ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE THROUGH COMMUNICATION-ORIENTED MOTIVATION

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Abstract

Researchers' focus on academic performance brings forth the "quality of academic life" and it's highly positive correlations with "students' welfare" as well as with certain personality features such as "self-respect" and "positive affectivity" alongside negative correlations such as „academic stress" and "negative affectivity".

Key-words: *motivation, communication, performance, educational relations, academic environment.*

Introduction

An academic welfare index is the "academic satisfaction/dissatisfaction", as a result of the educational policy and hence of the *training style* focused on students' development, on their involvement in the training practice, on their relations with teachers and colleagues as well as on the emotional support provided throughout the training process.

Therefore affective comfort will imply a sense of affective safety, of accepting and recognizing a human being as valuable to the group of colleagues and teaching staff, whereas the lack of a concord between *students' expectations and teachers' high expectations* as regards academic performance and discipline might affect the relations among them, engendering dissatisfaction on both sides. Furthermore the educational process would provide a strenuous environment conducive to students' negative satisfaction.

The **main objective** of our **study** which is part of an ampler survey carried out on a **sample** of 336 students of the Faculty of Law in an University, was to scope students' motivations for and interests in learning foreign languages as a means of attaining performance in foreign language communication. The underlying hypothesis was that if the motivating factors used by foreign language teachers to induce a certain learning conduct are articulated in a consistent set, then communicative-professional competence increases with the linguistic performance defined as a) linguistic skills acquisition and b) operational linguistic efficiency. Direct qualitative and quantitative investigation tools have been used in the survey such as Student questionnaire/adapted form: CH-MSA-IN 2006 a focus group with high academic performance students, a focus-group with foreign language teachers, co-participative observation, evaluation scales (applied in the view study), structured essay, case study, quantitative and qualitative analysis of documented foreign language study evidence (notebooks, reports, rolls, tests), statistical mathematical methods (statistical correlation, Pearson linear correlation coefficient – r).

From the analytical viewpoint the study of causative, conditional and methodological factors, which are instrumental in developing a thorough and efficient study of foreign languages has an open structure. For pragmatic reasons we have only dealt with factors that are extremely motivating and of topical interest for the present essay.

Performance Impact Variables

Academic Self-efficacy is the confidence in own capability of mobilizing cognitive and motivational resources towards attaining academic performance. It therefore implies the measuring

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of the capacity of performing activities rather than personal qualities and links to the criterion of *personal power* in fulfilling tasks. It is measured by the *degree of certainty* with which an individual can fulfill a task at the highest level. The measurement of self-efficacy hinges on the academic evaluation context and must be done before students achieve activities likely to bring about alterations in the perception of the academic self.

Schunk et al (1989) have shown that signals of academic progress towards performance are capitalized by setting up confidence in personal efficacy. This is proved by the efficiency with which students use their skills. Irrespective of such skills, psycho-social influences alongside evaluative feedback and social comparison will enhance self-efficiency confidence.

Building on **Bandura'**s *hypothesis* (1977) that *"self-efficacy confidence have an influence on the level of effort, persistence and choice of activities",* Schunk et al. (1985) have noticed students' progress in acquiring skills through a methodical qualitative approach and through the development of confidence in own problem solving abilities. As a result, increased efficiency brings forth success expectation which further generates perseverance against students' issues. Perseverance may thus lead to success, which enhances self-efficiency confidence in similar circumstances.

Self-efficacy confidence acts by the *motivational mechanism*. If students' trust in their self-efficacy is poor, then the resources they will be putting into academic work will be quite scarce, which will most likely bring about failure and the sense of self-inefficiency. This feeling triggers states of ruminative affectivity, absenteeism, aggressiveness, and training discontinuity. Students' confidence in their efficacy in achieving their academic tasks has an influence on their emotional states, motivation and hence their success and performance.

Performance expectations are crucial in the "*input effort-output result*"e equation. *Teachers' expectations* may thus become predictions which come true, endowing students with *self-efficiency confidence* which they so much need. Or, on the contrary, they may deliberately deprive students of self-efficiency confidence, which will affect their motivational, cognitive and emotional processes, influencing their behaviour both directly and indirectly, via their effect on the regulating mechanism built on personal performance standards and goals. Starting from the teacher's beliefs, some distortions may emerge in his/her relations with the students and even in the relations among students, which impairs on the educational environment and hence on the chances of academic performance.

