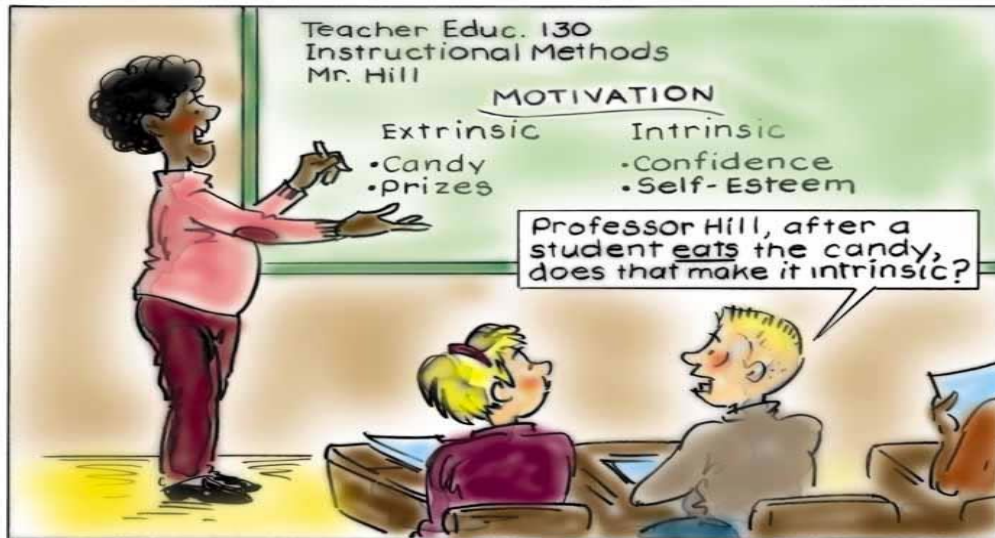

How to Motivate Children to Learn English



ing a foreign language

Some Characteristics of Children

Children are naturally curious and active. They are full of enthusiasm and often show a lot of eagerness to participate. But when we try to motivate children to learn, we need to know what they can or can't do, what they like or dislike. The following are some statements about their characteristics.

- Many children do not often have a clear purpose for learning.
- Many children like to do things with achievable learning target because they want to feel sure that it is not something beyond their ability.
- Many children like to do things with their hands, bodies and minds. If not satisfied, they sometimes would like to make noises and move around.
- Many children love listening to stories and songs. They are good at imitating sounds and facial expressions.
- Children are not good at analyzing language rules. They can't understand abstract concepts.

- They don't like boring classes with little activities and listen to the teacher all the time.
- Children's attention span is very short.

The Role of Children's English Teacher

Having known children's characteristics above, we may find a good primary school teacher has to play many different roles, such as a parent, a friend, a motivator, a story teller, a discipline controller, an evaluator, and even an actor.



We need to possess special qualities in addition to language competence and teaching capabilities. We need to understand how children think and learn. We need to care for "the whole child" instead of just caring for the language that we are teaching. We need to help children to develop in an all round way—linguistically, intellectually, culturally, and morally. We need to guide them in mastering learning strategies and learning how to learn, help them to develop the ability of using imaginations and learning to solve problems. We also need to teach them to care for others and respect others. From the above discussion, we may say it is really not easy

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to be a good primary school English teacher. However, according to some educationists one of the most important roles the primary English teachers play is a motivator. That is to say, as a good primary school English teacher, we have to know how to motivate children to learn English.

Definitions of Motivation

As Ball (1957) claims, 'motivation is a central concept in any theory of education.' Therefore, it is essential to demonstrate different points of view on definitions of motivation in order to achieve a better understanding of the role of motivation in language learning. According to Ball (ibid), motivated students refer to those who wish to do things that teachers expect, while unmotivated students are the ones who are unwilling to do things based on teachers' expectation. In contrast with teachers, psychologists (e.g. Lewin, 1952 et al) study the concept of motivation to a greater extent. Lewin, a member of the cognitive school, emphasizes that learning itself is motivation which determines success. However, Bruner (1966) seems not to be in line with