Learning Together: Student-Teacher Cooperation in Enhanced Learning Processes

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Abstract

The article sums up some results of my recent case-study on student-centred learning and motivation. The goal of the study was to better understand what kind of teaching and cooperation model could enhance student motivation in our groups, with the goal of applying the results in our teaching (action research). Our research analyses the following aspects: What is the preferred learning model for the students in the respective groups (students studying at the course Advanced English at our university) like? What motivates them in the learning process? In which areas of learning and curriculum planning would students rather be autonomous and where do they expect teacher support? The results of our case study administered to 36 students (ethnographic research, action research) will be summed up as the empirical illustration to the topic. As a theoretical background we resort to theories of motivation and research results on student-centred learning. Areas we focus on include: motivation, educational strategies to increase motivation, student-teacher roles, student autonomy. In the analysis of student-teacher cooperation we analyse the potential of educators to create a positive supportive climate for the learning (affect and motivation, student emotions and teachers´ roles). The focus is on creating a positive cooperation model that encourages student initiative and responsibility for their lifelong learning.

Introduction

As teachers and students are more often seen as cooperation partners, their roles, tasks and also their expectations towards each other change. Teachers´ roles are more and more becoming those of a coach and mentor. Students are expected to be goal oriented, to be able to themselves design their life-curve, and determine the skills and knowledge desired and needed for the important and relevant moments along this. Inevitably, this means that the traditional teacher-learner communication model, which for a long period may have tended to be rather monological, has in many contexts long ago been replaced for the dialogical, cooperation model. However, more often than not, teachers are still expected to be the driving engine, motivator, and supporter in the classroom. The new challenge may lie in finding a good balance in the teacher´s role, in adapting it to include the traits of leadership and mentoring that would support and increase student motivation. In the theoretical part of our paper we sum up some recent insights into research on motivation that might be relevant in this context. In the empirical part of the paper we analyse students´ views on motivation and the dynamic teacher-student roles.

1. Modern educational paradigms

Only recently, approaches to learning and learning methodologies were neatly divided into a clear-cut system of methodologies and approaches to be learned, analysed and sometimes followed at the teacher training education programme and sessions, as well as the ensuing careers and practice.

Today, the situation has changed. In 2017(Clandfield) the International Association for Teachers of English journal *Voices* publishes an article, which explicitly states: "we have come to the post-methodology period". It suggests that relying on one or another methodology only may be a somewhat outdated "action plan". Today, teachers are rather expected to be well-versed with the different methodologies, approaches and philosophies. So that they might be able to choose from the wide repertoire of different methods, methodologies and learning-teaching philosophies *ad hoc*, depending on the students, goals of the lesson, day, etc. This conclusion is published in the global magazine for teachers of English, who are often seen to be leading the trends in the global education business – due to their number, geographical global spread, and well established academic traditions in

the field. Thus, this trend may be seen to influence the whole teaching profession in the nearest future.

The decision to choose the philosophy, approach, methodology and methods thus, as it always has, today also explicitly rests with each individual teacher. Of course, one should respect the vision and mission, strategies and guidelines of the educational institution they are working for. This, in order to guarantee that the students can know ahead of their studies what awaits them, and to ensure the academic family shares a common network of agreed values and principles to rely on.

In making the decision, teachers can make choices based on their own values, the student group, student needs, and the focus of the studies at that moment. In order to analyse what possible considerations can influence and support them in their choices, also the aspect of motivation is important. Below, let us briefly review some recent research results on motivation from the current research literature.

Motivation

Currently, motivation and individualisation related aspects are often envisioned as having an increasing importance in the learning and teaching process. We suggest that these areas may be seen as some of the stepping stones in developing the modern, facilitating and supportive learning environment. Below, let us briefly analyse the area of motivation with respect to its theoretical implications and possibilities of applying it in practice.

For the learning to happen, there has to be motivation both on the student´s and the teacher´s side. Motivation has to be *aroused* so that the will to deal with an activity could occur. Motivation has to be *preserved,* at a relatively high level, in order for the motivation to last. And last but not least, it would be preferable if motivation could be *gradually increased* so as to enhance the learner´s cognitive and affective arousal. This could encourage students to focus on achieving their personal goals. It can also help them to grapple with the learning processes they are going through together with the teachers and significant others.

So how does recent research analyse the phenomenon and capacity known as "motivation"?For the first, even if *"motivation"* is a topic often discussed in multiple theoretical and analytical sources, it proves hard to pinpoint and its character is difficult to determine. Thus, it is difficult for scientists to define it. Reeve (2009:10) states: "Motivation is private, unobservable, and seemingly mysterious experience. You cannot see another person´s motivation. /…/ Two ways exist to infer motivation in another person. The first way is to observe motivation´s behavioural manifestations. /…/ The second way to infer motivation is to pay close attention to the antecedents known to give rise to motivational states".

Reeve suggests that the following can be observed to understand if motivation exists, and if it is strong or not (ibid.: 11):

"attention, effort, latency, persistence, choice, probability of response, facial expressions, and bodily gestures". "Engagement refers to the behavioural intensity, emotional quality and personal investment in another person´s involvement during an activity".

In addition to the above, one can rely on self-reports when deciding on the person´s motivation, usually in the form of an interview of a questionnaire. This is also what we have used as the empirical basis for the analytical part of this paper.

- **Conscious and subconscious motivation, affect and emotions**

Motivation is not often verbalised nor even conscious, cf.:" /…/ one of the most interesting recent developments in the social psychology of motivation has been the growing recognition that many kinds of social behaviours are performed in an almost automatic, spontaneous fashion, without conscious awareness. Even more intriguing are a growing number of findings suggesting that not only that social

Actors are frequently unaware of the real motivational reasons for their behaviours, but more strikingly, that when questioned they often come up with clearly incorrect or mistaken causal explanations for their actions (Wegner & Gilbert, 2000 in Forgas et al 2005:1-2).

