MOTIVATION, STYLES AND STRATEGIES

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(A Study to find out Learner's Motivation, Styles and Learning strategies) University of Essex

Abstract:
Throughout the history of foreign languages teaching has been observed using different methods and approaches, role of teachers and students, researches and results in acquiring a second language. Those factors have contributed to improve student's learning process. Nowadays adopting or opt more for a communicative approach which develops the use of language through meaningful and relevant tasks for the student. It is also important to take into account or consider other critical factors such as knowledge or to know that students have their own type of motivation, style and learning strategies. According to Tobias (1994): ' *Each of us perceives the world differently, in a unique way, consistent with our own style shaped by multiple factors, and that leads us to have our own preferences and skills, as well as our own weaknesses and deficiencies* '.

Key Words: Motivation, Styles , Strategies, Learning

Introduction:
1. **A Study to find out learner's motivation, styles and learning strategies in a teaching Spanish classroom.**
   The study objectives are:
   a) To discover what kind of motivation and learning styles students use.
   b) To create awareness in them to the importance of knowing different learning styles.
   c) To help students reflect on their own learning process.

2. Context Of The Study
The study was carried out to a group doing LA421-LA422 Intensive Initial Spanish Programme at Modern Languages; Language & Linguistics Department, University of Essex.UK. There were 28 students taking the Spanish programme mentioned above, they were undergraduate students. The lessons were 2 hours 3 days a week and because of being a large number of students they were split into groups. Group A has 16 students and Group B has 12, on Thursdays both groups are taught together, (28 students). The students' age are from 18 years old to 37 years old, and there was a wide range of nationalities including Polish, Rumanian, British, Cypriot, Lithuanian and Russian, as well as students from the UK. (See appendix III).

3. What Motivation Means
3.1 Motivation
Lightbown and N. Spada stated (2006) : '*Motivation in Second Language Acquisition could be defined in terms of two factors : On the one hand, learner's communicative needs, and on the other hand, their attitudes towards the second language community*'. So, to a higher motivation the best result a student will gain in his learning process. Another opinion about what motivation means: effort, desire, and attitude towards learning a foreign language
(Dörnyei,2005). After working three years at Modern Languages in the Language and Linguistics Department, University of Essex, I have observed that students are highly motivated to learn Spanish. From my point of view if the students are motivated I should contribute to maintain that individual factor, motivation.

3.2 Types Of Motivation

According to Robert Gardner and Wallace Lamber as cited in 'How Languages are learned' (OUP 2006) mentioned two types of Motivation: Instrumental Motivation (language learning for more immediate or practical goal) and Integrative Motivation (language learning for personal growth and cultural enrichment). Besides the most common and simple kinds of motivation are Extrinsic, Intrinsic, Travel and Xenophile Motivation. Extrinsic motivation is when the interest comes from our parents, someone else or something else to motivate students to learn a second language. Intrinsic motivation stands for learner's own motivation in learning a L2, their attitude is more positive, they have an inner interest and because of that

Learners tend to have a better result in their linguistic competence. A Travel motivation means students are interested in learning a foreign language for travelling for pleasure to places where the L2 is spoken officially. And the final type of motivation, Xenophile is when students are keen on learning another language to be able to communicate with overseas people.

4. Styles And Learning Strategies
4.1   Styles

According to Tobias,C.U. *The way they learn. How to discover and teach to your child's strengths* (1994):'*Each of us perceives the world differently, in a unique way, according to our own style shaped by multiple factors, and that leads us to have our own preferences and skills, as well as our own weaknesses and deficiencies'*. Taking into account Tobias definition I propose to use appropriate learning strategies to facilitate the success of the acquisition of a foreign language (Spanish).

The above statement and my own interest in guiding students to be successful in their L2 learning process made me to do research about 'Motivation, Learning Styles and Strategies' on a Spanish course, in the hope that my research findings might be of value to Teachers and help them to successfully educate students in learning   a foreign language (Spanish).

4.2 Types Of Learning Styles

According to the learning style model, students tend to use or prefer particular learning strategies since everyone is unique and has their own combination of learning preferences. Rod ellis (1985:114) defines 'cognitive style' as: *'cognitive style is a term used to refer to the manner in which people perceive, conceptualize, organise and recall information. Each person is considered to have a more or less consistent mode of cognitive functioning'*. What it is understood in a general overview that 'cognitive style' is the form a student sees, perceives, monitors, stores and remember linguistics information. However, how to find out students' styles, what to do after recognizing learners' styles and how to include styles while teaching a foreign language. Those are the questions i made myself and made me think about the research i carried out.