ON THE EDUCATIONAL SIDE Albert Bandura (1995) advises teachers to focus more on the enhancement of students' self-efficacy and to take care of self-confidence of both teachers and students.

Perceived self- competence is a psychological construct directly related to self-efficacy. Originally conceptualized as *an internal impulse generating the sense of competence*, perceived self-competence facilitates the development of confidence in personal capabilities.

ON THE EDUCATIONAL SIDE The teacher should help his/her students to realize that same skills may be applied differently according to contextual circumstances, to become aware not only of their own cognitive and behavioural skills but also of the motivational management aptitude as well as resistance to problem-induced stress.

Locus of control is **Julien Rotter**'s concept (1966). *Internal locus of control* implies the belief that personal strength and control can influence life outcomes and events, whereas *external*

locus of control implies that personality force has a minimal effect on life events which are caused by chance or others' power.

ON THE EDUCATIONAL SIDE The teacher should attach importance to this concept since a dictatorial climate at class or even by successive evaluation against increasing exigency may induce to students the sense of a limited control over their activity level and self-inefficiency, which will focus them on fear of failure rather than on task requirements.

The self-image (the Self-Concept or the "g" Factor) is the central nucleus of personality with a major role in selecting values and goals; it is the mirror of representations of own skills, attitudes and behaviours. Deemed to be multi-dimensional and hierarchically structured, it integrates the "social Self", with the "academic Self", the "emotional Self", the "competence Self", the "physical Self", the "family Self". **Bracken et. al** (2000) have confirmed that these dimensions contribute to the structuring of the global image of personality.

> *The Self-image (the Self)*
> *Analysed though the real Self, the future Self, the ideal Self*

The real - actual Self derives from experiences which we have lived within the socio-cultural milieu we have been living in and it comprises: "*the physical Self*", "*the emotional Self*","*the academic Self*", "*the competence Self*", "*the family Self*", "*the social Self*".

The physical Self structures the development, the acceptance of own corporality, the manner in which an individual perceives itself and believes s/he is perceived by the others.

The emotional Self brings together an individual's experiences by reference to her/himself, to the others and to the future. If the emotional Self is stable, then the world will be perceived as a safe environment which does not threaten the self-image.

The *academic Self* refers to the manner in which the self receives and integrates information contents about itself and the world, the manner in which these operate. The more the self-image is kept at the positive pole, the higher the individual's performances rise. **Parsons et al.** (2001) building on the approach of other authors (James Marcia, 1980 ; H. March, 1989 ; Marsh and Jeung, 1997) on the multi-dimensional features of the Self-Concept, focus their entire research on the "*academic Self*", on the **relationship between school performance and the academic Self**, on working techniques and on training activity design. These recent studies have drawn attention to the impression which school leaves on each individual's self-image.

The *competence Self*, of the action possibilities, refers to an individual's clear awareness of her/his own skills - relational, assertive communication, career planning, By putting face-to-face people's assessments about the self with the actually obtained performance, the image of own competences will be shaped.

The *family Self* expresses the emotional comfort felt by reference to the family members.
The *social Self* includes the personality dimension which we reveal to the others alongside our responses in our inter-action with them.

The *future Self* refers to the manner in which an individual perceives her/his personal development potential by projecting her/himself into the future. It consists of the *desired Self (*all projectible aspirations, motivations and goals) as well as the *anxious Self (*what an individual does

not wish to be – both of them resulting from a combination of representations of the past with those of the future. The desired Self yields joy and self-confidence, while the anxious Self releases fury, anxiety and depression.

The ***ideal Self*** refers to what we would like to be, and for which we are concerned with identifying the necessary resources. Orientation and domination of the self-image by the ideal Self when remotely placed from the real, may induce unhappiness and frustration.

ON THE EDUCATIONAL SIDE it is important that we make students aware of the value of the *possible Self* which is attainable and highly energizing. Thus, the ideal Self will mark the roadmap of the possible (future) Self. The teacher should bear in mind the fact that the self-image may be a personal construct with a <u>regulating function</u> in action programming and setting aspiration levels. But s/he should also take into account that an individual's subjectivity and the others' subjectivity – which are two intertwining, key elements – may <u>parasite the ideal image</u>.