Wegner and Gilbert stress that in analysing motivation, the ***role of affect and emotions*** should not be forgotten. As they put it (ibid: 7): " /…/ much recent evidence suggests that affective states and moods, however caused, can often be a powerful source of motivated cognition and behaviour. For example, even mild mood states influence how people perceive, interpret, respond to, and communicate in social situations /…/".

A positive atmosphere is the more important, as we know that even the physical responses of our own bodies predict whether a situation is perceived as positive or negative:

"/…/experimental participants who had been asked to adopt a smiling expression judged themselves (i.e. their own well-being) and affective stimuli (e.g., cartoons) more positively. According to self-perception theory, these participants inferred their affective state from their facial expression" (Strack and Deutsch in Forgas 2005: 100).

Furthermore:

"The same logic was subsequently applied to postural expression. Stepper and Strack (1993) found that participants who were introduced to adopt an upright posture while learning about their above-average performance in a previous task felt prouder than participants induced to assume a slumped pose" (ibid.).

Thus (ibid 102): "/…/ unobtrusively manipulated facial expressions may influence evaluative judgements".

Similarly, (ibid. 101)

"These findings show motor influences on mental processing when the behaviour has no immediate evaluative implications. However, these implications are mediated by a motivational subsystem to which the behaviour belongs. Because nodding is a nonverbal sign for agreement in most cultures and shaking one´s head is a signal for disagreement, these head movements are linked to an orientation toward approach or avoidance, which influences the impulsive regulation of behaviour".

This leads us to the main focus of this article – what are the possibilities for teachers to support student learning, through creating a positive and supportive atmosphere in the classroom, as well as through boosting student motivation through encouraging student creativity, playfulness and risk-taking.

Mastery or performance?

One important aspect to consider is whether the motivation is actually fostered by the will to *excel* in a certain subject, or just to *outperform* others. Thus, when designing our learning environment, and supporting and inspiring our students, one should remember the difference between *mastery* and *performance* achievement goals. Harackiewicz*et* al (2005 : 24) define these goals as follows:

 "When pursuing mastery goals, an individual´s reason for engaging in an achievement activity is to *develop* competence at an activity. In contrast, when pursuing performance goals, an individual´s reason for engagement is to *demonstrate* competence relevant to others. "

Research suggests that for *mastery goals* students choose more challenging tasks, while for *demonstration goals* they are rather satisfied with the easier ones (ibid.: 24-25). Thus, creating a positive atmosphere for learning and a safe and encouraging learning environment, can also encourage students to *take challenges* and broaden their horizons for the purposes of developing the mastery skills.

However, also students´ wish to develop their performance skills has some advantages. As shown by Harackiewicz*et* al, 2005: 25:

" /.../ tasks related to either preference are accepted more easily by the respective learner types. However, there is *a positive effect spillover* in either of the preferences. For example: "A performance goal /…/ provides the additional challenge of outperforming others and demonstrating competence, and thus may make the game more exciting and interesting for HAMs /individuals high in achievement motivation/".

Reeve (2009: 190) points out:

"Both types of goals – performance and mastery – are common in the culture, and both encourage achievement /…/. But typically, social settings like the workplace, sports field, and classroom pit these two goals against each other and ask (force) workers, athletes and students to pick one goal over the other. People are often asked to choose between courses of action that allow them to:

- Look smart and competent but at the sacrifice of learning something new.
- Learn something new, useful, or important, but at the sacrifice of looking smart and competent."

Thus, it may be important for the teacher as a mentor in the learning process to make use of this important theoretical piece of knowledge. Furthermore, Harackiewicz*et* al (2005: 27) conclude that"/.../ both achievement goals could promote intrinsic motivation.

Specifically, positive mastery and performance goal effects depended on personality differences (e.g., whether an individual was characteristically high or low in achievement motivation) or on characteristics of the situation (e.g., the match with other goals in the situation). What´s more, by examining the underlying motivational processes, Harackiewicz and Elliot found that mastery and performance goals facilitated interest through the same key mechanisms (competence valuation and task involvement). What proved more critical than the type of the goal pursued was whether the goal fostered competence valuation and task involvement."

It is also significant to observe (cf. Harackiewicz*et al.* 2005: 31) that both types of achievement goals bring about positive results in academic performance – as this, traditionally, involves both aspects (you have to*understand* and excel as well as to *prove and demonstrate* your knowledge at tests). Relevant to our course design and material choice (but also e.g. e-learning and gamification) is the result Harackiewicz*et al* (2005: 32, emphasis mine) present that shows that "*interest partially mediated the direct effect of mastery goals* on continued interest and academic major choice, *but /.../ enjoyment did not predict continued interest* in psychology or academic major choice."

This research result supports the widespread assumption that making the learning process intriguing, challenging and activating will stimulate students´ learning (cf. Problem Based Learning, Activity Based Learning, Learning through Activity Centres, etc.). The result that "*enjoyment did not* predict continued interest in psychology or academic major choice" (ibid.), however, seems rather surprising *viz a viz* the widespread presumption (that enjoying the learning process stimulates (and thus motivates) learning. As it would - at first glance - be logical to assume that people would choose as their academic major subjects those that they *enjoy* learning, the result by Harackiewicz*et al.* above makes the point that not only *enjoyment* but also *interest* have to be present in order for the motivation to persist.