The study was based on j.c. richards y ch. Lockhart's learning styles (1998:60-61): '*concrete, analytical, communicative and authoritarian learning style',* the reason for choosing their classification it was the most simple and easy to apply for a large sized group of participants,28 . It was found from the study that if a participant knows his/her style, s/he would prefer certain learning strategies over others, in their studies. The task of both the teacher and the learner, particularly if they are aware of individual learning styles, is to develop ways integrating appropriate   styles and learning strategies into the classroom. I could integrate those styles through questionnaires and letting know students what their styles are and how this individual factor influences in their role.

4.3 Strategies

The current advocated teaching methodology is based on the principles of student-centred Learning. Research in foreign languages learning classrooms have shown that students learn less effectively when the teaching methods used are teacher centred stated at *Teaching Methods* (2006) FUNIBER Organization. As a consequence, second language teaching is now more focused on learner's learning process 'on the How and What they learn' in a L2 class. Students are guided to take a more active role on their learning process. Active participation is encouraged by the teacher, who

manages the learning process that uses learning strategies that engage the learner directly in learning the language.

The hope is that students reflect and learn about their own performance and are guided to self-autonomy, learn to learn, and become the centre of their own learning.

Considering learning strategies as tools to facilitate student's learning process made me read and research more on that topic. First, to know what 'learning strategies' mean, general overview of them, characteristics and classification of them according to writers/researchers and how to develop them in a foreign language classroom (spanish). And what i plan to investigate is 'how to develop learning styles and strategies in a spanish course' considering the following issues: learners' context, methodology, sex, age, culture, motivation, styles and learning strategies. What i expect to research or find out is to know what are the most common learning strategies used by learners of spanish as a foreign language so i would propose those ones to be included in any course because if teachers know learner's styles and strategies could facilitate student's success in learning a second language.

4.4 Types Of Learning Strategies

In recent decades in the field of cognitive psychology studies have been done on the type of learning strategies that students use most often when learning or studying a language. The research findings have been used to improve students' learn. *Learning Strategies* (2006) FUNIBER Organization,Spain. Specific research interests look at:

- What the student does.
- The processes student uses while learning.
- The strategies students adopt in developing these processes.

The most common groups of strategies have been classified by Richards.J.C, and Lockhart,Ch (1998) and Oxford,R. (1990) as being Cognitive, Metacognitive, Memory, Compensation, Social, Affective and Communicative (see appendix IV) for their definition.

To know how and what students do while learning Spanish will give me more choices to improve my teaching role like designing materials in which they could learn in an easier and more motivated form. I could prepare more student-centred activities in which they could get more involved, be more reflective and reflexive, be autonomous and guide them from Dependency learning to Independency learning and I would plan a variety of tasks to develop a variety of strategies according to the research results. For example if students tend to use more affective and metacognitive strategies, I would prepare and design material to develop those strategies mentioned before. Also, I would tell students what kind of motivation they have and what kind of strategies they use most and why they are important in their learning process. I would emphasise that a wider variety they have a better results they will have in their learning process in Spanish or any foreign language they study.

5. Methodology
5.1 Data Collection

Permission was asked to Gladis Garcia, teacher of the LA4221-LA4222 to apply the Instrument on Thursday because it is when the whole group is together (see appendix V). The Total Questionnaires applied were 21 from 28.

The first questionnaire was called 'Finding my Styles of Learning' divided into two Sections, the first one refers to learner's motivation and the following chart shows the statements and the kind of motivation for each item.

Table 1 Reasons for students to learn Spanish

Section I

a. To travel into a Spanish speaking country	Instrumental Motivation
b. To know about the culture of a Spanish speaking country	Integral Motivation
c. I could get a better job if I speak Spanish	Instrumental Motivation
d. I will study a postgraduate degree in a Spanish speaking university	Instrumental Motivation
e. Because it's my own interest	Integral Motivation
f. Because I'd like to meet and talk to Spanish speaker people.	Integral Motivation

Section II

In this second section there were 24 items which allow knowing students' predominant learning styles. There are four styles based on J.C. Richards y Ch. Lockhart (1998) each style is grouped by six statements (see appendix VI) and a frequency value was given to know which style was the predominant. The styles are: Concrete, Analytical, Communicative and Authoritarian.

The second instrument is named: 'My Learning Strategies'. It is a questionnaire compound of 42 items grouped on a classification of six strategies and a frequency value was given to know which group they prefer: Cognitive, Metacognitive, Social, Affective, Memory and Compensation (see appendix VII).