As concerns the role of *expectations* in the academic outputs, adepts of social-cognitivism have shown that teachers' expectations shape students' behaviour and *performances*, harmonizes their *self-image*. As a result avoidance of negative labelling and differentiated approach become prerequisites of students' personality evolution.

Self-image is not static; it <u>has got its own dynamics</u> underpinning the assertion of the *self-image* (*self-assertiveness*) and *defence of self-image*. A student's positive self-image is a pre-requisite of his/her physical and psychological health.

Self-esteem is *the evaluative and affective mirror of the self-image*; it is the manner in which we assess ourselves by reference to our own expectations and to the others. A high-level self-esteem expresses optimism, self-appreciation and self-confidence, while negative life experiences will entail decreased self-esteem and a sense of devaluation accompanied by emotional states such as sadness, anger and even anxiety.

Competence (cognitive skills), *merit* (physical, psychological or moral traits), *power* (ability to influence others), *attribution* (internal or external) of academic failure, *acceptance* (respect, admiration) are the main dimensions influencing <u>stability</u> and the <u>self-esteem level</u>. The flow of academic successes and failures stabilizes self-esteem; also, comparison to others or reference to the social context has its significant role because for a student signals from the teacher, the colleagues or the family can equally be a powerful catalyst and a source of blockage. The teacher can assist students in the development of their self-esteem by focusing on their positive aspects, giving appreciation to their individual efforts rather than to their skills, offering options and opportunities for getting involved in the planning of learning activities and in making decisions, but not before delineating expectations according to their levels.

ON THE EDUCATIONAL SIDE Trust, autonomy and positive enhancement will be given to students with a view to developing **internality** - a dimension which stimulates students' activism, affective welfare and energetic support needed for reaching high academic performance. Self-esteem which defines the degree of an individual's tendency to positive self-evaluation and to rejection of positive attributes, becomes an index of the welfare which a teacher aiming to attain high performance with those students should make them aware of.

Factors <u>highly</u> motivating thorough and systematic study of a foreign language
With values between: **80%-70%**
• Scientific competence of the foreign language teacher

With values between: **75%-60%**
- Self-confidence in the acquisition and command of a foreign language;
- The actual (or correct) image of the performances to be attained in the study of a foreign language;
  - Types of behaviour self-control in foreign language training;
  - Open communication style in foreign language training;
  - Positive educational relations;
  - Tonic academic environment.

Stimulating academic style – tonic academic environment

a) The study of correlation matrices (Pearson method) revealing the whole item grouping range and therefore the location of key factors, elicits in student's view, the following significant value hierarchy for their academic success:

1st degree: **"stimulating academic style" – "tonic academic environment"**
(r = 0.893);
2nd degree: **"tonic academic environment" – "contents student's needs"**
(r = 0.862);
3rd degree: **"compensatory valences and learning style assurance/differences"**
– "cross-disciplinary content" (r = 0.822).

The 1st degree correlation coefficient with the highest, thus the most significant, value, r = 0.89, is the correlation **"stimulating academic style" – "tonic academic environment".** This shows that higher-education activities through the way they are unfolded, primarily contribute to the quality of the academic environment of the particular university faculty and consequently to academic and professional success. It is absolutely evident that a systematic, democratic, satisfaction-yielding, autonomy creating, modeling, safeguarding, efficient style is what students appreciate as positively stimulating in their studies, in maintaining optimal student-student, student-teacher relationships as well as contributing to a tonic academic environment beneficial to their success.

b) Another key factor in maintaining an academic environment favourable to student's academic success is the *curriculum*, its contents – particularly those meeting students' needs – and the way it is devised, built and implemented. We specifically refer to the use of some criteria of which essential for students are "cross-disciplinary contents" and "compensatory valences and learning style assurance/differences"

c) It is certain that students are very interested in their academic, and implicitly professional, success. A lot of correlations mentioned by them refer to this in various ways along each correlation range from each of the 3 value-descending levels.

