EFL Motivation through Vision: Role-plays, Narratives, Projects and Reading Tasks

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Abstract—This paper looks into some interactive, proposed ways in helping an EFL learner to develop an identity as an EFL learner in learning English to achieve language learning goals. First, vision theory is discussed, reflecting on the increased importance of envisioning oneself to create a self-image for the EFL learner in order to enable, acknowledge and enjoy his/her EFL identity. The second part presents the use of how conscious role-plays can make a difference in terms of shaping one identity. The next part supports the interlinking of image as a confident EFL learner and an effective individual in the future through personal narratives. The final section addresses how projects and reading tasks can be used as activities which can support the building of identity in EFL.

Index Terms—vision, role plays, narratives, projects, tasks

I. INTRODUCTION

Becoming an achieving speaker/learner in a foreign language engages the whole person as a cognitive, emotional and physical being. Hadfield and Dornyei (2013) currently place vision at the core of learners’ motivation in the area of foreign language learning. Seeing oneself as an L2 or in this very context, an EFL learner can help design a guideline to achieve the learner’s personal goal. As Dörnyei (1997) indicates, goal-setting theory is well-suited with expectancy-value theories as commitment is seen to be enhanced when people believe that achieving the goal is possible and important. Vision, comprising imagination and imagery, represents the mental demonstration of the sensory experience of a future goal condition. It is currently at the forefront of motivational innovation, and it has recently been seen as the motivational implement of EFL teachers. Vision is seen as a strong motivational force. Motivation has traditionally been viewed as stationary. Nevertheless, any EFL teacher would argue that this is simply not the case. Levels of motivation seem to move up and down throughout the course of a lesson, a day and even over longer periods of time. As a result, vision perceived as a strong motivational force, relates to a long-term effort, which is able to overrule these rises and falls. In viewing student motivation in this way, vision can be seen as “one of the most reliable predictors of their long-term intended effort” (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014, p. 9).

The vision of a learner’s future self includes a strong physiological element. In fact, a series of these physiological elements are needed to help the learner to create a self-image where he or she exists through the learning of the English language. The challenge is how EFL teachers can implement multi-physical based classroom activities that could engage the learners in the need of seeing, accepting, and enjoying a self as an EFL learner, in other words, their L2 identity. Four activities will be discussed from the standpoint of building and retaining an EFL self-vision. These include role-plays, personal narratives, projects, and reading tasks.

II. MINDFUL ROLE PLAYS

Role-plays are considered a basis for performing a communicative task. They are thought to enhance student interaction and place classroom practice in a real-like context. There appear many benefits of utilizing role plays. Furness (1976) claimed that an EFL learner can enjoy a role play experience with regards to enriched communication skills, creativity, better social awareness, autonomous thinking, expression of opinions, and improvement of values and appreciation of drama. Moreover, Ladousse (2004) pointed out that a role play is a great communicative method which develops fluency in EFL students, promoting classroom interaction and increasing motivation. A role play also inspires peer learning and sharing learning responsibility between the teacher and the student. Role plays can help EFL teachers meet an unlimited range of needs. According to Stern (1983), role playing helps the student to be more flexible and cultivate a sense of mastery in various situations which can help the student to apply the language more easily to new circumstances.

Despite these assumed advantages, many language teachers would agree that not every student enjoys role-plays. Some students cannot engage in their roles. Some don’t feel like acting out in front of the audience due to their personality and characteristics. Some lack enthusiasm during the activity and they will not necessarily take away a memorable learning experience of an activity where they had to be a front office personnel at a hotel, for instance. In the writer’s EFL context, some students explicitly question the validity of using role plays as part of formal learning assessment. They point out that it takes more than just acting out their roles: preparation of scripts, pair/group dynamics