Enhancing Intrinsic Motivation for Humanistic Education:  
Taking an Inside Look at German Language Education in the Thai Context

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Abstract
The main purpose of this study is to cast light on the concept of how the motivation of German language learners in Thailand can be intrinsically enhanced in terms of building culture of literacy. In this regard, the following aspects should be considered: 1) What do German teachers have to take into account when designing activities to create self-motivated learners in German classes?; 2) What kind of effective teaching tasks can be employed based on the concept of Humanistic Education?; and 3) What practical recommendations can be provided to humanistic teachers or educators concerning effective language pedagogy?

Keywords: humanistic education; german language education; thai context

Introduction

In Thailand, German has been taught more than ninety years since it was first offered in 1920 at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok (Saengaramruang, 2007, p. 18). Currently, it is a compulsory and elective course for learners in many high schools and at the tertiary level in many Thai universities. For many years, German language educators have been trying and searching for the best theories, approaches, methodologies, and the techniques that are suitable for their teaching context. In this regard, a humanistic approach is one of the approaches for language education that many previous studies focused on. Based on this approach, a foreign language is unlikely to be learned where it is not needed. Learners learn a foreign language for several personal and practical reasons and they are free to be themselves. As language is a means of interaction, acquisition of any language involves motivation. It is the factor for learning language at the first step. In fact, motivation, which includes both extrinsic and intrinsic, can be defined as the need or reason to do something. Hence, this paper mainly focuses on the main reasons as well as motivation leading Thai learners to study German. It is also discussed how German language educators in Thailand can enhance the motivation of learners in terms of humanistic education.

According to Ellis (1997), there are various kinds of motivation in relation to second language acquisition: 1) Instrumental Motivation (Learners may make efforts to learn an L2 for some functional reason – to pass an examination, to get a better job, or to get a place at university); 2) Integrative Motivation (Some learners may choose to learn a particular a particular L2 because they are interested in the people and culture represented by the target language group); 3) Resultative Motivation (Motivation is the cause of L2 achievement/ Motivation is the result of learning.); and 4) Intrinsic Motivation (Motivation involves the arousal and maintenance of curiosity and can ebb and flow as a result of such factors as learners’ particular interests and their extent to which they feel personally involved in learning activities) (Ellis, 1997, p.76). According to Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1999), the Thai society consists of people sharing a rich ethnic diversity, mainly influenced by two great cultural systems of Asian-Chinese and Indian. More than 90% of Thais believe in Buddhism, the national religion. Spoken and written Thai is used as the national language. English is often used and widely understood in cities, particularly in Bangkok where it is almost a second commercial language. Thailand has often been described as the land of smile. Not only are the Thai people frequently depicted with smiling faces, but they are also characterized by their optimism, ambition, pursuit of knowledge, and pride of being Thai. In Thailand, educational achievement serves as an indication of position within the national society. This is based on which Thai educational institution they attended and whether they obtained college and university degrees abroad. However, their research results reveal that the national culture is characterized by low individualism. They state,
The low individualistic characteristic of Thai culture is also reflected in values associated with the Thai kinship system. The parent-child relationship is viewed by the Thai as basic to social life, and thus most Thais retain very close ties with their families. Normally, at least one child in a family assumes responsibility for aged parents.

(Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin, 1999, p. 384)

As noted by Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1999), Thais believe that inner freedom is best preserved by maintaining an emotionally and physically stable environment. Therefore, they believe that social harmony is very important and in general, people will do their utmost to avoid any personal conflict in their contacts with others. They state,

Outward expressions of anger are also regarded as dangerous to social harmony and are obvious signs of ignorance, crudity, and immaturity. The person who is serenely indifferent will be respected for what is considered as important virtue.

(Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin 1999: 384)

As a result, Thai people believe in “kreng jai” which means an extreme reluctance to impose on anyone or disturb another’s personal equilibrium by refusing requests, accepting assistance, showing disagreement, giving direct criticism, challenging knowledge or authority, or confronting in conflict situation.

