

## **PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL CONTESTS AS A MOTIVATION FACTOR IN STUDYING ENGLISH**

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*The article analyses students' motivation in some tasks given to them at English language classes, namely participation in international contests. Firstly, theoretical aspects are considered, where motivation is viewed as a complex process, involving several factors. Secondly, the contests overview is provided together with the students' motives and the ways they are expressed. Two different age groups (university students and schoolchildren of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade) participated in two different contests, so their motives were studied separately. Finally, the motives of these two groups were compared. The study revealed that students and pupils have different motives, which make them participate in such activities.*

*Key words: motivation, motif, international contest, students, schoolchildren.*

Nowadays it seems that both informational and cultural environments themselves create enough motivation for people to study English: the Internet has eliminated the barriers in communication, made access to information, political, cultural, sport and other events easier; the development of transport made international travelling both cheaper and more accessible. However, technological development has also created a negative effect: the availability of various translation programs acts as a strong demotivation factor. Moreover, students mostly live here and now and often cannot see the possibilities of using English in future. All these facts show that teachers still need to motivate their students. Furthermore, the perspective of compulsory state exam in English increases this need.

There are different theoretical approaches to motivation, which is considered to be a complicated process, consisting of a variety of motives [1, p.151]. Firstly, it is divided into external and internal motivation. The former depends on environment (a person is willing to be rewarded or vice versa to avoid punishment); the latter increases a person's self-esteem, provides confidence in their actions as well as satisfaction. A positive feedback in the form of praise or approval can raise the internal motivation dramatically. It must be noted that both kinds of motivation are very important, moreover, they are interdependent as the external one influences the amount of work, while the other one contributes to its quality. If replaced by the external motivation, the internal one decreases, while a rise in confidence in a person's own abilities and skills contributes to the internal motivation growth [4]. S.L. Rubinstein pointed out that for a student to be involved into work, the tasks should not only be understood but also deeply accepted [3, p. 81]. This means they must gain value for a student, become an integral part of their emotional experience. Thus external

motivation must become internal one, but even if students act driven by the latter, they still want to be praised and awarded.

Secondly, motivation is viewed as a combination of cognitive and social motives. Cognitive motives are connected with the content of educational activity and its accomplishment; they reflect students' aspiration to self-study, their focus on perfection of the independent ways of gaining knowledge. Social motives are linked to different kinds of students' social interaction with other people. These also include so called positional motives, expressed in an urge to occupy a certain position in relationship with others, to receive their approval, and earn authority. The motives of social cooperation involve a wish to collaborate with other people, as well as analyzing and realizing the ways and forms of this collaboration. They form an important basis for personal self-development. Although both cognitive and social motives must be formed in an early age, they need to be constantly perfected and their level increased.

Thirdly, motivation is considered to have two trends, the first is aimed at achieving success, the second one tends to avoid failures. If students are motivated at achieving success, their goals are usually positive, educational process triggers positive emotions, mobilizes inner resources, and concentrates their attention. On the other hand, if the students' motivation involves avoiding failures, they lack self-confidence and work satisfaction, moreover, educational process triggers mostly negative emotions. Thus, it is important to motivate students to achieve success trying to minimize potential harms of a failure.

To sum up, motivation is a very important factor in the learning process and cannot be left entirely to students. Teachers both at secondary and high school need to monitor its level as well as motives and correct them if necessary.

In this work participation in international contests will be analyzed from the motivation point of view: which motives move students to take part in such activities, how they can be involved and increased. As both university students and schoolchildren participated in contests, their motives will be compared.

The English Language Department of Perm State National Research University has established a strong connection with the Science Center of Perm State Library named after Maxim Gorky, which provides the venue for contests allowing students of all educational institutions in Perm to participate. In 2017 two contests were held, the first one was the contest of presentations about Perm and its sister-cities, where I participated with university students; the second one was the contest of posters devoted to the Year of ecology, where I took part with schoolchildren.

University students will be looked at first. Second-year students of the economic faculty at Perm State University work on a project as a part of their curriculum in the spring term, when they start to study ESP. They could choose to make a project either on economy or Perm and its sister-cities, and were told that the latter would participate in the international contest of presentations. As the year 2017 was proclaimed the Year of Ecology in Russia, students wishing to take part in the international contest were suggested to talk about ecological problems and the ways to solve them in Perm and its sister-cities. The best work, which eventually won the first place in the contest, was the presentation on dealing with waste in Perm and its German sister-city Duisburg. Then students were invited to perform in the library in front of the audience where they were given certificates of participation or awarded prizes.

Participation in this contest by the students showed that all motivation factors are involved. First, participants are aimed at achieving success that triggers other motivating factors. Secondly, external motivation is presented in the form of public praises and awards that in turn raises students' confidence in their English language skills. Thirdly, they had to prepare projects independently, find and organize information themselves, so cognitive motives are involved. Fourth, even if they do not win, participants are respected by their colleagues for their courage and experience, thus social motivation to study the language also raises.

Schoolchildren of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades participated in another contest where they had to create a poster on ecology, choosing from several sub-topics: "My eco-city (or town)", "My eco-region", "My eco-house", "Environmental protection", "Ecology and its laws", and "The man and the nature in art and literature". Participants could use any drawing or painting technique, and posters had to be accompanied by a description. My students chose the sub-topic "My eco-city", because firstly, they wished to share their personal experience, secondly, by this they wanted their posters to be different from others. Two posters were presented at the contest – the first was named "My eco-city" and told about one of the Perm's parks, which successfully combines nature with the city environment. The second one was called "My eco-city of the future" and showed the use of eco-friendly technologies in a future city. These posters occupied the third and second places respectively. Though it was an absentia competition, participants were invited to tell about their posters before the award ceremony. Unfortunately, the event took place at the end of the school term, so only one contestant was able to present their poster at the ceremony. It was the 5<sup>th</sup> grade student of Perm Gymnasia number 7 Artyom Vasilenko. There were about 100 posters presented in the Science Center, and about 50 people took part in the award ceremony. After the ceremony Artyom was interviewed for local news. He was really surprised that so many people participated in the contest and so many different posters with different ideas behind them were presented.

Considering motivation factors of schoolchildren, it should be noted that they are guided by the wish to be rewarded and thus gain the authority among their classmates and receive praise from their teachers. It means that pupils are driven by an external and social motivation factors, which in turn triggered internal motivation, as both their self-esteem and confidence in speaking English rise. Students wanted to make their presentations more personal, trying to be independent in gaining knowledge, which tells about their cognitive motivation. Though the trend at achieving success was not explicit, the wish to be rewarded can be considered as a part of it. Moreover, when asked if they would participate in such contests again, children answered positively, so positive emotions and experience anchored the motivation trend at achieving success.

Comparing participation in international contests by university and school students, it can be seen that their main motivation factors differ: while high school students' main motivation is achieving success, supported by internal motivation, pupils seek approval. Moreover, different factors are more explicit with students than with children.

In conclusion, one must underline that it is better to motivate your students by actions rather than by words. International contests are one of the ways to do that, as they create the atmosphere of success, anchoring positive emotions and thus contributing to the achieving success motivation trend.

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