Closely related to this are the *catch* and *hold* aspects of interest which also play an important role in learner motivation (Harackiewicz*et* al. 2005: 36):

"/.../ catch factors changed the initial experience of the task that it was more fun to learn about the tasks presented, whereas hold factors seemed to affect individuals´ evaluation of the topic. Continued interest may depend on both enjoying the learning experience and finding the material interesting and important. The enjoyment of a learning task will soon be forgotten if the task was not perceived as valuable".

Obviously, the conclusion is highly relevant for teachers. Be it the materials-design, the possible introduction of gamification-ideas in the learning process, stimulation through games, credit points and achievable but motivating steps of process - all these popular methods can be applied in addressing the psychological mechanisms behind learning described above.

Teacher-student roles and trust

Students´ emotions and teachers´ roles

Above we have seen the importance of subconscious and unconscious motivation, affect and emotions, as well as the performance and mastery goals on student motivation. Obviously, these are strongly influenced by the cooperation partners of students, including their peers, family and teachers.

In many contexts "only data-forwarding"-focused teaching is still considered paramount. In many others - the role teachers have in designing the emotional environment in a classroom, as well as the importance of the support offered by them - is clearly stressed. Teachers have been considered as "emotional amplifiers", and "motivational socialisers" in the classroom. As expressed by Dörnyei (2001:35, emphasis mine):

"/.../ teachers are powerful motivational socialisers. Being the officially designated leaders within the classroom, they embody group conscience, symbolise the group's unity and identity, and serve as a model or a reference/ standard. They also function as an 'emotional amplifier' of the group whose appeals and examples are critical for mobilising the group /.../. Simply speaking, *to lead means to direct and energise, that is, to motivate*".

Similarly to what we have expressed before (cf. Mullamaa 2009, 2011, 2016), Carnell and Lodge (2002: 23) stress the importance of trust and positive relationships in learning. They state (ibid.):

"Learning is best promoted in a context of trust, respect and confidence. Pressure and high expectations can be damaging". Carnell and Lodge (2002: 23) point out the influence factor of "significant others". Importantly, the teachers are demonstrated to have an essential role in this:

"Young people recognize the value of good relationships with adults for effective learning. In their interviews with over 300 secondary students in Wales, Morgan and Morris found that pupils saw good learning as overwhelmingly derived from the actions of teachers, and that good relationships with the teacher was an important factor in this (Morgan and Morris, 1999)".

More than just direct learning outcomes, a positive teacher-student relationship can influence student school adjustment and – we suggest – through this even the pleasure of attending school and becoming an educated person altogether. Meyer and Turner (2007: 248) point out:

"Teachers´ relationships with students have been found to be associated with students´ academic achievement and school adjustment. /…/ Emotional scaffolding can help to establish and sustain positive relationships and classroom climate that support student engagement, learning and perceptions of competence. /…/

Furthermore, Carnell and Lodge (2002: 23, emphasis mine), claim:

"We have noted that young people are often dependent on adults, especially teachers. This observation is supported by our research with one group of Year 10 students. They valued teachers who responded to the particular class, taking account of their profile of needs. They valued teachers who make an extra effort, like making themselves available to help a young person. They identified three kinds of teachers: *those who just do a job, those who are enthusiastic and enjoy passing on their knowledge of their subject, and a third group who live for teaching."*

Thus we have proof that students both notice, monitor and evaluate "good teaching" and measure the persons working with them up to the idealised picture they have of them. Their expectations are high, and this can hopefully motivate also teachers to live up to them.

In the same vein, Kiggins and Cambourne (2007: 368-379) emphasise the importance of a "triadic partnership" from the very beginning of training of young teachers. They state "/…/ trust becomes a required element in the knowledge building process, and if friendship and trust are not present among the student cohort, this process is unlikely to occur" (ibid. 374).

Furthermore, Brophy (20004: 269) points out that "each person has a unique motivational system, developed in response to experiences and socialization from significant others in his or her life. In the case of students developing motivation to learn academic knowledge and skills, teachers are important "significant others". Therefore, rather than just accommodate classroom activities to students´ existing motivational patterns, teachers can *shape* those patterns through socialization designed to develop students´ motivation to learn".

These principles are well-known, and some pedagogical approaches (e.g. the socio-emotional environment supporting approach used in Norwegian schools), seem to apply them consciously and systematically. Teachers try to be supportive and encouraging, providing students with the educational, motivational and also emotional support they need. Undoubtedly, this is the goal to strive for, and it can foster and support good teacher-student cooperation, and through this also student motivation. In addition to the example of Norway above, also Meyer and Turner (2007: 245) suggest that teachers should "scaffold" emotions in the classroom:

"scaffolding emotions in classroom" include "setting a positive emotional tone, building shared understanding, extending understanding, and supporting empathy and mutual respect."

Importantly, their research illuminates a clear link between the emotional atmosphere in the classroom and the learning outcomes:

"In our analyses of classroom discourse to discover the instructional characteristics that promote high levels of student involvement in learning, we have found emotional scaffolding to be critical in sustaining students´ understanding of challenging concepts, students´ demonstration of their competencies and autonomy, students´ involvement and persistence, and students´ emotional or personal experiences /…/" (Meyer and Turner 2007: 245).

In addition to the above, we suggest, the teacher´s role, as that of a positive role model, should be stressed. As we have pointed out in our earlier research (cf. Mullamaa 2009, 2011**,** 2016), teachers are seen as guidance and role models, both as concerns learning, academic dignity, but also ***the communication models in and equal respect sharing towards*** the group members.

How about the negative effects teachers might have on students? Although this often seems to be a taboo-topic, research has been carried out in this field as well.