Class distinction and social differences in Thai society are broadly defined by such personal characteristics as family background, age, gender, and level of education. As a result, the Thai culture is also characterized by high power distance. Additionally, Thai culture is also characterized by high uncertainty avoidance. This means that uncertainty is reduced in communication relationships through the internalization of context-related rules and norms about “appropriate communication”. For example, when meeting other for the first time, Thais automatically employ the correct pronouns and postures of respect, deference, and intimacy. Politeness and tact dominate acquaintance-level relationship. Lastly, non-dominant (e.g., non-assertive and non-competitive) interpersonal styles are major characteristics of Thai culture. A successful, modest Thai person often expresses a lower opinion than is probably deserved of her or his ability, knowledge, skill, successes, etc. Older Thai people are not happy when younger people argue with them or give critical opinions. This may lead to conflict or interpersonal resentment. Thus, Thai culture is also characterized by low masculinity (cited in Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1999, pp. 383-417).

Some points mentioned in these previous studies indicate that culture is a shared system of symbols, beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations and norms for behavior. The most obvious is the culture we share with all the people who live in our own country. In addition, we belong to other cultural groups, including an ethnic group, probably a religious group, and perhaps a professional that has its own special language and customs. All members of a culture have similar assumptions about how people should think, behave and communicate, and they all tend to act on those assumptions in much the same way. So, this may lead to further discussion: How to be a Humanistic teacher based on this deeply-rooted cultural structure in the high-context culture of Thai society? 1) What do German teachers have to take into account when designing activities to create self-motivated learners in German classes?; 2) What kind of effective teaching tasks can be employed based on the concept of Humanistic Education?; 3) What practical recommendations can be provided to humanistic teachers or educators concerning effective language pedagogy?

Method

Based on the purposive sampling, twenty four german majors enrolling in a business german course (wirtschaftsdeutsch) as an elective course in their last academic year were purposively selected in this pilot study. Instruments used questionnaire, interview, and observation. The data collected were divided into these main groups: observation: the researcher observed the learning behavior of learners and their cooperative learning while working individually, in pairs, and in groups; questionnaire data; think-aloud protocols: the researcher asked students some questions concerning the results received from questionnaire. The researcher noted down and analyzed the data qualitatively. Opinions and needs of learners were analyzed qualitatively.
Results and Discussion

In this part, the results from the questionnaire of this study are mainly focused and presented according to the research questions: 1) What do German teachers have to take into account when designing activities to create self-motivated learners in Business German classes? In terms of designing activities, instead of thinking about what students should learn, we need to ask what students want to learn, and how we can use our personal expertise to help them to do this. This Business German course is offered to students as an elective course. This means that students have their own motivation to enroll in this course. According to them as research participants, they think that Germany is a leading country for global business. Studying German for Business would be beneficial for them. Apart from this, most of them mentioned that Germany is well known and accepted as a leader of EU for EU-Economy. Studying German for Business is “cool” for them and make them proud that they know much more than German for Everyday Life. As Germany is one of the leading countries for business, they also wish to enhance their language competence to achieve the level of business language. In other words, not only do they wish to study German for their daily life, but they are also intrinsically motivated to study Business German at the higher level.

Based on the results from the questionnaire, it was found that all students wish to learn specific vocabulary and business language expressions for their business contact in the future. Besides, they wish to learn some grammar necessary for business communication. Lastly, they mentioned that they wish to develop their communication skills apart from the language skills which will lead them to succeed in their future careers.

Since students wish to learn specific vocabulary and business language expressions for their business contact, the situations of telephoning may be an easy learning task at the very first step for their Business German class and the following tasks should be created: Task 1: The class instructor shows the picture concerning telephoning and let the learners guess or anticipate what they are learning; Task 2: The class instructor gives students many pieces of paper and have the learners put the pieces of paper in order. Then, he reads two telephone conversations out loud. Students have to listen to the instructor and put the pieces of paper in order again based on what they heard. After they have finished, the class instructor will repeat these two telephone conversations so that the students can check the correct order; Task 3: The class instructor shows students the conversations. Now, students are supposed to read the conversations on their own and go to task 4.