Thus, on **level 1** the correlation coefficients range between **r = 0.893 and r = 0.891**, that is between the correlation pairs "stimulating academic style" – "tonic academic environment"; "wide scope of training methods" – "tonic academic environment".
From the analytical view point, within the correlation coefficient range of this level between the above mentioned extreme correlation pairs the following significant value hierarchy is elicited:

TABLE I Correlation coefficients at level 1 of statistical representation

Current no.	Correlation coefficient	Correlation
1	r = 0.862	tonic academic environment – contents which meet students' needs
2	r = 0.822	Compensatory and diferentiated valences – cross-diciplinary contents
3	r = 0.809	Wide training method range - stimulating academic style
4	r = 0.806	stimulating academic style - contents which meet students' needs

These correlations show that for academic-professional success students believe that alongside the curriculum (especially "contents"), which meets their needs and interests, as well as "compensatory and differentiated values" by reference to study styles "cross-disciplinary contents" is another criterion practically significant for the design, build and didactic implementation of the teaching-learning units, which shapes into teaching strategies conceived and used in alternatives adaptable to the characteristics of the student groups., Noteworthy is the fact that such contents meet students' needs, impose a certain style to academic performances, endow them with a stimulating and efficient tone. For instance, this applies to the correlations "wide range of training methods" – "stimulating academic style", having the correlation coefficient r = 0.809. and "academic stimulating style" – "contents which meet students' needs", having the correlation coefficient r = 0.806. All this in so far as "stimulating academic style" correlates to "contents which meet students' needs" as well as to "wide range of training methods"; and consequently "contents which meet students' needs" correlates to "wide range of training methods".

Level 1 of the correlation degrees reflects therefore the high significance which students attach to the teacher's academic style and to the academic environment for their higher education and professional success. These factors have actually very high close-value correlation coefficients. A stimulating, energizing motivation engendered by a comparable academic style and environment will contribute to the maintenance of academic success at a top level. In this respect the correlations fall under the pair **"stimulating academic style" – "tonic academic environment"**

Thus, level 1 correlations confirm students' belief that crucial for their academic success is the quality of the academic environment in the university/faculty/course or seminar. The most essential factor underlying this is a stimulating academic style, rendered both by a suitable cross-disciplinary curriculum, and by the availability of compensatory tasks for personalized assistance.

The scientific competence of the foreign language teacher

The *scientific competence of the foreign language teacher* is perceived as highly motivating for students. It imposes respect and adequate conduct towards a thorough, systematic study of a foreign language. This factor is in their opinion at the higher level of the evaluation rates, between 70% and 80%, specifically 72.3%, with 243 of the students *mostly agreeing* that the scientific value of their teacher's qualification determines their response to their professional training challenges, where command of foreign languages ranks quite high. Thus a total of 91.3% of the respondents (i.e. 307 students) *mostly agree* and *quite agree* with the above-mentioned response.

This fact is confirmed by the large number of correlations where a **foreign language teacher's scientific competence** occurs, specifically 14 correlations at levels 1 + 2 plus their

varieties. This shows that students agree with the role played by a teacher by virtue of his scientific competence in the entire educational component of the teaching, learning and evaluating act, both in what s/he achieves with students and how s/he leads them to the aimed performances. Noteworthy are the following ways mentioned by students: "feedback", "organized style", "systematized content", "adequate strategies", "clear goals", "progressive and stimulating tasks", "high learning skills", "elimination of any learning issues or teaching-derived misunderstandings" in addition to elements which define "evaluation and set up of high output levels" as well as "teacher's progressive control". Last but not least, educational relations appear as relevant: "teacher-student" relationship, "student-student" relationship, "cooperation relationships", "positive competitiveness" relationships alongside those pertaining to the "understanding of students' needs".

For instance students are appreciative of a teacher's open, exciting, stimulating communication style, which helps them to acquire and improve their foreign language communication competences necessary in their future profession. This is how the teacher's scientific competence influences the entire educational act. Worth noting here is the hierarchy of students' preferences.

It can be stated that:

a) students are motivated by a competent foreign language teacher who provides the teaching-learning feedback, also maintaining the actual image of the performances to be attained.