And research very clearly points to the negative effect of cold socio-emotional environments on students in the classroom, cf. Meyer and Turner 2007: 249: "Our analyses of ambiguous and negative classroom socio-emotional environments were related to student reports of more avoidance behaviour, whereas in supportive classrooms, students reported significantly lower incidences of avoidance behaviours. Consistent, positive emotional scaffolding appears to have helped establish the necessary foundation of trust needed for taking the risks and accepting the responsibility so essential to learning in classrooms".

Thus, positive support is the best support in student achievement, as is confirmed by the authors´ (ibid. 253) reference to a study by Stipek et al 1998, which shows that "affective climate was the best predictor of student motivation and that positive affect was associated with mastery orientation".

Thus, in providing support to students, teachers should remember that also teacher emotions play a crucial role on students´ learning motivation. As stated by Schutz *et al* (2007: 227, emphasis mine):

"As teacher identity and emotions are inevitably related to each other, *teacher identity is often conveyed and expressed through emotions, whether it is unconscious or conscious*".

It is demonstrated that teachers need to constantly monitor themselves as sources for cues of how learning and the learning situation may be perceived, at the same time following the implicit rules for discipline, emotional well-being of the group, and a positive environment in the classroom.

In the same vein, Schutz *et al* (ibid. 231) further point out:

"/…/ within the context of classroom activity settings, teachers are expected to display emotions in particular ways depending on the nature of the events /…/. For example, in most transactions with students, teachers are expected to show pleasant emotions and suppress their unpleasant emotions /…/".

2. Methodological approaches and motivational strategies

Motivation in student-teacher cooperation: teachers´ possibilities

Relying on the importance of teacher support and their ability to create a supportive atmosphere for learning, as demonstrated in some of the recent research briefly summarised above, let us explore some of the possible vistas along which teachers could enhance student motivation.

2.1. Life-coach and learning strategies

It is a generally acknowledged fact that teachers have multiple and important roles in addition to that of disseminating education. As we have outlined above, these include responsibilities for motivation, support, creating a positive framework, positive scaffolding, and creating the positive atmosphere (but also dynamics, etc.) in a group.   However, teachers´ responsibilities, on the "macro-level", do not end with the classroom. In various situations, the teacher is awaited to have an important role in guiding the study process. Often, this may be an even broader role of advising students on how to manage with the learning process as a whole.

Furthermore, teachers can be expected to be able to advise learners on how to combine studies with the other aspects in their lives like training, independent learning and free time. In some schools teachers may have the roles of noticing if additional support of a social worker, or psychologist may be needed for the child.

In the case of teaching grown-ups, also the aspects of how to combine studies, work-life and family life are added. A good balance between personal life and the academic, or learning-related activities can stimulate success (cf. the role of affect above).

2.2. Teacher support in explicitating the learning process and supporting student self-efficacy

On the "micro-level", in providing support in finding this balance, teachers often find themselves sharing some simple "tricks" on how to manage the learning process as well. A fair share of trust and good cooperation can – in our view – be especially justified when we encourage the learners to be in charge of their own deep learning processes. Scaffolding alone may not suffice. As we expect students to be consciously active in the "hands-on" design of their personal, individual learning process, they should also be given the tools for this. This means: students should be explicitly explained about the learning process, the benefits of having a conscious plan and "blue-print" of what they are heading for, the "small tricks" of envisioning the general goals they have as their destination. Also, the importance of scheduling minor sub-goals with a realistic schedule to achieve this, may come in handy.

In addition to the above, the more concrete skills for performing the tasks can be taught out. Although this is very often done in supportive learning contexts, we would suggest that adding the knowledge of some concrete techniques (e.g. mnemo techniques etc.), some easily understood facts and overviews of results from recent research on (language) acquisition and learning etc., can enhance both student motivation and through this their actual ability to apply the techniques. (The lack of these is otherwise often lamented in research on youth motivation).This, ideally, might support them to achieve the ultimate goal faster and with a more clear vision of what they are doing and why. Also research confirms that strategies in envisioning one´s goals support student achievement and are important in backing them up in their learning process. In Boekaert´s words (2007: 40):

"students who can monitor their progress to the goal and who have access to volitional strategies also know how to handle obstacles and frustration en route to the goal in a particular domain of study /…/".

In addition to knowledge of the learning process, implicit and explicit, clear advice and one-to-one based individual consultations can help students in pursuing their goals. Such intensive cooperation will in its turn also give the teacher adequate information on how students are coping with their studies, their possible insecurities and lack of motivation – something which we may not be able to notice in "regular" classroom situations, especially when students have chosen to follow rather performance than mastery goals.

We suggest that students who have been supported in this way not only succeed better at a given task. Much more, they might also get a boost of self-confidence and determination. This may support them in that they can set higher goals for themselves. A solid background in the form of teacher trust and support can work wonders, yielding in better results and student self-esteem not only concerning the concrete subject matter, but as individuals on the whole (cf. Student feedback on such teacher-student cooperation from our earlier research: *"I had a talk with my teacher. She believes in me/ She believes I should take the advanced course")*.

Teacher support increases self-efficacy in students. Self-efficacy supports better learning results. In tune with that, (Reeve 2009: 239) points out:

"Persons with a strong sense of efficacy attend to the demands and challenges of the task, visualize competent scenarios for forthcoming behaviours, and harbour enthusiasm, optimism, and interest. Persons with a weak sense of efficacy, however, dwell on personal deficiencies, visualize the formidable obstacles they face, and harbour pessimism, anxiety, and depression /…/. Once performance begins and things start to go awry, strong self-efficacy beliefs keep anxiety at bay".

In other words, self-efficacy can be seen as an important sub-component of motivation.

