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STUDYING THE PROCEDURE COMPONENT OF LEARNING MOTIVES OF STUDENTS WITH DIFFERENT GPA (ON THE EXAMPLE OF STUDENTS OF KHACHATUR ABOVIAN. ASPU)

Abstract

The article focuses on the study of the procedural component of students' learning motives from the faculties of humanities of ASPU. As an academic task has been taken reading comprehension, and reading comprehension actions have been considered as procedural components of learning motives.

The focus group method was chosen as an effective method for studying the above-mentioned issue. The results of the focus group study, that's the variety of reading comprehension actions of students with different GPA (Grade Point Average) were revealed and grouped. The actions or strategies of medium and especially low GPA students are poor for ensuring deep comprehension of academic texts, which in its turn decreases learning motivation, while students with high-GPA mainly perform mental actions of different complexity levels for ensuring text comprehension which in turn increases intrinsic learning motivation.

Keywords: procedural component, learning motivation, learning actions, reading comprehension, focus group.

Learning motivation, as a key component of the learning process, are constantly changing due to reforms in higher education. As a result, the requirements for students are regularly modified and shifted. Perhaps one of the main ones is emphasizing the importance of students' individual/autonomous work throughout the entire study. In the context of increasing the share of autonomous work, the study of the students' learning motivation becomes more important, especially from the procedural point of view that is advanced approach (Bodrov V.A., Lozhkin G.V., Pljushh A.N., 2001).

Traditionally motivation to learn is connected with student's goals, interests, expectations, self-efficacy, etc., but never with learning actions. In the context of the

Psychological Theory of Activity learning actions and operations are considered as the process components of the motivation. Perception, understanding and learning of the academic material stands as the operational component of learning motivation, which provides the actual performance of the academic achievement.

According to another approach, success in academic performance depends on the students' learning strategies, which are skills and abilities to acquire and internalize knowledge effectively (Schellings, Gonny, 2011).

So, we think that learning actions and learning strategies have the same meaning and functions, therefore can be used as synonyms.

Understanding and mastering academic or scientific texts, scholarly articles, or internet publications is commonin higher pedagogical education. That's why Reading Comprehension is identified to be the most important part of the learning process. Simply put, in this study, individual Reading Comprehension actions/strategies appear as a procedural component of learning motivation.

Obviously, the reading comprehension depends on the effectiveness of analysis, comparison, synthesis, criticize, promotion of new ideas, etc. Therefore, for motivated learning, it seems necessary for the student to perform complex learning actions.

The problem reading comprehension is relevant throughout the world. It stands as a research object for many scientists (Doblaev, L.P., Davydov, V.V., Tikhomirov, O.K., Znakov, V.V., Chistyakova, G.D., Pearson, P.D., Anderson, R.C., Gallagher, M.C., Spiro, R.J. etc.). Researches (Royer, Marchant, Sinatra, & Lovejoy, 1990) have shown that students' academic performance mainly depends on their understanding of academic texts. Research we conducted has also revealed that the growth of intrinsic learning motivation depends on how effectively students cope with academic text comprehension (Karapetjan V.S., Kelojan M.A., 2014).

The research goal is to identify reading comprehension actions/strategies of low, medium, and high GPA students.

Sample of the study

The overall sample consists of low, medium, and high GPA 153 students (1st year 36, 2nd year 33, 3rd year 45, 4th year 39) from the Humanities stream of the Armenian State Pedagogical University.

Explanation and justification of the research method

The method of focus groups has been chosen as an adequate method for the goal and objectives of this study. The rationale for the selection has been served thorough examination of the existing methods, approaches and expert opinions on this issue.

Of course, there are various scales, questionnaires (Studentapproachesto learning (SAL), The Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ) etc.), which are implemented to conduct similar studies. However, many experts in this field (Veenman, 2003; Hopfenbeck, 2009, etc.) are of the opinion that the choice of method depends on the specific research task. For example, Veenman believes that the questionnaires after additional processing may provide adequate reliability, but their convergent validity remains low (Veenman, M.V.J., Prins, F.J., & Verheij, J., 2003). Hopfenbeck, when conducting similar studies, advocates the use of qualitative methods, in particular, interviews.

Moreover, there are two approaches to study the work with academic text: on-line (research is conducted in the learning process) and off-line (research is conducted before or after training) methods. The first group of studies includes the think-aloud method, behavior observation, eye movement measurement, trajectory analysis, and performance assessment. The second group of methods includes questionnaires, oral interviews, scales, portfolios. Today, researchers prefer the methods of the second group, since the results obtained using the methods of the first group cannot be generalized for all tasks. In addition, online methods are time-consuming in terms of both implementation and processing of results, and in the case of a large sample, their use is impractical (Veenman, M.V.J., Prins, F.J., & Verheij, J., 2003). In view of the above, we have chosen the focus group method.

