Making Small Achievements: A Step by Step Motivating Approach in L2 Learning

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was defining the effectiveness of an achievement making method, a motivating instructional one to improve English learning as a second language (L2). For doing so a *case study* research design selected and after considering the English scores of students of a language institute and in a purposive sampling method, the subject who was interested in our study has been selected. The scores average for the subject (case) was 71.35 (C) in a 100 points scale. The case, replied to an author made, Persian questionnaire on his English learning experience, as a motivational factor. The case was an Iranian student, 22 years old, male and graduate in industrial management (B.S). He entered in the treatment (instruction) process after passing 8 course sessions (1month).Regarding the results of the subject's first survey on his learning experience ,an instructional method designed ,based on multiple short exams and immediate feedback and reinforcement to modify the learner's L2 experience in a step by step achievement making approach. A general exam on language main skills accomplished after each 4-course sessions alongside replying to learning L2 experience questionnaire. The final results of qualitative analysis of totally 12 months, 96 course sessions and 22 general exams showed a clear improvement in subject's L2 scores (L2 achievement) and also in L2 learning experience. Based on our finding, it can be concluded that, designed achievement making instructional method has been effective to improve subject's learning L2 experience and hence the L2 achievement.

Keywords: Achievement Making; Motivation; L2 Learning Experience.

1. Introduction

1.1. On Motivation

Motivation is defined as the act or process of giving someone a reason for doing something: the act or process of motivating someone generally. Motivation is a theoretical construct used to explain behavior. It represents the reasons for people's actions, desires, and needs. According to Elliot& Covington (2001) motivation can also be defined as one's direction to behavior or what causes a person to want to repeat a behavior and vice versa. Pardee (1990) affirms that a motive is what prompts the person to act in a certain way, or at least develop an inclination for specific behavior." Motivation is

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referred broadly to what people desire, what they choose to do and what they commit to do" (Keller, 2010, p.3). Motivation is defined as the process that initiates, guides and maintains goal-oriented behaviors and also as Keller (2010) believes, explains the direction and magnitude of behavior .In other words, it explains peoples' goals type and the amount and intensity of their activity to pursue these goals.

Certainly motivation has an important role in L2 learning too, as Dörnyei (2005) notes that motivation plays a critical role in academic learning and achievement and especially in mastering a L2 (as cited in Molaee, Dortaj & Sadipour, 2016; p.9). Dörnyei developed his new model after his previous *process model* entitled as *motivational self system* which consists of three items: the *ideal self*, the *ought to self* and the *L2 learning experience* (Dörnyei, 2009). As Dörnyei (2010) defines self system items, the *Ideal L2 Self*, is the "L2-specific facet of one's 'ideal self […] Ought-to L2 Self, concerns the attributes that one believes one ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes (&) L2 Learning experience, which concerns situated motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g. the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the experience of success" (p.79-80). Csize´r and Kormos, 2009; Taguchi et al., 2009, in their studies affirm that the L2 learning experiences has" the strongest impact on motivated behavior" (as cited in Papi, 2010, p.469). As Dörnyei (2009) explains, for some language learners the initial motivation to learn a language does not come from internally or externally generated self images but rather from successful engagement with the actual language learning process. (Ibid,p.469)Hence one of important dimensions in L2 learning motivation could be L2 learning experience, his/her achievement history and the formed idea about ,for learners. The relation between L2 learning experience and the motivated behavior (the observable dimension of motivation) has been studied before (Papi, 2010) believes that the "effect of English learning experience on the learners' motivated behavior" is unquestionable (p.474). However there is no history related to *L2 learning experience* and *L2 achievement* (learning), it has been done some studies that show English learning experience has the most impact on L2 learning intended effort (Papi, 2010; Csize´r and Kormos, 2009; Taguchi et al., 2009) In the result of the key role of L2 learning experience not only in self system model, but in L2motivation and learning, the present study has considered the mentioned study gap.

2. Problem Statement

Failure in learning L2 makes a demotivating role in learning. Sometimes too complicated or fast instructional methods are it's real cause, sometimes the others. Any way failure and any other inappropriate learning experience can decrease motivation. So making a good L2 learning experience is a critical subject.

3. Research questions

How we can motivate L2 learners with making achievement process?

4. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was defining the effectiveness of an achievement making method, a motivating instructional one to improve English learning as a second language (L2).

5. Research Method

The selected method for the paper was Case study. As Stake (1995) says, the case study "is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case" (p.xi as cited in Dörnyei, 2007). A case can be a person, an organization, an institute, a group, in other words, anything that can be considered as" a single entity with clear defined boundaries"(Dörnyei, 2007.p.151). Thomas (2011) offers the following definition of case study: "Case studies are analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more method. The case that is the subject of the inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytical frame — an object — within which the study is conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates."

Since the process of changing someone's feelings and attitudes needs a complex of long-term activities, it seemed necessary using a longitudinal method to modify the subject's English learning experience. Monitoring the learner's changes in learning experience as a self system motivational factor alongside the English exam scores as an index of English achievement was a time consuming activity. In the same way, permanent instruction and taking multiple exams, performing interviews with learner and his instructors was another long-term procedure of the study. In the other hand a case study design selected to provide a descriptive base for future hypothesis and theorizing.

5.1. Participant(s)

For case selection, the English scores of students of a language institute considered and in a purposive sampling way, the subject who was interested in our study selected . The selected case of the study was a male, 22 years Old Iranian student, B.S in industrial management. His English skill level was intermediate on the beginning of the course. The criteria for sampling consisted of: having low English scores (min:0 to max:79/C-F grades) as an achievement index, having a L2 learning experience score between 10 to 20(min:10 to max:60).The scores average for the subject (case) was 71.35 (C) in a 100 point scale and his first L2 learning experience results in 11 scores. In addition to he was so eager to improve his English learning and after defining him the privacy rights and moral consideration, the main goal of the study and it's applicable results, he committed himself to participate in the study process.

