MOTIVATION: THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE TEACHER [1]

Denis Girard

Motivation is such a basic factor in language learning that I cannot see how any teacher could avoid being concerned with his pupils' motivation. If we want to become fully aware of the role played by motivation in any language-teaching situation, we need only remember what Leon Jakobovits says about it. [2] Analysing what he calls the 'learner factors', he distinguishes four sets of such factors which, more than anything else, account for the various degrees of success or failure of a foreign-language learner: aptitude, intelligence, perseverance or motivation, and other factors. Basing his analysis on the findings of American and Canadian psycholinguists and the results of a variety of objective tests, Jakobovits is bold enough to establish percentages for these four categories and produces the following table:

Aptitude	33
Intelligence	20
Perseverance or motivation	33
Other factors	14

One might of course express some doubt as regards the accuracy of each of these figures, presented with great caution by the author, but there is certainly some truth in the overall proportions if one judges from the teacher's experience. It is remarkable that the third category (perse-

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1. A modified version of a paper given at the IATEFL conference held in London in January 1974. Reprinted from Eng. Lang. Teaching J., Vol. XXXI No. 2, Jan. '77.

2. Leon A. Jakobovits: Foreign Language Learning (Newbury House 1970).

verance or motivation), which is our concern at the moment, should come out with the same high percentage as aptitude, that is 33 per cent or one-third of all the learner factors and should seem to be much more important than the intelligence factor.

We should not be too surprised, however, by the importance granted to the motivation factor if we consider that one of the main differences between first-language acquisition in a natural setting and the learning of a foreign language in a school situation probably lies there. Motivation towards acquiring the mother tongue is easily shown to be very strong indeed in the young child. It is part of his struggle for life, as the satisfaction of his basic needs can best be obtained through the acquisition of an efficient means of communication with the outside world. The mother tongue also represents for the young child a key to his discovery of his environment and to his cognitive development, as has often been shown by psychologists. Motivation is no problem in first-language acquisition: it is given by nature together with the innate capacity to acquire the language of the environment. One may speak appropriately of primary motivation.

When we turn to foreign-language learning, we notice that motivation is quite a different matter. We are faced with an extraordinary variety of motivation from one group of pupils to another and within each group from one individual to another. There is a variety in degree and in nature, from the most highly motivated pupils to those whose motivation seems to be nil or, even worse, who have developed a kind of anti-motivation, if only through realising their inability to learn the language. There are four main factors in motivation: one which is not directly connected with the classroom situation and three which correspond to the basic components in the teaching situation, i.e. the learner, the method used, and the teacher.

The socio-linguistic context is the first important factor. When the learning of a foreign language happens to play a vital role in the life of the country (in countries like Sweden or Denmark) there is no doubt that this is a powerful motivating power in itself. Little can be done about

this first factor. The second factor, the learner's natural aptitude for language learning, can hardly be altered either. By contrast, one can easily influence the third factor, the method used. We all know that some methods have a greater motivating power than others. It depends very much on the way the method takes into consideration the learners' interests and possibilities: the closer the connection between method and learner the higher the motivating power.

We are now left with the fourth and last factor, the teacher. I am inclined to consider this as the most important one. It has often been observed that the same method is successful in the hands of some teachers and a complete failure with others, all other things being equal. It seems therefore appropriate to ask ourselves why.

I cannot agree with Jakobovits's sweeping statement that 'the problem of how to handle the "unwilling" student is not one that the foreign-language teacher is likely to solve by his own activities in the classroom'. Yet the disagreement is only apparent. The key word in the above statement is of course 'activities', which is something quite different from the teacher's attitude, my main concern when I talk about the teacher's responsibility.

