

Q: やる気を高めるために、各生徒の長所はどうやって見つけますか？ *What are our students' strengths?*

A: This is a good question that I recommend all teachers try to answer for themselves. Teachers are traditionally conditioned to look for what is lacking in their students' abilities and work. If asked about their students' weaknesses, probably many teachers can readily respond with accuracy. After all, they are expected to know these things so they can help their students improve. But can they answer just as quickly and concretely if asked about their students' good points? Are we ourselves capable of recognizing our own students' strengths, and if so, how often do we focus upon these strengths? How often do we share our own observations about students' strengths with the students? By doing so, especially to each student directly and specifically and honestly, we are opening up their eyes as to what they can potentially continue to use and develop. This can also open our own eyes about the quality and value of what students are learning.

In both written and verbal forms, try sharing your observations directly to individual students about what they are doing well. Make a goal of doing this with at least a few students each lesson. You may find this challenging at first, but it gets easier with practice. And as your perspective of the possible becomes more positive, so too does the participation and performance of the students.

(Joseph Falout 2016)

Q: ルーブリックは生徒のモチベーションアップのためですか？ *Although you said that you usually give students grades, full-marks or failure-marks on writing, don't you use rubrics to find out students' strength and/or weakness?*

A: Sure, I use rubrics sometimes for both writing and presenting, depending on which class it is and what the learning objectives are. More importantly, the students are using the rubrics in giving feedback to their peers. Rubrics are good for identifying specific areas that are predetermined by the rubric. "Liking," as explained by Elbow (2009) as basically appreciating what works in meaning-making, does not necessarily preclude the use of rubrics or structure, nor preclude rigor and validity. The kind of freestyle "liking" shown in one of my examples in our NUFs workshop (with green-starred specific feedback as opposed to red-marked error corrections on written reports) is good for both students and teachers to explore what works in meaning-making and why it works. It can also open up avenues of thinking about what is possible next time the students speak or write. The practice of "liking" can even point out what doesn't work and helps us embrace learning by trial and error: "Making mistakes makes me make more mature choices next chance!"

In other words, following a predetermined rubric can encourage working within the rubric, while following circuitous or discursive practices can encourage exploration that leads to powerful learning discoveries that are original and valid. In fact, our own field of applied linguistics has relied upon and been greatly informed by discursive practices, such as diary studies, ethnography, grounded theory, and narrative inquiry.

(Joseph Falout 2016)

Q: 生徒から否定的なコメントは教師のやる気が失せると思いますが。 *What happens if a respected reader sometimes gives us negative feedback? Would that make us more or less motivated?*

A: The answer depends upon many factors, including our history and relationship with the respected reader (or speaker, journal reviewer, family member, friend, colleague, etc.), the content of the message, the form and tone in which it was given, and the frame of mind we're in when we receive it. We might draw meaning from the same message differently at one moment or another, depending upon anything from the weather outside to our own internal weather (mood), and we may even reframe or reinterpret the meaning of the same message as time passes.

Something important to remember here is to be mindful of the way we teachers present any kind of feedback to our students, from well-intended personal advice to formal assessment. We might try to choose softer dictions and avoid imperatives. For example, using "might try to" instead of "should" in the previous sentence could lessen the level of pressure felt by the receiver of the advice. We might try explicitly teaching our students such pragmatic language use and its social effects, and they can practice it by giving feedback to each other. Rather than handing down quick, vague, and judgmental responses to an aspect of written work, spoken performance, or conversational interaction, we might use provocative, non-threatening questions to spark newer thought processes and meaning-making. Rather than determining the type of linguistic errors we are observing, we could be collaborating with our students on the elaboration of their thoughts and expressions, and in turn witness their continuation in using English and expansion of ideas. And all we need to do is ask, "What do you mean?" or "What could it mean?" Such questions can be encouraging.

For teachers doing action research and receiving what is interpreted as negative feedback from journal reviewers or editors, it might be good to: (1) allow some time to pass to help the negative emotions abate, and perhaps realize that the advice is actually quite astute, (2) remind yourself that these reviewers are on your side, and that their advice is intended to help you reach the mutual goal of improving the paper, and (3) try to revise the paper with the advice in mind, yet realize that sometimes there are different ways to solve the problems that the reviewers see, ways that might be considered by you and the reviewers as even better than what they had initially suggested. Reframing the reasons behind the negative feedback and what you might be able to do about it can help you stay motivated in publishing your action research.

(Joseph Falout 2016)

Q: 生徒同士の助け合いを重視したいのですが、レベルややる気の違いに差のある場合はどうしたらいいのでしょうか。How can I make students teach each other, and have autonomy in classroom when there's few students who can't participate well? Classes are not graded in public junior high, and the level of students' learning skill and attitude can vary. What will be effective in this case?