After describing the general overview of the group studied and given details about the instruments used to carry out the research 'LEARNER'S MOTIVATION, STYLES AND LEARNING STRATEGIES IN A TEACHING SPANISH CLASSROOM' analysis and results will be described on the following section

5.2   Data And Results Analysis

a) DESCRIBING STUDENTS' MOTIVATION

Analysing the first section from Questionnaire I, it is found that students show the following kinds of motivation while learning Spanish choosing number 1 as the most important to 6 the least important for them (see appendix VIII).

Student		Kinds of motivation				
S1	2	4	5	6	1	6
S2	1	4	6	5	3	2
S3	3	2	4	6	1	5
S4	3	4	5	1	6	2
S5	1	2	5	6	3	4
S6	2	3	4	1	5	6
S7	3	5	4	6	1	2
S8	2	3	1	6	4	5
S9	2	5	1	6	3	4
S10	2	3	4	6	1	5
S11	6	4	3	1	2	5
S12	3	4	5	6	1	2
S13	2	5	1	6	3	4
S14	3	2	5	6	1	4

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	a	b	c	d	e	f
S15	2	4	3	6	1	5
S16	3	5	2	6	4	1
S17	1	1	3	4	2	1
S18	5	5	6	1	4	3
S19	5	4	6	2	6	5
S20	2	3	1	6	4	5
S21	2	3	6	5	1	4

a. Instrumental Motivation
b. Integral Motivation
c. Instrumental Motivation
d. Instrumental Motivation
e. Integral Motivation
f. Integral Motivation

Choices of kinds of motivation while studying Spanish (1-6)

Choice number 1, as the most important reason to learn Spanish:

Three students chose as their most important motivation or interest to learn Spanish the option **a** and the kind of motivation is Instrumental, they are interested in learning the language for travelling reasons and be able to communicate in Spanish speaking countries.

Just one student selected **b** as his/her most important reason to learn Spanish, and belongs to the Integral style, it is his/her interest to know about cultural facts from Spanish speaking countries.

Four learners pointed out choice **c** as the most important for them, this means learn Spanish to get a better job opportunity if they speak it and the kind of motivation is Instrumental.

Four students chose **d** as the main reason to learn Spanish, they are interested in studying a postgraduate degree in a Spanish speaking university, and the type of motivation is Instrumental.

Eight people selected **e** as their most important choice, 'it is their own interest to learn Spanish' and the kind of motivation is Integral.

Two learners showed **f** as the most important interest to learn Spanish, they would like to meet and talk to Spanish native speakers, and the type of motivation is Instrumental.

Choice number 2:

Nine students had an Instrumental motivation because they chose **a** as being interested in learning the language to travel into a Spanish speaking country.

Three students showed having an Instrumental type of motivation while selecting **b,** they are keen on learning Spanish to know about the culture of Spanish speaking countries.

One person chose **c** as a second option, S/He might get a better job if S/He speaks Spanish. Another person pointed out **d** as S/He might study a postgraduate degree in a Spanish speaking country.

Two learners selected **e** because it is their own interest to learn Spanish.

Four learners chose **f** as a second option because they would like to meet and speak to native Spanish people.

Choice number 3:

It has been observed that six students selected **a** statement as their third choice; they are interested in travelling to Spanish speaking countries.

Five learners are keen on knowing about cultural issues on Spanish speaking countries, **b** choice.

Three people are showing as their third choice to learn Spanish because they could get a better job if they speak Spanish, **c** statement.

Nobody chose **d** as their third option.

Four students showed **e** as their third choice to learn Spanish, it is their own interest.

One person chose **f,** S/He would like to meet and talk to Spanish speaker people

Choice number 4:
Nobody chose **a** as a fourth choice to learn Spanish.

Seven students selected **b** as an option to learn Spanish in fourth place, to know about the culture of a Spanish speaking country.

Four people showed **c** as their fourth choice, learning Spanish to get a better job.

Just one student chose **d** as his/her fourth option, studying a postgraduate degree in a Spanish speaking country.

Three people selected **e** as fourth option, being their own interest to learn Spanish.
Five learners pointed out **f** as fourth choice to learn Spanish to meet and practice with native speakers.

Choice number 5:
Two students selected **a** as less important to learn Spanish, for travelling to a Spanish speaking country.

Five learners showed **b,** knowing about the culture of a Spanish speaking country.