Explicitation of knowledge on the learning processes and mechanisms

Explicit sharing of knowledge

In knowing how to succeed, a positive atmosphere, teacher support and clear setting of goals are important. In addition to this, the learners should have some support in learning strategies and knowing how to pace up their work. In other words, simply in knowing how learning works.

Teachers have an important role to play here as well. After all, we didn´t spend all those years at teacher training education just to keep the knowledge to ourselves.
As the new dynamic teacher´s role often entails that they should also be good communicators, also the knowledge on learning processes.

Thus, a passive *knowledge* of the state-of-the art research results of learning mechanisms and the mastery of technologies alone cannot account for a truly rewarding and result-yielding learning process. We suggest that in this myriad of approaches, the teacher´s ability to choose a clear learning and teaching philosophy and strategy to follow, and moreover: also *explicitly vocalise it* for students for negotiating common goals and work process procedures, may play an essential role. Such a thought-through framework will also hopefully help to lay the foundations for trust and true cooperation between the teacher and the students, which is essential for increased motivation and better learning outcomes.

Of course, a good teacher´s role also entails democracy in the classroom and enabling the students to choose.
Even here, a brief discussion on the different ways to learn, what the different students´ personal preferences are, and some advice on how to possibly choose one´s strategy – can be of considerable assistance (and indeed a motivation in itself) for students.

2.3. Learning and teachers´ roles

2.3.1. Teachers´ personal qualities

The increased importance of teacher support has been noticed in different learning contexts. These include e.g. experiential learning - another field that has been seen as important in allowing student motivation to grow, encouraging them to discover their true needs and passion.

Similarly to scientific results quoted above, Beard and Wilson (2009: 48-49) point out that the main roles for the guidance provider in experiential learning include: relationship development, performance enhancement and consultation/intervention.

In order to be able to provide such support in a meaningful way, a good educator *cum* supporter should encompass various characteristics that help enforce the process. Some of these, as listed in Beard and Wilson (2009: 52-53), include:

- "Self-knowledge and maturity
- An understanding of cultural conditioning
- The guts to make mistakes and learn from them
- A psychological and human understanding of others; insight into human interactions
- The ability to ´see through´ situations; the ability to understand the meaning of events
- Tolerance for ambiguity and the ability to work with it
- The ability to frame a problem so that it is workable; the ability to reframe information
- Avoidance of stereotypes
- Holistic thinking, open mindedness, open-endedness, contextual thinking
- Meta-thinking, or the ability to think about thinking and become aware without being aware
- The ability to see relationships among diverse factors; the ability to spot flaws in reasoning; intuition, the ability to synthesize".

As we notice, the qualities mentioned by these authors once again make suggestions on what a well functioning teacher/supporter in a modern educational context might be and behave like. The demands are high, and it is stressed - in tune with many other authors - that "general philosophy, life skills and people skills" are given the upper hand *viz a viz* "pure knowledge" (i.e. just "teaching the subject").

2.3.2. Creating a meaningful learning environment

A good teacher is able to design a meaningful learning environment. As expectations to teachers, students and modern learning continue to change, so do the expectations on the learning environment. Obviously, the so-called "monological" or "static information "feeding" system" (e.g. teacher-led classrooms) alone does not suffice to stimulate and engage a modern learner. In tune with the changes in the educators´ and teachers´ roles, as well as enhanced demands on their personality traits, and communication skills, also the demands on the learning context/ environment, change. The adaptations teachers are expected to make could e.g. follow the advice by Carnell and Lodge (2002: 31). They analyse the modern learning environment. They bring out that learning in such a case is: "

- contextualised – the problem is related to real life;
- first and – the learners have hands-on experience;
- co-operative – the youngsters learn collaboratively to solve the problem;
- self-assessed – the boys review their own learning;
- less structured – the learners are less boundaried by time constraints" (ibid.).

In a similar line, Brophy (2004: 256, emphasis mine) stresses that in order for students to be able to learn from the school curriculum, one should "make sure that your school *curriculum and learning activities are in fact meaningful and worthwhile,* and develop this content and *scaffold your students´ engagement in learning activities* in ways that *enable them to see and appreciate their value*".

3. Practical advice for enhancing student motivation

3.1. Coaching, Feedback and Modelling

In addition to repeating that teacher support and positive attitudes, as well as a meaningful context, are essential for students, also some practical advice on possibilities for enhancing student motivation may come in handy.

Some of these have been outlined by Brophy (2004). He (ibid.: 258, emphasis mine) points out that

"the *motivational optimal match principle /…/ wouldoccur when the domain or activity is familiar enough to be recognizable as a learning opportunity, and attractive enough to interest the learner in pursuing it"*.

The motivational aspects of scaffolding "optimal aspects" for learning, thus, means considerable facilitating cooperation from the teacher. The important building blocks here, in e.g. Brophy´s (ibid.: 268) view, include :

- "modelling – convey reasons why this is worth learning, when and why we use it, and how it looks and feels when we do (verbalize self-monitoring and appreciation of growth in one´s own knowledge, artistry, craftsmanship, etc.)
- Coaching – provide goal reminders and cues to next steps in the process in ways that develop learners´ appreciation for the learning domain and for their own development of domain-specific knowledge and skill
- Feedback – provide feedback that calls learners´ attention to developments in their knowledge or skill, ability to anticipate and prevent problems, or make connections smoothly; signs of artistry or craftsmanship in their work; or unique "signature" elements indicative of their personal style of operating in this domain".

Aspects mentioned above are indeed essential for student motivation. In this, probably, many teachers can do even more - as oftentimes we might be inclined to think that students manage the process of guiding their self-motivation on their own. However, this is not necessarily always so. Students often have a great number of subjects, activities and deadlines in their schedule. The pressure to meet the deadlines can easily guide them to following the achievement goals only. It is here that the teacher´s clear support and modelling of the learning (as well as coaching and feedback), not just for the achievement goals, but also for mastery goals, becomes essential. Here we can also stress the importance and value of deep learning, learning for life, etc.

