedback, and this results in an increase in students' motivation. As it has already been said, in order to motivate students the teacher's role has to be that of a facilitator of students' learning. It is clear that, if the teacher does not develop a teacher-fronted way of teaching, and gives students more opportunities to work on their own, in pairs or in groups, the role of the teacher will easily move from being a provider of information to being a facilitator, and there will be more time for feedback. With games, other types of communicative activities in which students interact between them, and ICTs, the teacher has more time to act as a facilitator and to provide feedback while students are working. Teachers who

provide positive feedback also enhance motivation by arising students' self-confidence and self-efficacy. If the feedback is positive, learners are going to feel satisfied and they are going to see they are valued. Therefore, their self-efficacy and self-confidence is going to increase too.

The achievement of autonomy in the learning process is also very motivating for students. The top ten about the websites for learning English was constituted having in mind that all the resources and tools of that websites had to develop students' communicative competence and, of course, the different skills as well as grammar and vocabulary. Many websites divide their materials in different levels, so this can favour differentiation and can be adapted to different age ranges and levels, as the Curriculum states. With this, students can learn while they are practising in their own time and volition, so this develops their autonomy and of course, gives them the opportunity to learn by doing. In the case of the second project, particular attention was paid to the promotion of autonomy as students often had to work in groups or in pairs, thus having more time to think for themselves and becoming more autonomous, instead of following the instructions of the teacher all the time. It is important to foster autonomy so that students develop their own strategies towards learning and so that they learn to take their own decisions and responsibilities. If they realize they are able to do this, they are going to be more motivated to learn.

Having a good classroom atmosphere is also an important factor when considering motivation. Putting into practice the previous strategies brought along a significant improvement in the learners' motivation. As a result, they were more focused on the work that they had to do, so their attention increased. The classroom atmosphere, as a result, was more relaxed, which made the teaching-learning process easier. This also had a positive effect on the relationship between the teacher and the students, which was also better. All the activities related to the research project helped to have a good atmosphere in the classroom, both between students and between teacher-students, as almost all the students were involved in the activities and showed a good attitude.

Regarding cooperative learning, students also worked in groups in some of the activities. As most of them were quite competitive, the dynamic of these activities often

turned into a competition, and this reinforced their interest. In some cases students also had to elaborate mind-maps to have a clear idea of the particular structure they were learning. This technique also allows working collaboratively and reflecting on what students have just learnt. Some websites also allow working in groups, and some of them offer the opportunity to post in forums or blogs. This way, students can work collaboratively in a different way as they do in the actual class. Working collaboratively also promotes group cohesion. Working with other classmates reinforces team work, and therefore, group cohesion on the whole. In a cohesive group, students are going to feel more comfortable and this will trigger motivation to work.

Another strategy which is commonly used to enhance motivation is the inclusion of socio cultural aspects related to the target language so that students integrate into social and cultural milieu of L2. ICTs can be very helpful in that respect. Most of the websites include authentic materials which allow students to connect what they are doing to things that happen in real life. It must not be forgotten that they are used to work with materials which are specifically designed for the classroom. ICTs, however, also allows them to see that what they do is useful in their daily lives too. These authentic materials are, for example, poems, daily news, magazines, films, books or famous quotations, and all kinds of resources which they rarely work on in their everyday classes, so this offers them the opportunity to work on new and different topics and areas of interest. On this basis, they may extend their learning outside the classroom and practice English in a different way, such as watching films, reading books or poems if they like to do so. This gives the opportunity to immerse learners in another type of learning and to know another literature or other films. Or to be more general, to know another culture. This can awaken their curiosity to learn more aspects related to the language, and if students like what they are doing and enjoy doing it, obviously this is going to be motivating for them.

Related to the use of social and cultural elements of the L2 in the classroom to integrate students into that L2 is the fact that, if students are immersed in that culture and find interesting things there, their integrative motivation is also going to be developed. In the long term, many students might feel curious about learning more about the L2, rather than studying it because they have to. ICTs give the opportunity to learn English outside the classroom and can make learners study English for pleasure if

they find specific ways of learning English that they like (watching films, reading novels or poems or listening to English music, to give some examples). This, also, can develop students' intrinsic motivation, as there are no external rewards that make students learn, but their own curiosity and eagerness.

Moreover, and although this was not previously mentioned as a strategy to develop students' motivation and interest, applying all these strategies and techniques in the classroom may develop different learning styles. Thanks to the use of ICTs, games and interactive activities, students are also given the opportunity to develop different learning styles and to use multiple intelligences as there are a lot of materials they can practice with. The LOE Aragonese Curriculum (2007) supports that different learning styles have to be taken into account in the teaching-learning process. The LOMCE Curriculum (2015) is more specific in that respect. In article 12, it rules that one of the general methodological principles of education must be the development of multiple intelligences in all the subjects and for all the students. To do that, opportunities to strengthen those intelligences in which each student presents more capacities have to be included. This means that diversity in learning styles has to be fostered. In the activities which were proposed and carried out in the two assignments that we are analyzing, different intelligences are worked upon. The use of linguistic intelligence goes without saying, but there are others: Musical intelligence is also developed through the use of songs, as well as the visual/spatial intelligence through images and movement around the class which is possible thanks to games. And, of course, interpersonal intelligence is also promoted through interaction between students. Therefore, developing different learning styles helps to develop motivation in the ESL/EFL classroom. Each student will feel more comfortable depending on the intelligence which is being developed, and if different intelligences and learning styles are promoted in the classroom, students will become more motivated.