Five people chose **c** as a fifth choice, to get a better job if they speak Spanish.

Two students have shown less interest on learning Spanish to study it for getting a postgraduate degree in a Spanish speaking country, **d** choice

Just one person showed **e** option to learn Spanish; it is his/her own interest.

Seven learners pointed out **f** choice to learn Spanish because they would like to meet and talk to Spanish native speakers.

Choice number 6, as the least important to learn Spanish:
One student showed **a** as the least important statement to learn Spanish, to travel into a Spanish speaking country.

Nobody chose **b**,to know about the culture of a Spanish speaking country.

Four people have selected **c** as the least interesting for them to learn Spanish, getting a better job if the speak Spanish.

Thirteen students pointed out **d,** to study a postgraduate degree in a Spanish speaking country, as the least important issue to learn Spanish.

Two people chose **e**, because it is not their own interest to learn Spanish.

Two learners selected **f** as the least choice to learn Spanish, they would not like to meet and talk to Spanish speaker people.

After analysing students' kind of motivation, it is shown that the most predominant motivation is the Integral one, eight from twenty one students have chosen **e** choice**,** and they are motivated to learn Spanish because it is their own interest. They are self motivated to cope with their learning goals. Although as a second important choice is to travel into a Spanish speaking country, belonging to the Instrumental motivation. To sum up students have a mixture of both motivation, Integral-Instrumental. After knowing how motivated the group is, it helps me to develop or plan activities to raise or maintain their high interest in learning Spanish, I could use the Problem Based Learning method which fulfils the profile of the Higher Education student in UK, being more active, reflective, reflexive, creative and autonomous, and getting involved in their own learning process.

5.2   DATA AND RESULTS ANALYSIS
b) DESCRIBING STUDENTS' LEARNING STYLES
On the second section of Questionnaire I, students chose the situations they prefer to learn Spanish. There are 24 items grouped in a set of six statements to give four styles: Concrete, Analytical, Communicative and Authoritarian (see appendix VIII). The result of the analysis on students' learning style is shown on the below chart:

STUDENT	PREDOMINANT STYLE	LESS PREDOMINANT STYLE
S1	COMMUNICATIVE	AUTHORITARIAN
S2	ANALYTICAL	AUTHORITARIAN
S3	CONCRETE	AUTHORITARIAN
S4	CONCRETE/COMMUNICATIVE	AUTHORITARIAN
S5	CONCRETE	AUTHORITARIAN/ANALYTICAL
S6	CONCRETE/ANALYTICAL	COMMUNICATIVE/ AUTHORITARIAN
S7	AUTHORITARIAN	CONCRETE
S8	ANALYITICAL/COMMUNICATIVE	CONCRETE
S9	CONCRETE	AUTHORITARIAN
S10	ANALYITICAL/COMMUNICATIVE CONCRETE/AUTHORITARIAN	
S11	COMMUNICATIVE	ANALYTICAL/AUTHORITARIAN
S12	ANALYTICAL	CONCRETE/COMMUNICATIVE
S13	ANALYTICAL	AUTHORITARIAN
S14	CONCRETE	AUTHORITARIAN
S15	CONCRETE/ANALYTICAL	COMMUNICATIVE/ AUTHORITARIAN
S16	COMMUNICATIVE	AUTHORITARIAN
S17	COMMUNICATIVE	AUTHORITARIAN
S18	AUTHORITARIAN	COMMUNICATIVE
S19	ANALYTICAL	COMMUNICATIVE
S20	COMMUNICATIVE	AUTHORITARIAN
S21	CONCRETE	AUTHORITARIAN

Students' predominant learning styles

Five learners have the 'concrete style' as their predominant style of learning. Moreover three more students also have the concrete style as dominant in combination with another style. So seven people have a 'concrete style' while learning Spanish. Some characteristics of this style are: being curious, spontaneous, risking and students prefer visual and verbal learning experiences.

Four learners show having 'analytical style' as their predominant style of learning. And four more students also belong to that style but combined with another style. In total there are eight people focusing on the style mentioned above. Students tend to infer and analyse, they prefer learning through the logic and doing research and solving problems.

Five students tend to have a 'communicative style' of learning as predominant. But there are three more having that style mixed with another style. So it is observed eight students showed the style mentioned above. These kinds of students prefer working in groups, interacting and socialising with others, they tend to be self autonomous and be democratic in a classroom.

Three students showed having 'authoritarian style' and they prefer learning in a traditional class, they like the teacher guides and order what to do in class, they do not like to take risks and decisions by themselves.