3.2. Modelling

While coaching and feedback are usually often mentioned in methodological literature, modelling seems to be relatively less bespoken. What is meant by this can be understood when reading e.g. Brophy (2004). An important guideline in how to do this can be the principle "model your own motivation to learn" (ibid.: 270), which in Brophy´s (ibid.) words can be done as follows:

"Model interest in learning throughout all your interactions with your students. This modelling will encourage students to value learning as a rewarding, self-actualizing activity that produces personal satisfaction and enriches their lives. Besides teaching what is in the textbooks, share your interests in current events and items of general knowledge (especially as they relate to the subjects you teach). Call attention to current books, articles, television programmes, or movies on these subjects and to examples or applications in everyday living, in the local environment, or in current events."

It is obvious that this needs from a teacher time and capacity, also courage – in some instances – to step beyond the "safe" textbook-curriculum predefined area. It calls for the will and courage to venture into – what according to some is actually good teaching´s true mission – shaping responsible and all-round educated sensitive and emphatic human beings and responsible and pro-active members of the society. Sometimes it is believed that this is where the teacher profession has room for development, as despite wonderful and brilliant examples of teachers who do possess this courage and skill (as well as principle in their professional *ethos*), there is still a long way to go among many others who still see their main task in more or less mechanic "forwarding of their knowledge". However, even then, the borders of how far to develop seem infinite. Brophy (ibid.: 270-271) reminds us that:

"Modelling means more than just calling your students´ attention to examples or applications of concepts taught in school. It means acting as a model by *sharing your thinking* about such examples or applications – showing your students how educated people use information and concepts learned in school to understand and respond to experiences in their lives and to news about events occurring elsewhere. /…/ modelling may be subtle or indirect, but if it is displayed consistently it will have cumulative effects on your students´ attitudes and beliefs."

In appreciating cooperation from students in showing their motivation and interest, Brophy (ibid.) further points out that their questions should be respected and answered in ways which encourages them to ask even further, and praises their innovativeness. Further tips for teachers include: "if you treat students as if they already are eager learners, they will be" (ibid. 272).

3.4. Frymier and Shulman´s 12strategies for teachers

Frymier and Shulman (1995 In Brophy 2004: 284) "identified 12 strategies that teachers might use to help students appreciate the relevance or value of their learning. They asked students to rate how frequently their teachers performed each of the following behaviors:

- *uses examples to make the content relevant to me;*
- *provides explanations that demonstrate the importance of the content*
- *explicitly states how the material relates to my career goals or my life in general*
- *links content to other areas of content*
- *asks me to apply content to my own interests*
- *gives assignments that involve the application of the content to my career interests*
- *helps me to understand the importance of the content(italics in all previous bullet pointsmine KM)*
- uses own experiences to introduce or demonstrate a concept
- uses student experiences to demonstrate or introduce a concept
- uses discussion to help me understand the relevance of the topic
- uses current events to apply a topic.

Several studies indicated that students reported greater motivation to study for classes in which their teachers used more of these strategies (Frymier 2002)". Relevance can be increased by embedding the new content in the wider context, eliciting prior knowledge (ibid 285); task-related thinking and problem-solving, story-telling, etc. Similarly, Brophy (2004: 296) invites us to "induce metacognitive awareness and control of learning strategies", thus giving rise to self-regulated learning. Finally he (ibid.299; italics mine) makes the case that

"/…/ from a motivational stand-point, the most desirable classroom activities are those that make it possible for students to *accomplish the teacher´s instructional goals while at the same time accomplishing many of their personal and social goals.* This provides some motivational insurance against the possibility that no relevant goal will be activated".

It is also pointed out (ibid. 300; italics mine) that it is important to "*avoid practices that distract students from learning goals to performance goals*". He further (ibid.) identifies that "two strategies for shaping students´ expectations about learning are *being enthusiastic (regularly) and being intense (selectively).*

5. *Empirical results*

II The Empirical part: our study and results

Students feedback and analysis of their learning process

Motivation and student feedback

Above we have reviewed some theories on motivation and learning. But how do students themselves evaluate what´s important for their learning and motivation? To find out, I invited students to discuss on the topic of student based-teacher based learning. In relation to this, we intended to get a glimpse of their understanding of the learning process and the importance of motivation for them. The implicit questions included*: "Does student-centred vs teacher-centred teaching have a role in influencing student motivation? How important is intrinsic motivation in student centred learning and do they appreciate it?"* To illustrate the answers, I am going to present some excerpts from student feedback.

Methodology

The methodological framework is ethnographic research. Qualitative inputs are patterned and quantified. We use the method of on-line discussion, where students write their opinion into the e-learning environment Forum. The e-learning platform is Moodle. Students are familiar with the process, as we use this way of discussion also for other topics during the course.

We presented the questions on motivation and student- *vs.* teacher focused learning to our two groups of English Advanced students during the academic year 2015/16. To initiate a discussion, the students read through a short text on modern learning. After reading the article, all students were encouraged to enter their views on the topic in our common e-learning environment (Moodle Discussion). This is a standard procedure during our e-learning block of learning. Thus, the procedure itself was a rather routine one, students feel comfortable concerning the task itself (as there are several texts and topics we discuss in the same fashion).