After listing the five factors which contribute to the student's motivation or perseverance, L. Jakobovits adds the two following sentences: 'There is one important area where the teacher does have some influence on perseverance and that is the extent to which he is responsive to the factors just considered.' The five factors analysed by the author were labelled: need achievement, attitude toward teacher, interest in second-language study, attitude towards the foreign culture, ethnocentrism, and anomie. 'The politician's time-tested adage "If you can't lick 'em, join 'em", admirably expresses the attitude of the foreign-language teacher who is "aware" and "with it" in this age of the New Student.' That is exactly what I have in mind when I ask the question: how is it that some teachers will fail in a given teaching situation and others will succeed, using the same method and teaching the same pupils?

One can imagine several ways of answering that

question. An obvious and efficient one would be to carry out an objective analysis of the teacher's performance in order to discover the deficiencies in his teaching technique and perhaps in his mastery of the language taught. Such an analysis is bound to provide valuable clues and can help to influence the teacher factor favourably. Yet if our chief concern is the pupils' motivation, it may be interesting to take into consideration the pupils' opinion about their language teacher. If one wishes to avoid the awkward situation of pupils becoming their teacher's judges and being invited to say what they think of Mr So-and-so, a good way to do it is to ask them to draw a detailed portrait of an ideal language teacher. One may assume that the main features that will emerge will have a great deal to do with those qualities in a language teacher directly connected with the pupils' motivation to learn the language. As with all enquiries of this kind, the larger the population interviewed the more reliable the results obtained.

In 1969, a German teacher in France, M. Yves Bertrand, asked some 300 French students of school-leaving age how they imagined the ideal foreign-language teacher and he published the results of his enquiry in an article in Les langues modernes (Mars-Avril 1970).[3] Among the characteristics of that ideal teacher were the following: he had a youthful character (whatever his age); he was highly cultured and bent on developing his pupils' culture; he helped them to succeed in life; he made them understand and have sympathy for foreigners; he dealt with present-day problems and made them forget the restricted world of the school. These were interesting results which had probably little to do with what could have been noted down by an outside observer analysing the teaching techniques of those students' teachers. Yet the population was rather limited and belonged to a very narrow age-range. I had the idea of applying the same technique of enquiry to a larger and more varied school population.

The opportunity was given to me when I had to carry out an enquiry on the use of audio-visual methods

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3. Y. Bertrand: Le professeur de langue ideal, in Les langues modernes (March-April 1970).

of English in French schools, in preparation for the Council of Europe symposium to be held at Pont-à-Mousson in 1970. I gathered information from some fifty teachers who had a fairly long experience of such methods. But I also wanted to have their pupils' opinion about it and worked out a questionnaire which was filled in by 1,000 boys and girls aged from 12 to 17. They were asked to take a position for or against audio-visual methods. As my chief concern was to try and find out whether the use of such methods was having a positive or negative influence on the attitude of pupils and teachers and the relationship between the two, I also added a second part, which was largely inspired by Yves Bertrand's enquiry, on the pupils' definition of the ideal language-teacher.[4]

A list of twenty different features were suggested to them in haphazard order describing contradictory aspects. They were asked to classify them in order of importance and to complete the list as they wished by adding whatever other qualities they found important.

I will give you the first half of the list as it came out from the 1,000 answers, with the pupils' classification:

1 the good language teacher makes his course interesting
2 he teaches a good pronunciation
3 he explains clearly
4 he speaks good English
5 he shows the same interest in all the pupils
6 he makes them participate
7 he shows great patience
8 he insists on the spoken language
9 he makes his pupils work
10 he uses an audio-visual method.

We can forget that tenth point, which was of course ranked differently by those who had expressed themselves for or against audio-visual methods. Yet the fact that it was not

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4. D. Girard: 'Problèmes psychologiques et pédagogiques: le point-de-vue des élèves' in Enseignement audio-visuel des langues vivantes: Bulletin d'échange et de liaison. (Institut Pédagogique National. October 1970)

ranked among the first items even by those who were most favourable to audio-visual methods tends to show that the pupils were capable of making a clear distinction between method and teacher and were well aware of the teacher's responsibility, whatever the method used.