The following correlations are detected at the level of degree hierarchy:

1st degree: "**teacher's scientific competence" – "feedback provision"** ;
2nd degree: **"teacher's scientific competence" – "actual performance image"** ;
3rd degree: **"teacher's scientific competence" – "set up of high output levels"** ;

b) immediately following is students' appreciation of the teacher's contribution to their qualification as high professionals in their fields of choice, self-confident, confident in the communication competences acquired at the level required by their professional accomplishment.

An illustration of the above mentioned is the following order of degrees:

4th degree: **"teacher's scientific competence" – "types of behaviour self-control"**;
5th degree: **"teacher's scientific competence" – "self-confidence"** ;
6th degree:**"teacher's scientific competence" – "communication competences"**

c) an additional observation to the above refers to students' interest not only in what and how much to learn but also in how to learn, which denotes *"a cognitive-emotional-attitudinal synthesis"* so necessary in the profession they are training for.

Self-confidence in the study of foreign languages

Education specialists, and in our study students as well, regard the role of *Self-confidence* as essential in ensuring personal, social and professional success. Students thus feel motivated by the foreign language teacher who enhances their positive thinking, builds up a rich knowledge pool, makes them masters of their own forces and therefore "free". This is why this sub-item has been regarded as a key motivating factor by 206 of the students, i.e. 61.3% of the respondents, with an opening towards a large number of correlations with appropriate correlation coefficients.

Among students' options "self-confidence" is primarily connected to "communication competences" acquired in foreign language learning, then in descending order, to the "type of behaviour self-control" over foreign language learning, to foreign language "learning skills" and to the "actual image of the performances" to be attained in a foreign language. This reveals the fact that students are interested in *how* to inter-relate and inter-communicate, how to learn and raise to the performance level required by a proper command of a foreign language. As a result, highest appreciation appears to be given to the foreign language teacher who teaches them "how to do" not only "what to do" and "how much to do". The bifactorial relationships are dominated by the following correlations:

Self-confidence
(1) **"self-confidence" – "communication competences"** (r = 0.770) ;
(2) **"self-confidence" – "types of behaviour control"** (r = 0.769) ;
(3) **"self-confidence" – "learning skills"** (r = 0.750) ;
(4) **"self-confidence" – "actual performance image"** (r = 7.39).

Students are aware that "self-confidence" indicates how much they feel they "command" a foreign language and their intercommunication and relational efficacy in a foreign language. This is why this sub-item correlates to whatever belongs to the foreign language educational act: the manner in which feedback is provided in the teaching-learning process, realistic set up of desired output levels, resolution of learning issues, educational relations which ought to exist between teacher and student, student and student, teacher's competence, cooperation relationships, teacher's efficacious, crystallized and organized style.

Herewith our findings in order of options:

Self-confidence:
(1) **"self-confidence" – "feedback provision"** ;
(2) **"self-confidence" – "set up of high output results"** ;
(3) **"elf-confidence" – "resolution of learning issues"** ;
(4) **"self-confidence" – "positive educational relationships"** ;
(5) **"self-confidence" – "teacher's scientific competence"** ;
(6) **"self-confidence" – "cooperation relationships"** ;
(7) **"self-confidence" – "organized teaching style".**

The actual image of performances in foreign language training

Students are interested in the image of the performances to be attained in a foreign language which provides their confidence in and satisfaction with their personal, social and professional success. This is why they consider that in order to own and turn such an image into reality, to reach professional satisfaction, a solid knowledge and management of their own foreign language vectors is needed: "efficient manners of behaviour self-control", high quality "self-confidence", proper "learning skills", "high communication competence". This engenders a steady quest for "self-improvement ", stake raising, "intercommunication stimulation", all in an educational process where the " teaching-learning feedback" operates on expected parameters and "educational relationships" are optimal.

The most apparent factorial pairs with very good correlational values are given below in descending order:

Actual performance image:
(1) **"actual performance image" – "types of behavior self-control"**
     (r = 0.792);
(2) **"actual performance image" – "communication competence"**
     (r = 0.778) ;
(3) **"actual performance image" – "set up of high output levels"**
     (r = 0.761) ;
(4) **"actual performance image" – "feedback provision"** (r = 0.754) ;
(5) **"actual performance image" – "self-confidence"** (r = 0.739) ;
(6) **"actual performance image" – "learning skills"** (r = 0.705) ;
(7) **"actual performance image" – "communication stimulation"**(r = 704) ;
(8) **"actual performance image" – "positive educational relations"**
     (r = 0.700).