The procedure is, that after reading the article, students enter their comments on the topic in the Forum. Altogether 36 students responded, and their task was to analyse their preferred learning pattern concerning student-centred and teacher-centred learning. They also analysed this *viz a viz* what they experience in their current university (Tartu university) and what they have experienced earlier – i.e. during their high-school studies and at other universities. This is the basis for our empirical results on the student views on the issue. Students have been numbered from 1-36 based on the number of entering their point in the on-line group-discussion. The abbreviation "S" stands for "student". Thus, "S1" means "Student 1", "S32" "Student 32", etc.

Students were informed about the fact that we are interested in their views on this discussion, and that their answers and data will be used for research. They also gave their consent and support for this. Their quotes are given verbatim (and without editing) to illustrate the results.

In addition to the on-line discussion and its results, we also had three focus group interviews with the students: in the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the course. We also had   individual feedback and study process analysis sessions with individual students at the end of the course. The focus group interviews and individual interviews consolidated the results. They were thus used as a reference point for "gauging the self-evaluation process" of students, confirmatory to the current research results, but due to space constraints, have not been included in this paper.

Results

Overview and illustration

The analysis of our 36 students´ entries in the on-line discussion environment gives the following results:

1. In general, the balance between **student-centred and teacher-centred learning process** is seen to be important by the majority of students. 30 out of our 36 respondents mention it as favourable. Excerpts from student on-line discussions to illustrate this view include:

S1: I would prefer a mixed one meaning a balance of student-centred learning and teacher-centred learning. On the one hand it is a good idea to put a schoolchild/student in the centre where he/she can decide what he/she will learn, how he/she will learn, and how he/she will assess their own learning. On the other hand it can be very abusive from schoolchildren/students applying these rules. Thus, I agree that it is sometimes good to have a section that is pre-planned to order the learning process and some limits to the student-centred learning should be set.

S2: Well, I strongly believe that student-centred learning is much more effective and interesting than old notion of classroom, where students were just sitting quietly and neatly in their seats, while the teacher was up front pouring wisdom and knowledge into their brains. Student-centred approach develops autonomy and independence by putting responsibility in our hands. Apart from getting education in more efficient way, student-centred learning helps us to develop many practical skills, which are necessary in our everyday life – being independent, confident, responsible, able to control your time, plan your schedule, etc. But I agree with Artem and prefer some kind of amixed approach. I don't think we should throw away every aspect of teacher-centred learning. It is better to have a pre-planned section very often. There are courses, which include a huge amount of reading materials and you need right direction and advice, which of them are most important. Professors can help you with their experience and knowledge. Also, it would be quite confusing and disorganized if every student could choose only what they wanted to learn.

S6: I would also agree with the majority opinion with regard to mixed approach in higher education. If it was only self-management and self-studying, why would we need universities at all? Just to give us costly papers which are called "diplomas"? Self-learners do not seem to need them. I believe that we are going to universities for a such that we are not professionals in all the subjects we are going to study, we need people who are indeed professionals to give us guidance and correct our mistakes within the process. That is the function of each university which creates big part of its economic and social value.

S7: Student-centred learning is more interesting, but we still need teacher-centred learning too. Teacher directs all classroom activities, so they don't have to worry that students will miss an important topic. Also when students work alone, they don't learn to collaborate with other students, and communication skills may suffer. I agree that it is best to use a combination of approaches.

S9: Students graduating from high school is familiar with teacher-centred teaching method because it is how they were taught throughout their schooling. They are unused to get involve in the lectures, to find their own reading materials besides provided textbooks and to discuss in a group. Technically, the teacher-centred system exacerbate students' impetus to learn new themselves. They stay passive and expect for knowledge to be filled with.

Fortunately enough, there is a tendency of shift in teaching method from teacher-centred to student-centred. Students are now aware of what they want to study and how to plan their study schedule. Their autonomy has been estimated and raised properly.

However, students might not adapt to the new method immediately. They feel lost in making decision when they have no clues how to choose proper subjects to study. It is when the role of teachers has been addressed. Teachers should be the one who guide and instruct students through their study, yet not to nurture with ready-to-serve knowledge. Teachers will give feedback on how good students have worked and what could be improved.

2. **Only student-centred learning** is explicitly favoured by four participants. The examples include e.g.:

S11: In common with the most of you I strongly believe that student-centred learning is the best alternative to form responsible, independent and confident humans.

Luckily this is more often the norm than the exception in University and the future tendency in primary-, middle-, and high school. The very fact, that the progressive educational movement consider 100 years ago, that the assignment of a teacher/professor is to go along with the student, not to educate him/her, make it clearly recognizable!

S16: I agree that student-centred learning is definitely more effective and students should take control of their learning process to become more independent. In elementary school it is inevitable that teachers have to keep more eye on their pupils, but at the same time it is also important to introduce them step-by-step individual learning skills. But in high school and university most of the learning should be done individually in order to avoid the "spoon-fed" students crisis to occur.

3. **The importance of skilful guidance by teachers** is clearly expressed in several cases:

S 35:Nevertheless, although student-centred learning is the very model of a learning process, I am of the view that better learning outcomes can be achieved if student-centred learning is complemented with teacher-centred learning. The teacher's role is essential in a study plan, not to spoon-fed students but to support them and guide their self-regulated learning to make sure that individuals are flourishing.

4. There were also students who explicitly stated that **the existence of teacher-support is necessary** for them:
S24: Student-centred learning is more interesting than teacher-centred, but if we have only student-centred learning, there will be problems. For example, when students work alone, they do not developing their communications skills. The students may become lazy and may be they don't feel the importance of learning. Teacher directs all the activities that the students have to do, helps students and give them feedback. The students don't miss any particular topic.

