

Motivation and Self-Concept in Language Learning: An Exploratory Study of English Language Learners

Authors : A. van Staden, M. M. Coetzee

Abstract : Despite numerous efforts to increase the literacy level of South African learners, for example, through the implementation of educational policies such as the Revised National Curriculum statement, advocating mother-tongue instruction (during a child's formative years), in reality, the majority of South African children are still being educated in a second language (in most cases English). Moreover, despite the fact that a significant percentage of our country's budget is spent on the education sector and that both policy makers and educationalists have emphasized the importance of learning English in this globalized world, the poor overall academic performance and English literacy level of a large number of school leavers are still a major concern. As we move forward in an attempt to comprehend the nuances of English language and literacy development in our country, it is imperative to explore both extrinsic and intrinsic factors that contribute or impede the effective development of English as a second language. In the present study, the researchers set out to investigate how intrinsic factors such as motivation and self-concept contribute to or affect English language learning amongst high school learners in South Africa. Emanating from the above the main research question that guided this research is the following: Is there a significant relationship between high school learners' self-concept, motivation, and English second language performances? In order to investigate this hypothesis, this study utilized quantitative research methodology to investigate the interplay of self-concept and motivation in English language learning. For this purpose, we sampled 201 high school learners from various schools in South Africa. Methods of data gathering inter alia included the following: A biographical questionnaire; the Academic Motivational Scale and the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analyses yielded significant correlations between L2 learners' motivation and their English language proficiency, including demonstrating positive correlations between L2 learners' self-concept and their achievements in English. Accordingly, researchers have argued that the learning context, in which students learn English as a second language, has a crucial influence on students' motivational levels. This emphasizes the important role the teacher has to play in creating learning environments that will enhance L2 learners' motivation and improve their self-concepts.

Keywords : motivation, self-concept, language learning, English second language learners (L2)

Conference Title : ICLL 2017 : International Conference on Language Learning

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : July 20-21, 2017