

Mantle-Bromley, Corinne. "Positive Attitudes and Realistic Beliefs: Links to Proficiency." *Modern Language Journal*, 79

(3) Fall 1995, pp. 372-386

- A study took place and results showed that many young learners enter their 1st language class w/ misconceptions about language learning that may hinder their progress and persistence in language study.
- Stats are from the 90's, so the numbers may not be the same anymore
- 69% of US high school graduates graduate w/ more than 2 yrs of foreign language study (no more than 230 hrs of language instruction)
 - ↳ not enough time to move average language student from novice to intermediate level
- 3/4 of American colleges and universities don't require language study
- It was a study in Florida
- Requiring students to take a language doesn't motivate them → impacts classroom achievement
- attitudes have 3 components:
 - affect: attitude refers to affect and is evaluative, emotional reaction
 - cognition: what a person knows about the attitudinal object
 - behavior: has to do w/ intentions or actions related to the attitudinal object
- disagreement w/ these components determines attitudes
 - ex: if you think Spanish speakers were below you
- To try to change classroom attitudes:
 - content delivery should require active learner involvement w/ complex, ^{sometimes} controversial material
 - classroom environment should be one of "change or novelty"
 - Students need to struggle w/ complex material and reach their own conclusions
 - Students should become aware of their own attitudes toward language and culture
- Act of classroom experiences very effective
- Common goals of "FLEX"
 - Introduction to language learning
 - Awareness and appreciation of foreign culture
 - appreciation of the value of communicating in another language
 - Enhanced understanding of English
 - Motivation to further language study
- Model of learning in study was due to nature of attitudinal construct, the foundation of attitude-change theory and knowledge base in each of these 3 areas
- Asked students what beliefs are since they differ
 - attitude toward language and speakers
- Most students in FLEX course thought they'd get an A or B and few reported intercultural experience
 - ↳ 47% said language learning wasn't important to their parents, 40% somewhat, 13% very important

• The lessons in the study aimed to:

- help students understand value of knowing a 2nd language and understanding its culture
- increase students' personal reasons for studying a 2nd language
- increase students' awareness of their own attitudes and beliefs about languages
- increase students' awareness of North American cultural variety
- increase students' cross cultural communication skills

• 5 attitude-change methods:

- Cognitive dissonance → created when one becomes aware that an attitude or belief isn't supported by data
- Acting in ways inconsistent w/ one's beliefs
- Direct exposure to the attitude object
- "Felt Accompli" → teacher gives evidence that supports a particular stance and then asks students to evaluate the situation
- Increased understanding of one's attitudes, including how they originated and how they are maintained

• Results prove that curricular intervention can maintain and improve students' attitudes

• Importance is placed on teacher in attitude-change efforts

• 23% thought Spanish was easy to learn at 13% for French, but this doesn't match their results

• 69% thought someone could become fluent in 2 years or less

• 41% believed some people are born w/ special language learning aptitude

• 36% believed they personally had that ability

• 36% didn't think cultural understanding was important

• Conclusion: teachers greatly influence attitudes and have the power to change them

} these attitudes can discourage learning when it becomes difficult

} these really surprised me

Ch. 3: Language Learning Fundamentals In Curran and Dahlberg, Languages and Learners - "Key Strategies for Language Teaching and Learning" (pp. 89-100)

• Language teaching has greatly changed → use of technology

• The communication goals are so the learner can function in a variety of situations and respond w/ meaning

- Also had to be able to interpret language

- in presentation, must be clear

• Must understand culture → different perspectives

• Setting goals is important for keeping motivation

• Learners must use language in and outside of classroom for optimal growth

• Students usually struggle w/ interpersonal speech because they are used to imitating the teacher

• There are several activities you can do to help in these areas

• must have meaningfulness in the classroom!

↳ identify patterns and make connections

• I have found it difficult to implement conversation that is not just reciting because many of our lessons

have a clear format to help our students understand and form sentences through repetition
For meaningfulness, in my lessons I give them many options for response to these questions
↳ some will even ask me for non-vocab words, which also helps w/ motivation

How do I facilitate conversation w/ beginner learners w/o just using repetition?
I don't really correct grammar in the most strict way → I tend to find that students correct themselves on their own

↳ if I notice a pattern, then I'll correct the whole class

I still try not to use English, but it's hard because the students are very confused, but I think part of it is them convincing themselves that they don't know English

↳ I let them struggle a bit before using English to make sure they are truly trying their best and not just waiting for an English translation

↳ sometimes their peers help them out with this

My students love hands-on approaches - especially games

-they are very competitive

-they don't care much for songs

Some love role play, others struggle with it

I want to incorporate stories better in my lessons

Small-group work is the most effective way for my students to practice conversation skills

I use many gestures to help describe meaning w/o using English

I use words of affirmation to help motivate my students - "muy bien", "excelente"

When they say they don't know Spanish, I help them through a speaking activity and say "¡Mira, sabes español! Recuerda de decir TODO eso en español! ¡Puedes hablar español!"

I always bring extra take-home activities for the next class in case there were absent students or students who lost it

↳ they get excited for the take-home activity now - even ask to help pass it out

I think my positivity helps them get through challenging tasks because I always try to motivate them

-I also give them time to answer questions

↳ some students are at higher levels, so they are always participating, but I try

to give students that are a little more shy a chance before picking on the students I know will get it correct

When I see a student getting upset about getting a question wrong, I reassure them letting them know that it isn't a big deal and that we're all learning together.