S34: I think, especially after reading this text, that for me it is easier if everything has been done for me. Although I like making my own systems, I usually don't get to do them, because of the lack of time I have. On the other hand, I don't want to be totally spoon-fed, because I love to practice the things I have learned to make them comfortable to use and to feel like they are my own. So the best for me would be to have some part of the learning process pre-planned, so I could fill the other part as I want and feel I should be doing this.

5. Even when the **teacher-centred approach** is favoured, some students still add they **would not like to give up their independence**:

S16: I agree that student-centred learning is definitely more effective and students should take control of their learning process to become more independent. In elementary school it is inevitable that teachers have to keep more eye on their pupils, but at the same time it is also important to introduce them step-by-step individual learning skills. But in high school and university most of the learning should be done individually in order to avoid the "spoon-fed" students crisis to occur.

Luckily, I feel that the Estonian education system is student-centred and students are closely involved in the learning process.
I personally even prefer when I can plan my time independently and design my learning process

S23: Young adults need to plan their time and set personal goals. I think that if everything is pre-planned for them, they can't really deal with the pressure once they have to step „into the real world".

6. The majority of the students participating in the study, however, also stressed the **importance and relevance of student responsibility**, cf.:

S3: As most of you, I think that even though student-centred learning could be quite enriching, it's necessary to combine it. If you have everything pre-planned, how are you going to survive after university? Who's going to guide you? It's important to be independent, improve your creativity and most of all, gain responsibility as soon as possible.

S5: I found idea of self-education very inspiring and efficient for students. It is an excellent way to gain responsibility and to get used to adult world. Spoon-fed students can face some difficulties in real world after graduating university, even despite of their good results. This kind of people can suffer from lack of creativity and are not able to think out of frames. But those qualities are what employers want to see in specialists and what are needed for successful entrepreneurship. A particular attitude towards knowledge *gives wish to continue study and is a perfect start for life-long learning.

S7: /.../ It is easier to achieve your goals when you can yourself design your learning process and materials. You put your time and effort in it, so you do it more efficient and you have better results./.../ "Spoon-fed" students don't have their own opinion, have a lack of imagination. They also cannot bring their examples. They believe everything the teacher says. Students should be allowed to express their own opinion and most important - have their own opinion!

7. **A clear connection between motivation, and the teachers´ responsibility to motivate**, is expressed:

S32: I just want to add that if you really want the going to school, attending the courses kind of education to work, it is very important how you deliver the knowledge to students. Often teachers do not know how to teach. Because as a teacher, you are also an entertainer, speaker, actor. Looking at you teaching must take all my focus and must be fun. Therefore even if some teachers are very good in their field of knowledge, it is no use if their are boring and not appealing. And more important then presenting particular information, I like better when teacher creates a curiosity and motivates me. And then let me find the most proper materials, and the best way for me how to get my head around the topic.

What I mean is for example, when Jacque Fresco was teaching his son how to read, he would read him every evening very good book. One night he was like .... "and then in the final moment ... " You know what son I don't really feel like reading it anymore, good night. If you want to know what happened learn how to read. And soon after this his son started to learn how to read by himself because he wanted to. Teacher should learn how to motivate students.

8. **Ideal teacher role**. Student expectations of teachers are high, and the **ideal teacher involvement** is described in a couple of cases:

S23: But also I think that teachers are still very important for an effective studying process. I believe that nowadays teacher role has changed more into a tutor role – they show students a direction for moving forward. They are more like guides in this supersaturated modern world, where it is really hard to orientate in the information field.

To sum up, 4 of 36 students explicitly favoured student-centred teaching, 4 teacher-centred and 28 obtained a "middle stance", stating there should be a good teacher planned and run framework, yet students individuality and freedom should be respected. Views on teacher-student cooperation include student responsibility, integrity. Importantly, also the need for the teachers to provide a clear framework and support, motivate and inspire, was mentioned.

The well-balanced student-teacher cooperation thus, clearly gained the upper hand among all the opinions given and – at least based on this sample – seems to be the one to be followed in cooperation with students, in order to encourage and motivate them best.

Discussion

In this paper we have taken a look at some recent theorists´ views on motivation. We reviewed some of the recent literature concerning the aspects of conscious or unconscious motivation, achievement goals or mastery goals, and motivation and affect and emotions. The importance of the student-teacher roles, teacher modelling, support and creating a positive atmosphere was mentioned.

In the empirical part we gave an overview of the pilot-study of a student e-environment based discussion on whether students favour the student-centred or teacher-centred learning-teaching model, and if and what kind of connection this may have to motivation.

The majority of students favoured the "balanced view" with both student and teacher centred approaches combined. Typically, students emphasise they need a well thought through course structure and lesson-plan, which accommodates students´ interest- and career-focused choices. These they wish to envision and follow the course goals themselves. The process of learning, the *why we do it*, as well as the more general goals in life become all the more important for students, and their role entails learning to take this responsibility, as well as to learn to cooperate with teachers, seeing them as partners on this way.

A great proportion of students (30 out of 36) stated that they highly valued the possibility to take responsibility and participate in the part allowing them to design the course goals, aims, and materials. This attitude in the sample group consolidates the understanding that modern students need to be seen as equal partners in the learning design. They are willing to and capable of taking the responsibility. They see this opportunity as an integral part of a good quality course-design and teaching.The empirical part of the paper illustrates that students in the sample studied indeed*do* appreciate the individualisation and participation in course build-up and practice. They state they appreciate if there is a good balance in a pre-prepared course framework and the assignments they are allowed to designed based on their own career needs and wishes. Thus, we can conclude that student-centred learning and teaching is essential for students. The aspects of motivation mentioned in the literature review are of considerable importance for knowing how to better accommodate for this. Motivation, student-centred learning and teaching form an important triangle where finding the right balance supports students and teachers alike.

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