Dialog 1
Telefonist: Firma Lego, Was kann ich für Sie tun?
Telefonist: Wie ist Ihr name, bitte?
Frau Schön: Mein Name ist Schön.
Telefonist: Einen Moment bitte, Ich verbinde Sie.
Frau Schön: Danke.

Dialog 2
Sekretärin: Firma Bos, kann ich Ihnen helfen?
Herr Kümmel: Guten Morgen, würden Sie mich bitte Frau Schön verbinden?
Sekretärin: Tut mir Leid, Frau Schön ist nicht im Haus. Möchten Sie eine Nachricht hinterlassen?
Sekretärin: Auf Wiederhören.
Herr Kümmel: Auf Wiederhören.

(Adapted from Buscha & Linthout, 2005, pp. 107-109)

Task 4: Work individually; underline the words that you know? Task 5: Work in pairs, list the word from the conversations according to their part of speech.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Pronoun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kann</td>
<td>Telefonist</td>
<td>ich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.......</td>
<td>Firma</td>
<td>Sie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>möchte</td>
<td>Frau</td>
<td>your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sprechen</td>
<td>Herr</td>
<td>mich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verbinde</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>sie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helfen</td>
<td>Moment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.......</td>
<td>Sekretärin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rufe...an</td>
<td>Nachricht</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Preposition Collocation Expressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Collocation</th>
<th>Expressions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Task 6:** After students have finished, they should give the meanings of the words and expression in the table and compare the answers with their partner; **Task 7:** Role Play (Work in pairs or in groups). Students complete the conversation before they role play in front of class. This will help students think on their own and they will not imitate the whole conversation for the roleplay.

**Sekretärin:** Firma Bos, kann ich Ihnen helfen?  
**Herr Kümmel:** Guten Morgen, würden Sie mich bitte Frau Schön verbinden.  
**Sekretärin:** Tut mir Leid, Frau Schön ist außer Haus. Möchten Sie eine Nachricht hinterlassen?  
**Herr Kümmel:** Ja, ______________________________.  
(Possible Answer: Please tell her to call me back.)  
**Sekretärin:** ______________________________.  
(Possible Answer: No problem. Thank you for your call. Good bye.)  
**Herr Kümmel:** ______________________________.  
(Possible Answer: Thank you. Good bye.)

Apart from the language skills, enhancing their intercultural competence may also be considered so that students can understand the similarities and the differences when communicating with people from other cultures. **Suggested Task for Intercultural Competence:** Task 1: What do you have to consider when communicating with people in your country?; Task 2: What can be some different aspects/points when communicating with people from other cultures?; Task 3: Interview your partner if he/she has experienced the situation in which he/she had to communicate with someone from other cultures? **Interview Question:** Can you tell us the story in brief? Was it a successful or unsuccessful story? What communication techniques or strategies did he/she use? What problem(s) did he/she have? (If you’ve never had such an experience, you may imagine a situation you’d like to participate in.) Task 4: Roleplay the situation you have discussed with your partner in front of the class.
Note: The tasks designed for the class in this pilot study is based on the concept of Scaffolding which refers to the process by which learners utilize discourse to help them construct structures that lie outside their competence (Ellis, 1997, p. 143).

Task 5: Summarize the main points you have learned from the roleplays of your classmates. In conclusion, these tasks are created as students wished. In relation to humanistic approach for language education, the following aspects are considered: 1) Students are able to choose what they want to learn; 2) Teachers can foster students' desire to learn and teach them how to learn; 3) Students are self-motivated in their studies and desire to learn on their own. However, in terms of discussion, it might be difficult for learners if teachers force them to speak German all the times in class. They may feel that the class is threatening. So, allowing them to use their own language (L1) or L2 sometimes in class can make them feel secure to learn. Once students feel secure, learning becomes easier and more meaningful. Task 6: Follow-up activity. Students wish to practice themselves to be well-prepared for the workplace. In addition to the language skills, the communication competence of the learners should be further enhanced at the greater level. Humanistic teachers as a facilitator may show a diagram concerning the intercultural competence in the Thai context for the learners as follows example Conceptualization of Communication Competence in Thai Organization. Additionally, a class instructor may use an appropriate excerpt or text from academic resources which properly explains the diagram to make learners understand Thai culture when compared with western culture. If the language of the text is not German, an English text or a text with explanation in Thai may be required. The following is an example of one possible excerpt which appropriately explains the diagram:

According to Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (1999), the kinds of communication skills associated with communication competence in Thai organizations were similar to those frequently identified to as important for workers in 'western' organizations. As shown in the example, these skills include giving instruction, feedback and advice; providing, seeking and receiving information; writing; listening; networking; and persuading. However, individuals also place a very high value on a person’s ability to speak in a gentle, calm, and thoughtful manner. Communication competence in Thai society also involves knowing how to avoid conflict with others (for example, by not discussing things without regard to the person being referred to, recognizing the inappropriateness of responding negatively to colleague’s opinions, and being to control the expression of emotion). Their research findings also reveal that Thai managers are expected to know everything for which they are responsible, they may find they can obtain more useful information from their subordinates by encouraging them to be more open in expressing their opinions, providing them with positive feedback for the upward communication of bad as well as good news, and rewarding them for generating new, unsolicited ideas for improving job performance.

(Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin, 1999, pp. 388-415)
Thai Cultural variability

↓

Low Individualism
High Power Distance
High Uncertainty Avoidance
Low Masculinity

↓

Communication Competence

Strategic

- Communication Knowledge
  - Conflict avoidance
  - Displays a respect
  - Use of correct pronouns
  - Politeness, Tactfulness and Modesty

Tactical

- Communication skills
  - Giving instructions/orders
  - Giving advice/feedback
  - Providing, receiving & seeking Information
  - Writing, listening, persuading, networking,

Behavioral Traits
Cognitive Abilities
  - Empathy
  - Cognitive
  - Complexity

(Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin, 1999, p. 410)

In addition, as feelings and knowledge as well as self-evaluation are important in the learning process. The following task should be considered in the last step of the learning activity or at the end of the learning process: Task 7: How do you feel about the activity in class today? Evaluate your satisfaction with what you have learned today in class. To sum up, it is apparent that cultural as well as critical thinking skills are necessary for studying German for business purposes since business firms are becoming more flexible. This also indicates an area of study where the importance of humanistic education for the practical world of business is clearly visible. What practical recommendations can be provided to humanistic teachers or educators concerning effective language pedagogy? In terms of traditional learning, German can be taught through compulsory classes. It is learned to pass examinations and learners should sit and learn. Regarding humanistic education, German is learned for several personal and practical reasons and learners are free to be themselves. Some points mentioned in this study can lead to the discussion concerning learners' motivations according to Ellis (1997). There are various kinds of motivation. Ellis (1997) also explains that motivation is clearly a highly complex phenomenon. His four types of motivation should be seen as complementary rather than as distinct and oppositional. Learners can be both integratively and instrumentally motivated at one and the same time. Motivation can result from learning as well as cause it. Furthermore, motivation is dynamic in nature; it is not something that a learner has or does not have but rather something that varies from one moment to the next depending on the learning context or task (Ellis, 1997, p. 76).
Conclusion

As the demands of today's world are excessive and human life is full of pressure and anxiety, humanistic education can reduce the anxiety and offers a teaching and learning approach. Not only does it construct students' knowledge but it also gives them a self-realization of their own potentiality. In relation to language studies, apart from the language skills, enhancing the intercultural competence may also be considered so that students can understand the similarities and the differences when communicating with people from other cultures. In other words, encouraging learners to learn a foreign language and culture is an important way to develop the realization of their own values as well as cultural ideology. It cannot be denied that the teacher needs to be himself a humanist. Learners should love the subject and communicate the joy of learning. The success of a teacher is that he can see his students grow up intellectually and emotionally to be independent, sensitive, imaginative thinkers and practitioners in the future.

References