According to student' opinion, in order to turn the performance image into reality the foreign language teacher's competence underpins both the teaching act ("organized style", "teaching strategies", "avoidance of teaching misunderstandings") as well as the learning act ("learning issues") and not least evaluation, especially "progressive checking/controlling". Noteworthy is also the teacher's tactfulness in developing and maintaining "cooperation relationships and circumstances" so necessary to an efficient intellectual work climate.

We are listing below the factorial pairs as evidence for the above assertions:

Actual performance image
(1) **"actual performance image" – "teacher's scientific competence"**;
(2) **"actual performance image" – "cooperation circumstances"**;
(3) **"actual performance image" – "resolution of teaching
     misunderstandings"** ;
(4) **"actual performance image" – "progressive control"** ;
(5) **"actual performance image" – "organized teaching style"** ;
(6) **"actual performance image" – "resolution of learning issues"** ;
(7) **"actual performance image" – "teaching strategies"**.

A challenge for students is to get performance outputs in a foreign language. The clarity and actuality of a performance image is directly related to the extent to which the performance is understood and acknowledged as well as to its attainment motivation. Hence the requirement that a foreign language teacher should be open in communication, active, indefatigable and continuously exciting, able to determine competitive circumstances, designer of progressive, stimulating tasks, an excellent manager, well organized and systematic in content value presentation, properly responsive to individual needs.

Efficacious types of behavior self-control in foreign language training

"*And if there are two moral attitudes which our times might need, they are definitely self-control and compassion*" says Daniel Goleman in his "Emotional Intelligence".

Indeed, self-control is one of the supportive pillars in the emotional architecture of our professional behavior; it is the skill with which we place reasoning on the scales when emotions are too heavy on the soul platter; it is the IQ with which we try to honour the new paradigm of our times which advises us to "harmonize the mind with the soul".

Therefore, the teacher has the noble mission of channeling towards this fundamental ability so much needed for maintaining the harmony of feelings and emotions which sometimes may become far subtler and rigorous than words.

Let us not ignore the cries and whispers of emotions which may induce not only power but also weariness; nor should we ignore their beauty or "non-beauty" which may surge or lower; let us learn how to recognize them within ourselves and in the others, let us learn how to channel them towards noble goals such as success and performance.

The surveyed students have given "*great*" attention to self-control in foreign language teaching/learning, which is most necessary for the new generation behaviour and life style.

The manner in which students manage their cognitive and emotional powers regarded as "types of self-control in foreign language teaching/learning" is connected to their *challenge* level and hinges on how well their targeted foreign language performance is *known* and *acknowledged*. To this a key factor in reaching and even exceeding the performance should be added, namely "students' self-confidence". This is why students consider that it is only <u>a proper management of the training act</u> in the foreign language classes that can provide the "so much necessary teaching-learning feedback", that can determine "the actual output levels", can provide them with the exact manner in which "learning skills" and "communication competence" are acquired. Additionally it can boost "their self-confidence", it can show "the targeted performance".

The correlations are given below in descending order:

Types of behavior self-control
(1) **"types of behavior self-control" – "actual performance image"**
    (r = 0.792);
(2) **"types of behavior self-control" – "communication competences**"
    (r = 0.780);
(3) **"types of behavior self-control" – "learning skills"** (r = 0.775);
(4) **"types of behavior self-control" – "self-confidence"** (r = 0.769);
(5) **"types of behavior self-control" – "feedback provision"** (r = 0.737);
(6) **"types of behavior self-control" – "set up of high output levels"**
    (r = 0.722).

Students have a high opinion of foreign language teachers who have a rich teaching experience and scientific competence, who quite tactfully manage to set up and maintain positive educational relationships, who stimulate inter-communication within proper limits, who appreciate competitiveness as a positive boosting factor, who eliminate any teaching cognitive disruptions, who balance teaching/learning issues.