In conclusion, it is clear that motivation has been a key topic to discuss among important critics in the field of education. As a result, different strategies and ways of increasing the interest of students have been developed. Motivation is, however, more complex than it might seem, and although these techniques are not difficult to apply, each student is different and it can have different effects on them. What teachers should do, however, is to try to apply all this because in the majority of students it has positive

effects, and little by little, the influence can affect more students until there is a significant change which can make a progress in the teaching-learning process.

4. CONCLUSIONS

As Dörnyei affirms: “Motivation has been widely accepted by both teachers and researchers as one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of second/foreign language (L2) learning.” (Dörnyei, 1998: 117) And after having completed the “Máster del Profesorado” and this dissertation, I cannot but agree with him completely. Few factors can affect the learning process and have so many implications for so many different areas in TEFL more than motivation.

During this year, in which I have been for the first time in contact with the world of teaching, motivation has been one of the recurrent topics of all the subjects of the course. Motivation, however, is a more complex issue than it might seem at first sight. As Robert C. Gardner claimed, motivation “is more complex than merely wanting to learn the language.” (Gardner, 2007: 10) All the knowledge acquired thanks to this master’s degree as well as the practice experience in the school placement have allowed me to be aware of that complexity. When students do not feel any motivation to study, it is difficult to engage them in the lessons. Motivating all these learners with no interest to learn is something really difficult, because often motivation is something which has its origin in the individual. Also, without motivation and interest towards learning, it is not possible to carry out a lesson in an effective way, therefore, all the different factors influencing the teaching-learning process are affected too.

One of the most pressing issues affecting motivation nowadays is that some teachers do not give motivation all the importance that it deserves, and do not see the value of arousing interest in the students. As a result, they do not make use of any of the strategies which have been explored. They conduct their lessons following a traditional approach, which basically consists of just placing themselves in the front of the class and making students work individually most of the time with little opportunity for interaction between students. This situation, however, can be dramatically changed if the teacher takes the initiative to innovate and spends some effort trying to make lessons

more dynamic and interactive. There are multiple ways of doing it: through ICTs, interactive and communicative activities, games and group work, as it has been explained. Students will enjoy more what they do and this will progressively make a significant change in the teaching-learning process. Students will undoubtedly see the value of learning English and they will get more involved and participative in the lessons.

The different strategies and ways of arousing interest in the classroom which have been explored give some examples to put into practice in order to motivate students. As it has already been affirmed, it is possible to make learners more involved if teachers use materials which are interesting and relevant for the students. Positive feedback is also very important so that students feel they are valued and that what they do is worthy. Giving students the opportunity to develop their autonomy is also important, as this can increase students' self-efficacy and self-confidence too. That way, students are more confident and are not afraid of doing things wrong. In addition, they will learn more from their own mistakes.

It could be said that all the process of motivating students in the classroom is a kind of (positive) vicious circle because not only motivation and interest can also improve students' learning, but also an increase in learning will result in an enhancement of motivation. When students are motivated they show better abilities and capacities in the subject.. Therefore, this makes the teacher give more positive feedback. This, at the same time, increases learners' self-satisfaction and self-confidence, which again, influences the motivation of these learners. All this shows that, with motivation, it is possible to improve learning while having fun. Often students associate going to school with something boring and they take it as an obligation. But if the teacher makes some effort and tries to make lessons more dynamic, that can change. Students can play games, do interactive activities and tasks and at the same time these activities will help them to develop skills and concepts of their foreign language learning.

The limitations of this dissertation have also to be considered. One of the limitations of this dissertation is that I did not have enough time to see how the activities and techniques to increase student's motivation that I proposed would work in the long term. There is a possibility that students might also get bored of all those

activities once they are used to them. Consequently, new activities would have to be designed so that students do not get tired of the same methodology. Fortunately new methods and approaches to teaching a foreign language appear frequently and there will always be something new to implement. In any case, I only had a few weeks to see how my proposals worked in an actual class, so I can only speak from my short experience as teacher. Only the future will give me the opportunity to see how students react to this in the long-term and if their motivation is still kept on.

Another limitation of this study has to do with the kind of students who took part in the lessons. Most of them were average to low achievers, with very little previous motivation. Interactive activities, games and cooperative work as a technique to increase students' motivation and learning might have a better effect on students who find English difficult and have more problems with it as well as on students who do not usually participate in the classroom activity. Their motivation is higher and their learning also may improve faster. They realize that there are alternatives to what they are used to and this may excite their interest and therefore they may be more involved. However, further research and evidence is needed on different kinds of students, because we do not know if the learning of students who already show good command of English through traditional methods would continue in the same line or would show even better results. Another investigation could be done, in the way in which students with high abilities perform with innovative approaches as compared to how they perform with traditional approaches.

However, in spite of the limitations of time. I can gladly say that new perceptions and points of view towards teaching to put into practice in the future have been acquired during this year, and more specifically, towards teaching a foreign language. One of the main insights that I have gained this year is that motivation is really important, if not crucial, in the foreign language classroom. Motivation is going to keep students' interest and attention and to make them be more engaged in the subject. In the end, this will help to develop students' learning. Some approaches might be better than others, some may be more suitable than others for a particular group of students but, in any case, if the teacher always follows the same approach and without any motivation, students might get bored and they may lose their attention and interest

with any method they follow. What is important is that the teacher takes into account learners' motivation, whatever the method or approach, and to put into practice the strategies which try to increase students' motivation. This can bring a significant change in education nowadays, and all the teachers should see the value of motivation and what it can be achieved thanks to it.

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