5.2. Instruments

The main instrument of this study was an author made Persian questionnaire on English learning experience, based on L2 learning experience item of Z. Dörnyei (2006) & Mostafa Papi (2010),

questionnaires on L2 motivational self system. It has been added some related new questions to the existed Likertian one, to have a continuous assessment of subject's learning experience changes alongside his achievements process. The final questionnaire consists of 10 items of personal assessment of learning and achievement, the ability of learning, instructor proficiency and intimacy, the good feeling of passing time in English course, waiting for English course beginning, enthusiasm in new English courses, class atmosphere, interest in learning English, course materials interest and enjoyment in learning L2.

The complementary instruments were interviews with the case and also with his instructors in addition to their observations reports on general process and changes. In the other short and also long general English exams) multiple choice,100 scores) designed by institute expert instructors have been applied.

5.3. Procedure

The selected case, replied to an author made, Persian questionnaire on his English learning experience, as a motivational factor. He entered in the treatment (instruction) process after passing 8 course sessions (1month). Regarding the results of the subject's first survey on his learning experience ,an instructional method designed ,based on multiple short exams and immediate feedback and reinforcement to modify the learner's L2 experience in a step by step achievement making approach. A general exam on language main skills accomplished after each 4-course sessions alongside replying to learning L2 experience questionnaire and also some interviews and observations about.

6. Findings

The results of 24 general English exams, L2 experience surveys, interviews and observations are summarized as below: the results of L2 learning experience shows an improvement from 11 to 47,the maximum of improvement (5 scores) has been reported in items of personal assessment of learning, the ability of learning, personal assessment for instructor proficiency and intimacy and the good feeling of passing time in English course sessions. The minimum of improvement (2 scores) has occurred in items of waiting for English course beginning, enthusiasm in new English courses. The other items improvement were 4 scores for class atmosphere, 3 scores for interest in learning English, course materials interest and enjoyment in learning L2.
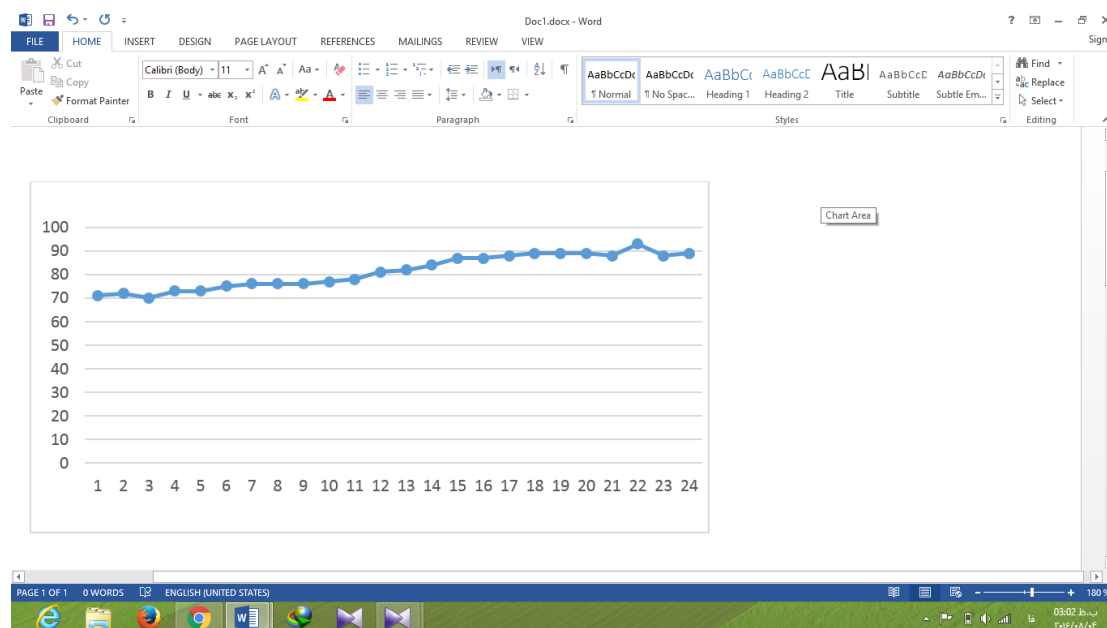
Fig. 1. English Scores per 24 Exams

7. Conclusion

The final results of qualitative analysis of totally 12 months, 96 course sessions and 22 general exams showed a clear improvement in subject's L2 scores (L2 achievement) and also in L2 learning experience. Based on our findings, it can be concluded that, designed achievement making instructional method has been effective to improve subject's learning L2 experience and hence the L2 achievement. . It seems that despite of long-term instructional process, some learning experience items are lasting and hardly can be changed so it is too important studying L2 learning experience formation .It can be suggested for future studying on the relation of making small achievement, L2 learning experience and L2 general achievement or even motivated learning behavior as the observable part of motivation construct. The other items of motivational self system such as ideal self, ought to self, can be subject of new other studies, related to achievement making process. The other suggestion is considering the relation between learning experience and L2 self-efficacy and finally it will be definitely another study subject to do in a quantitative or mixed methods to shed light on and making possible generalization. However the case studies have some limitations but they can provide us necessary pilot material for experimental studies and collect vast and detailed information about.

Acknowledgements

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