Other significant correlations are:

Types of behavior self-control
(1) "types of behavior self-control" – "communication stimulation";
(2) **"types of behavior self-control" – "teacher's scientific competence**";
(3) **"types of behavior self-control" – "competitive circumstances**";
(4) "types of behavior self-control" – "educational relations";
(5) **"types of behavior self-control" – "resolution of learning issues**";
(6) "types of behavior self-control" – "resolution of teaching misunderstandings".

Open communication teaching style, an optimal prerequisite of foreign language training efficacy

An open communication style actually designates a *style open to an optimal communication circumstance*. This is considered both from Rogers' *nondirectivity* approach (including "unconditioned acceptance of the others", "benevolent neutrality", "authenticity", "empathy") as well as from Porter's *active listening* approach by which the less we interpret the more we allow others to express themselves in a personal and profound manner (first rule of non-interpretation), the less we evaluate somebody the higher his/her possibilities of authentic expression (second rule of non-evaluation), the less we counsel somebody, the wider his/her possibilities of real expression (third rule of non-counseling), the fewer questions asked, the wider his/her possibilities of free expression (fourth rule of systematic non-questioning), the more we wish to facilitate others' communication, the more we should show that we are interested in what s/he is telling us and that we are listening in order to understand, not to judge, him/her (fifth rule of understanding).

The students' answers to the questionnaire prove that they have not felt judged or guided, but simply listened to as regards their view on the place and role of foreign language training which should be as high as possible for ensuring their personal, social and professional successes. The findings point to the value of the "open style" in which they have communicated own opinions about foreign language training: the significance of "positive educational relations" and of "cooperation relations", "understanding of professional needs", "teaching strategies", "progressive control", "progressive and stimulating tasks" , "elimination of teaching misunderstandings and of learning issues", "teacher-induced stimulation", "competitive circumstances", "organized and systematized contents".

Observing the two levels also indicated in data processing, we reach the following values of the correlation coefficient (Pearson model) which reflects the above statements.

At level 1:

Open communication teaching style
(1) **"open communication teaching style" – "progressive control"**
      (r = 0.799);
(2) **"open communication teaching style" – "teaching strategies"**
      (r = 0.754);
(3) **"open communication teaching style" – "resolution of learning issues"**
      (r = 0.734);
(4) **"open communication teaching style" – "resolution of teaching misunderstandings"** (r = 730);
(5) **"open communication teaching style" – "teacher's understanding of student's needs"** (r = 0.718);
(6) **"open communication teaching style" – "set up of cooperation circumstances"** (r = 714);
(7) **"open communication teaching style" – "educational relations"**
      (r = 0.713);
(8) **"open communication teaching style" – "progressive, stimulating tasks"** (r = 0.702).

Positive educational relations in the foreign language class – an efficacy generator towards academic success

The academic environment addresses relations between students and teachers, among students, among teachers, between teachers and students. Its openness can be ensured only through an optimal communication style underpinned by appropriate educational relations.

By virtue of his/her main activity, which is training, the university teacher is a highly prestigious scientific personality, a true hallmark in the taught subject. Through training a teacher conveys knowledge to students, shapes students' skills and attitudes needed in their future profession so as to enable them to perform as specialists, with professionally typical competence, and sets up formal, non-formal and informal contacts. Hence the significant role of pedagogical and educational aspects in the teaching and coaching processes. A key aspect is obviously the balanced choice between student's adaptation to the teacher's demands and the adaptation of a teacher's style to the features of a certain group of students. The decision is at the discretion of, but not only of, the teacher, who should know best what exactly of the taught subject should be transmitted to students and particularly how, through which relations and, last but not least, how open these relations should be.

It is only appropriate relationships that enable reciprocal understanding. Through such relations students gain confidence in asking questions to the teacher in order to clarify their uncertainties, as well as in unleashing their curiosity, creativity and willingness to face and overcome challenges, which leads to improvement of training activities.

