
The Opportunity of Motivation in Grammar Lessons

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Abstract: In the article were analyzed the opportunity of motivation in teaching grammar of German language.

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Many learners find it difficult to motivate themselves for the usual tasks in foreign language lessons. This is particularly difficult for younger learners when activities and assignments are presented under the keyword "grammar". On the other hand, there is a broad consensus among learners and teachers that grammar and grammar practice are important for learning a foreign language. Again and again we meet "highly motivated" learners who have learned foreign languages well and with the help of grammar and grammar exercises.

Dealing with grammar in foreign language lessons certainly has aspects that many teachers and learners experience as motivating will. In foreign language teaching, many teaching and learning goals are difficult to "operationalise". When we train skills in class, it is often difficult to define exactly which partial learning goals can now be achieved with the help of a specific task. Grammar can bring order to the "chaos" of foreign language teaching and suggests that it is possible to break down foreign language learning into manageable sub-steps. Important elements of grammar lessons, such as the systematic presentation of the subject matter, clearly defined partial learning objectives, the associated reduction in complexity and the intensive repetition and practice of selected language structures, seem to have a motivating effect on some learners.

We should not lose sight of these "proven" motivating factors when we try to use additional potential motivating factors for grammar teaching in the following. Because motivation, as explained in the introductory article by Gudula List, is a very

complex and individual phenomenon, these factors shall be modestly referred to here as "motivational opportunities".

Increasing the attractiveness of the task: The fundamental decision to learn a foreign language is often made quickly. For many learners, however, this decision does not provide a sufficient basis for motivation to experience specific tasks in specific teaching situations as significant and subsequently as motivating. This is often not the case when the focus of the lesson is on practicing formal aspects of the language and not on message-related communication.

In order to ensure that learners deal intensively and with motivation with the linguistic phenomena to be practiced, it is necessary to make tasks in grammar lessons appear "more significant" for the learner. There are different possibilities for this.

Motivation opportunity: game formats

The attention and concentration of many learners when repeatedly practicing a structure is often greater if this is done in the context of a "game" (= it gives clear rules and winners) happens. With the help of the following game format, e.g. B. Practice adjective declension.

Adjective exercise

Teacher writes on the blackboard nouns with adjective attributes that he associates with a certain topic. (e.g.: hard work, hard-earned money, dangerous drugs, an enthusiastic audience, a short career, a sadistic coach, etc.) Learners try to guess the subject. (Solution: elite sport). Then, in groups of three, the learners collect as many nouns with adjective attributes as possible on a given topic (possible topics: cinema, flying, water, seeing, family, etc.). The groups present their associations and their peers try to guess the topic given to the group. The group that can come up with the most words without guessing their subject wins.

In addition to guessing games, there are a variety of other game formats that allow you to practice grammatical structures. (FREMDSPRACHE DEUTSCH issue 25 "Play - Think - Act" shows a variety of examples).

However, when using "game formats" in the classroom, we should make sure (1) that the structures relevant to the learners are actually used repeatedly, i.e. that they are practiced, (2) that the level of difficulty of the task is appropriate and (3) that meaningful individual feedback can be given. It also helps many learners, especially adult learners, if (4) the goals of the activity are also expressed in language

respect to be made explicit. However, if we, as teachers, exaggerate interventions in this area, the motivating game character of the activities can be lost. On the other hand, game formats can be intimidating and demotivating for learners who experience competitive comparison with others as a threat. Playing competitive games between groups can often only partially compensate for this effect.

Opportunity for motivation: arousing curiosity through unusual forms of perception Especially in the area of grammar, learners need to pay attention to linguistic details and to perceive these details. A stabilized perception of these linguistic details subsequently leads to "language attention", one of the key terms in the grammar discussion in recent years (cf. e.g. Doughty and Williams, 1998). In order to be able to intensively perceive relevant linguistic phenomena, learners need (1) appropriate linguistic input that is not too extensive, (2) time to process the input and (3) motivation to deal intensively with linguistic details.

This motivation can often be aroused with the help of presentation techniques that lead learners to perceive language in ways that are sometimes unfamiliar to them.

The following two activities meet these criteria and, based on experience, are good for making learners aware of certain grammar structures. They can be applied to a wide variety of grammatical phenomena.

Activity 1: Comparing adjectives

Teacher writes the basic level of various adjectives on strips of paper. The learners work in pairs. Learner A turns to the wall, learner B looks at the teacher. The teacher shows the first adjective, learner B writes the comparative form of the adjective with their finger on learner A's back, one letter at a time. Learner A writes the superlative form on a piece of paper. After five adjectives, the results are compared. The learners swap roles and five more adjectives are presented.

Activity 2: Participles

Infinitives of verbs that have recently been learned and are to be practiced are collected on a slide. The teacher forms the participle II of the verbs only with the mouth, without voice. The learners write down the participle II. After five verbs, the results are compared.

Opportunity for motivation: tasks that are personally relevant for the learner Experience has shown that learners react to tasks in the classroom in a particularly motivated manner when personal information, personal opinions, experiences are exchanged. Most of the exercises and tasks in the textbooks and exercise books pay little attention to this aspect. Dealing with textbook characters and their unoriginal everyday activities (Robert calling his girlfriend, Ulla taking her children to school, etc.) usually takes up so much lesson time that the learners hardly have time to talk about their own experiences and adventures to report.

Even in a communicatively oriented lesson, there is a risk of the learner becoming “alienated” from the teacher, from the teaching materials and from themselves as the learner (Stevick, 1996).

The attempt to create communication situations in the classroom in which authentic, personal information is exchanged can counteract this. The following three examples are intended to suggest the many ways in which classroom activities can be made more personally relevant to the learner, whereby the language used (idioms, vocabulary, structures, etc.) becomes more significant for the learner.

Opportunity for motivation: giving options, offering structure, letting it be filled with meaning Lessons that are based on the specifications of textbooks and exercise books often leave the learner little opportunity to make their own decisions, to control and influence their own learning process. Especially in the area of grammar, tasks specify in detail what the learner has to do and how. Some learners feel comfortable in the security of well-organized lessons. However, many learners would see it as a motivating challenge to be able to leave the sometimes all too perfectly organized "travel group".

Again, for the teacher it is a matter of finding the right balance between clear guidelines that give the learners security and activities that help where learners make their own decisions. The possibility of being able to make decisions for oneself is probably experienced as more motivating the better learners are prepared for it. The preparation should take place in terms of language (provision of the necessary means of speech, clear instructions in the form of examples or a model) but also and above all in terms of learning strategy.

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