A: You are right. We cannot MAKE students really do anything. But we can invite them and give them choices. In Finland they do not do streaming at all and students learn to learn with people who are at lower levels. Still the system is the highest rated system in the world. Students learn that lower level students still have things to teach them, maybe not about English, but other things, that still makes them want to interact and learn about the other person. (Just because a Monkey may not speak English does not mean that I have nothing to learn by spending time with it.) Seeing every encounter as an opportunity to learn something and to be fascinated by life are ways of living we want to cultivate in our students and in ourselves.

Tim Murphey (2016)

Q: 英語の間違いを恐れるなどと言っても、入試や試験では間違いは許されません。どうしたらいいのでしょうか。How can I convince the students that making mistakes in English is OK even if the educational system (entrance tests and comprehensive tests) doesn't allow students to make mistakes?

A: I have a good friend who talks about “variations in severity” that we need to recognize. When our 1 and 2 year olds are beginning to walk and run, we never scold them for falling down or bumping into things, they are just learning about the world by close contact (people and beds are soft to bump into, walls and floors usually are not). In other words, we need the mistakes in order to understand our worlds. Some mistakes are just not mistakes, they are variations on getting something understood and communicated. The worst mistake we could possibly make is to stop trying to understand and communicate, and yet many do for fear of little mistakes. I teach my students to have “**mention conversations**” (one or two word utterances, asking questions and answering) with ungrammatical completeness: 1) Hungry? 2) Yeah! ! 1) Sleepy? 2) No. Native speakers have ungrammatical phrases a large part of the time. (and article on mentions is here:

https://www.academia.edu/2872974/Mentions_in_Action_Few_Word_Sentences_OK

Showing students the NPRM Video of the 4 students talking about mistakes (it was mailed to you in a previous email) also helps.

Tim Murphey (2016)

Q: 生徒が主体的になる活動はどのようなものですか。I'd be interested in hearing more activities to motivate, teach and 'student-center' my students.

A: I think the key here is to create well-designed activities to ensure that the students are genuinely interested in achieving a specific non-language goal. The activities that I did during the workshop are a few basic examples that can be modified depending on the teacher's overall language goal. Using the basic format of the activities that I presented, essentially that one student has some information, which the other student needs to complete his/her goal; you can come up with a lot of different and interesting activities related to your theme and target language. These can start with very basic activities requiring only one exchange of information, which progress to much more complex and creative activities. I think it is important that the teacher designs the activities themselves to ensure that they fit the teacher's individual learning goals for the students.

Sean Reid (2015)

Q: 生徒のやる気に悪影響を与えないテストとはどのようなものですか。How do you control the test making/validity while not affecting the students' motivation?

A: I'm not sure I understand this question but I will try to answer this with my interpretation of this question.

One of the maxims of neuroELT is, “Context affects cognition”, so any change in your teaching (or the syllabus design) will certainly affect the students motivation in some way--often in unseen ways. This is because it's all part of a dynamic system that is largely unpredictable, due to the complex effects of compounding variables. Student motivation is a part of a dynamic system of teaching. That

said, I think the best way to have students take a test while raising their motivation is to implement formative assessment.

As we discussed at our session, high-stakes tests only at the end of a course are unfair, and unscientific. Small tests of high frequency with outcomes and designs that are totally transparent to the students is a much better approach to lowering test anxiety.

To learn more about formative assessment, look here: <http://edglossary.org/formative-assessment/>

For great tools to teach with formative assessment, look here:

<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/5-fast-formative-assessment-tools-vicki-davis>

Robert Murphy (2015)

Q: ペーパーテストと生徒のモチベーションとの関連はどのようなものでしょうか。How does the difficulty of the paper test affect students' motivation? Will difficult tests make students study harder in the next term? Which is better: giving a difficult test so students will do their best for the next term, or giving a test suitable to their level but students will feel they don't have to study and exert effort?

A: Most people, in my experience, feel discouraged by bad results, and if their results are often or usually bad, they naturally become demotivated and conclude there is no point in trying. Success feels good and makes most people want to maintain their successful record.

A better way to motivate students than adjusting the difficulty level of tests is to let them feel the thrill of communicating their real information, opinions and feelings in English and learning about their classmates' information, opinions and feelings about various things. The teacher creates many small learning steps that most all of the students can succeed in. Over time, the effect of many small steps is a visible big step in ability to speak and write English. During one term and one year, students discover that using English to communicate is as fun as communicating in Japanese, and is also pretty “かっこいい”. Students doing such activities are generally smiling and very engaged. This discovery motivates them to want to know more vocabulary and to use grammar more correctly in order to use their English more skillfully.

Another thing to consider is the textbook. Paper tests are generally based on the textbook, so it has a significant impact on motivation. If the chosen textbook assumes a higher level of English than many students have, the students will find the textbook discouragingly difficult from the start. The weakest students have the biggest hurdle to jump. More motivating is a textbook with high-interest content (from students' points of view) and at a level that they can handle well with a reasonable amount of effort.

Nancy Mutoh (2014)