My contention is that a careful analysis of the order selected by the pupils in defining the good language-teacher is bound to give us some clues as to what the teacher should do to motivate his pupils. His first duty is, as we might guess, to make his course interesting (this was selected unanimously as the first point by all age-groups). The information we can draw seems very vague indeed: how does one make a language course interesting? The answer probably lies in putting together the different features which were ranked immediately afterwards. We can assume that pupils are motivated if they have the feeling of learning good authentic language, especially the spoken language, and if the teacher proves capable of giving them a good model, which he can make his pupils reproduce. They want to understand what they are learning. After these basic requirements, we notice quite a number of points which were ranked fairly high in the list and referred not so much to the content of the course and the competence of the language teacher as to the special quality of the teacher-pupil relationship:

- showing the same interest in all the pupils (whatever their qualities and weaknesses)
- making the pupils participate in all activities
- showing great patience.

One may of course wonder whether these points would have come out if the inquirer had not suggested them. The fact remains that they were ranked very high. But the best answer to the objection is to be found in the analysis of those qualities which were freely added to the initial list. Many boys and girls took the opportunity of adding a few qualities which, we may assume, were of paramount importance to them. Now here are the features which came out most often among the twenty or so added:

from the 12-13 age-group:
- he gives us information about the country (England)
- he shows sympathy for his pupils

from the 13-15 age-group:
- he is fair to all pupils (whether good or bad at English)
- he is kind though strict and exacting
- he inspires confidence

from the 15-17 age-group:
- he shows sympathy for his pupils
- he shows great understanding even for those who have difficulties
- he is quite close to his pupils

Now the remarkable fact is the high degree of coherence between the different age-groups when the pupils wish to express what to them is most important. A great majority deal with teacher-class-relationship and the words 'confidence' and 'sympathy' come again and again as a kind of leitmotiv.

What conclusions can we draw from that enquiry which will have a direct bearing on our topic, motivation, and the teacher's responsibility?

We notice that three types of qualities seem to be emerging from the pupils' conception of a good language-teacher:

1 he must offer a good model in the use of the foreign language, especially the spoken language

2 he must be a good technician of language teaching in order to be able to
- make his pupils understand
- correct their pronunciation and develop their communicative skills
- stimulate activity in the foreign language

3 he must also, and above all, be a good psychologist, well aware of all his pupils' individual problems, capable of coping with them and of creating at all stages an atmosphere of mutual confidence and sympathy in the teacher-class relationship.

When the three qualities combine in the same teacher, he will have no difficulty in 'making his course interesting', which was, we remember, the first requirement in the minds of the pupils who answered the questionnaire. Some of the vagueness we found in that requirement (what do they mean when they want the language course to be 'interesting'?) has been partly cleared up, we hope, through out analysis of all the main qualities advocated.

The first two qualities just mentioned are generally developed by any serious teacher-training course which aims at providing the trainee with a good mastery of the language he is going to teach and with the classroom techniques he will need in order to teach that language in any useful way.

As for the third quality, we more or less know that it depends very much on the personality of the teacher, which is the most difficult thing to change. We have all met some people whom we consider as born teachers, who are adored by their pupils. We also know a number of teachers who seem quite incapable of establishing the right kind of contact with their pupils: how could they possibly motivate them?

We should not, however, conclude that nothing can be done. Leaving aside a small number of hopeless cases where the only piece of advice that could be given would be to try and find another job, it is my belief that more could be done for the great majority, in teacher-training centres, to make quite clear what the pupils will be expecting from their teacher. Psychological and sociological studies will certainly be a help. But that will not be enough. The trainee must be equipped with a host of practical hints from experienced teachers on what to do in order to motivate the most reluctant pupils. He must be convinced that motivating his pupils is, at all stages, his chief responsibility.

Such is the most important lesson I personally draw from my small piece of research on the pupils' point of view.