In the teacher-student relation, the student influences directly but also indirectly the teacher's training behavior. This relation cannot be sustained unless the teacher is a "model", a lively personality with whom students can *communicate permanently*. The relationship will be quite special, endowed with a strong psycho-affective trait, by means of the most natural gesture of the *hand put out…. in search of support…*, by means of the most human gesture of the *hand put out… to provide the searched support… whenever needed.*

The foreign language teacher is regarded by students through various quality angles as a reflection of his/her own personality. Thus students believe that teacher-student educational relations are positive only if they rely on "teacher's competence" of providing students' actual performance image, on the professionalism with which the teacher manages and organizes his/her training activity ("organized teaching style", "teacher-induced excitement", "communication stimulation"), on the "openness with which the teacher resolves teaching misunderstandings", on the teacher's responsiveness to novelty and relational openness towards cooperation and dialogue ("open communication style", "set up of cooperation circumstances").

Below are given the correlation values of this factorial group:

Positive educational relations
(1) **"positive educational relations" – "communication stimulation"** (r = 0.799);
(2) **"positive educational relations" – "set up of cooperation circumstances"** (r = 0.735);
(3) **"positive educational relations" - "resolution of teaching misunderstandings"** (r = 0.732);
(4) **"positive educational relations" – "teacher-induced excitement"** (r = 0.730);
(5) **"positive educational relations" – "organized teaching style"** (r = 0.717);
(6) **"positive educational relations" – "resolution of learning issues"** (r = 0.714);
(7) **"positive educational relations" – "open communication style"** (r = 0.713);
(8) **"positive educational relations" – "actual performance image"** (r = 0.700).

Conclusions

The conditional-motivational factor approach in the academic study of foreign languages at university-level – equally rich and complex – is located at the top of the evaluation scale of students'

performance and success. The range of students' choice of factors motivating both their foreign language-related behaviour and other players involved in the teaching-learning-evaluation process elicits a refined, creative and creational process inherent to the human value space. Its variations refer to values dependent on clarity of objectives, content organisation, quality of the subject curriculum and, not least, the teacher's personality, who stands for a model to be followed in all aspects.

The basic factor correlation enabling the study of foreign langauges should combine a tonic academic environment, with a stimulating teaching-learning style based on a rich array of educational methods and techniques apt in delivering a curriculum appropriate to the students' professional needs.

Students believe that 'the ability to communicate and inter-relate' are instrumental to successful performance which depends on higher methodological competences and self-evaluation skills, more diversified study methods and techniques as well as a wider freedom of choice – all enabled by a stimulating academic environment.

A curriculum that responds to the students' needs is the model of the essential factor correlation accounting for students' academic success. It should be based on well-designed training-learning methods, with adaptable alternatives, delivered through all facilities towards better information and documentation (full study support: auxiliary materials, internet, magazines, books), in a performance-oriented tonic academic environment, which, with systematic student-oriented curriculum contents, should be adding to the pedagogical methods and teaching materials.

The way in which students have responded to the delivered questionnaire proves that they have not felt judged, analysed, interpreted or guided but simply listened to with much understanding. Hence the value of the open style in which they have communicated their opinions about the significance of positive educational and cooperative relations, the understanding of professional needs, teaching strategies, progressive control, progressive and stimulating tasks, elimination of teaching misunderstandings and of learning issues, teacher-generated stimulation, competitive situations, well-organized and systematic contents.

The surveyed students consider as key factors in determining positive teacher-student relations the teacher's competence in providing an actual, correct picture of their performance, the teacher's professionalism in managing and organizing the teaching activity; the teacher's willingness to openly resolve any teaching-related misunderstandings; the teacher's responsiveness to novelty; and the teacher's relational capacity open to cooperation and dialogue (open communication style which facilitates cooperative circumstances).

The success of a higher education teacher within a tonic background able to yield "academic satisfaction", can be attained through a teaching activity which creates "performance-related" values as regards the "students" factor. Students expect the training style to be focused on ensuring their "academic welfare"; "the teaching strategies" to be designed in as wide a scope as possible, with alternatives adaptable to the students' characteristics and needs; the compensating and/or assisting tasks to be differentiated and even personalized as appropriate and the difficulty progression criterion to be observed.

The insertion in the questionnaire of a whole range of motivational factors implemented further on in the study of *academic performance by motivation towards communication in a foreign language* has enabled a quite interesting array of responses whose distribution and hierarchy could indicate "pools of interest" for foreign language teachers, for students as well as for foreign language curriculum designers and decision makers.

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