Six students have a mixed-up style while learning Spanish. So it is possible to have a combination of styles.

To sum up the predominant styles in the group LA421/LA422 are the 'Concrete and Communicative and style' counting with five students to each style and in a mixed-up style, too. The second predominant style is the 'Analytical style' with four learners and the last predominant style with three people is the 'Authoritarian style'. Knowing the students preferences I will look for activities and tasks to develop more those strategies. To base teaching material on Problem Based Learning method, this will give students to face arguments, to think and give their opinions, share information, work individually and as a part of a group, get more involved in their learning process, be more critical thinking, creative , reflective and reflexive.

c) Describing Students' Learning Strategies

LEARNING STRATEGIES RESULTS:

Key	Metacognitive Strategies	Cognitive Strategies	Communicative Strategies	Social Strategies	Affective Strategies	Memory Strategies	Compensation Strategies
S1	13	14	11	16	8	10	13
S2	13	16	12	16	12	15	22
S3	15	17	13	14	17	13	16
S4	21	13	12	16	15	13	17
S5	15	14	12	18	19	17	16
S6	20	12	18	18	17	17	16
S7	23	16	18	14	13	15	13
S8	16	15	13	16	17	9	13
S9	21	9	17	15	19	14	20
S10	19	17	18	15	18	19	16
S11	13	16	13	13	20	14	17
S12	20	16	11	15	11	15	14
S13	13	10	12	10	15	8	4
S14	15	11	13	17	18	16	14
S15	15	13	12	12	12	17	16
S16	12	15	12	14	14	13	14
S17	20	15	17	15	18	13	16
S18	15	16	10	14	12	11	18
S19	13	22	19	11	12	21	20
S20	23	19	12	15	17	12	13
S21	17	19	18	15	20	14	19

The most predominant learning strategies

Two students have found with two predominant strategies groups, Metacognitive and Memory group and the other one, Metacognitive and Affective Strategies.

The most predominant strategy group used by the learners is the 'Metacognitive' which they plan, organise and evaluate their own learning process. Eight students based their learning on those strategies mentioned above.

Another predominant group of strategies is the 'Affective', learners tend to reduce their anxiety, nervous and they try to make efforts and reward themselves when achieving their learning goals. Using 'Affective strategies' help students to cope with some negative emotions and raise positive motivation.

Three people prefer using 'Cognitive Strategies' which help them to understand systematically how the language works. They tend to use these strategies to analyse, compare the languages, take notes and reason the language system.

The Memory group is preferred by two students as the name itself, they are strategies or techniques using the memory. For example: writing lists of vocabulary, drawing vocabulary to record and memorise it. Two learners like using 'Compensation Strategies' which help to compensate their limitations while learning a second language, they adopt a behaviour to cope with their role in a conversation or reading activities like using periphrases, avoiding a topic or guessing with non linguistics clues.

One student prefers using 'Social Strategies', these strategies improve students' communication skills, they like to participate in group conversation, ask most of the time while having problems if they do not understand something, emphasise on information clarification and verification and like to socialise with their classmates.

Finally it is shown that most of the students from the group LA421-LA422 tend to use more Metacognitive and Affective Strategies, some few use Cognitive, Memory and Social and Compensation strategies. Nobody had Communicative strategies as his predominant.

Conclusion:

After analysing and having the results from the group studied about its kind on Motivation, Learning Styles and Strategies, it is concluded:

First, as a teacher we must know what type of motivation students have, a better attitude towards the learning process a better result learners will have and facilitate the teaching learning process as well. According to S.P. Corder (1981): '*If there is motivation, the success of learning a second language is guaranteed'.*

Second, if the teacher knows students' learning styles it will help him to understand the variety of students' styles, so they should be aware of, to propose and use general activities to match most of the styles in a classroom. And it is also important to let students know what their predominant learning style or styles are because this will inform and help them to facilitate their own learning process.

To conclude, Students will be more conscious of the strategies they already use; they will be encouraged to use strategies that help them reduce stress, nervous, anxiety and any other negative feelings that might interfere with their learning. Students will be able to control their already used strategies more efficiently, and they will be able to choose to use new strategies or not ones which are less effective. The studied group preferred some kind of strategies more than others, such as metacognitives, affective and cognitive ones. In addition each student has developed a certain set of strategies or a mix of them. As many different groups of strategies used by students a better success they will obtain during their learning process. If students only tend to use just a group of strategies, the teacher's role will be to guide them to be able to try a wider set of strategies.

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