The grade and academic performance have been chosen as the criteria for the formation of a homogeneous focus group. 8-12 students have been included in each group. The duration of focus groups ranged from 35-45 minutes and was protocoled (video recording was not carried out according to the student's request).

The objective analysis of the results has been made according to the requirements of the qualitative research analysis (Mel'nikova O.T., Khoroshilov D.A., 2010, pp. 12-19). Preliminary preparation and the very procedure of conducting focus groups were carried out on the basis of approaches Belanovsky, C.A. and Melnikov, O.T. (Belanovskij S. A., 2001, Mel'nikova O.T. ,2007).

Results and discussion

The results of the focus group study show that first-year students of the humanitarian stream with “high” academic performance used to divide the text into parts and read slowly or visualize the content during reading (see tab. 1.).

In the second-year students also establish connections between different topics and draw parallels, use other sources of information. The third year, students add to existing actions new ones: “compare and analyze”, “differentiate the primary from the secondary meaning in the text”. In the fourth year, students understand the text more deeply. A summary of the results obtained allows us to conclude that students with “high” academic performance mainly use metacognitive actions of different complexity levels (see tab. 1.).

Table 1. Learning actions of high GPA students (from 1st to 4th grade)

Grade	Learning actions	**Percentages**
1st	Divide into parts and slowly read	50%
	Read slowly and visualize	50%
2nd	Use other sources of information	50%
	Read slowly and visualize	25%
	Make connections between topics and draw parallels	25%
3rd	Make connections between different topics and courses	37,5%
	Read slowly and visualize	25%
	Compare and analyze	12,5%
	Differentiate primary and secondary information	12,5%
	Draw parallels	12,5%
4th	Read slowly and reproduce with comprehension	55,6%
	Make connections between different topics and courses	22,2%
	Use other sources of information	11,1%
	Compare and analyze	11,1%

First-year students of the humanitarian stream with “medium” GPA mostly read the text several times, then reproduce in own words. They also make notes, underline the main meaning in the text and write out it in brief. Not very popular actions are learning by examples and using dictionaries (see tab. 2).

Table 2. Learning actions of medium GPA students (from 1st to 4th grade)

Grade	Learning actions	Percentages
1st	Read several times and reproduce in own words	33,3%
	Make notes and underline	29,1%
	Divide into parts and read	16,7%
	Use dictionaries	8,4%
	Write out the text in brief	8,4%
	Learn by example	4,2%
2nd	Read and reproduce in own words	68,75%
	Make notes and underline	12.5%
	Write out the text in brief	12,5%
	Use a dictionary	6,25%
3rd	Read and reproduce the text word for word	26,3%
	Make notes and underline	21,1%
	Write out the text in brief	15,8%
	Divide into parts and read	15,8%
	Learn by example	10,5%
	Simplify material	5,25%
	Explain in own words	5,25%
4th	Divide into parts and read	25%
	Make notes and underline the main parts	16,6%
	Read, visualize and reproduce in own words	16,6%

	Write down unclear parts to find out	16,6%
	Write out the text in brief	8,4%
	Connect with past knowledge	8,4%
	Use of pictures, charts, schemes to understand and memorize	8,4%

Sophomores use nearly the same actions that use freshmen. The 3rd and 4th year, students write down unclear parts of the material, simplify and connect it with the past knowledge using pictures, charts, schemes for better understanding and memorizing. They already reproduce the content of the material in their own words, which can be considered as a criterion of understanding. This action is inherent to students with "high" GPA (see tab. 2).

First and second-year students with “low” academic performance mostly read and reproduce the text with the words of the author, nearly by heart. They also ask for help from a lecturer or friends when faced with difficulties (see tab. 3). Students of the 3rd and 4th years partly differ from the actions performed on previous courses: they tend to read aloud or in mind, separate comprehensible parts and try to remember, make records and listen many times. At the graduation course, these students are already beginning to apply the actions inherent to students with a “medium” academic performance: “make notes and underline the main parts”, “divide into parts and read” and “write out the text in brief”.

Table 3. Learning actions of low GPA students (from 1st to 4th grade)

Grade	**Learning actions**	**Percentages**
1st	Read and reproduce the text word for word	62,5%
	Ask for help from a lecturer	12,5%
	Ask for help from friends	12,5%
	Learn by heart	12,5%
2nd	Read	70%
	Try to learn by heart	20%
	Ask for help from a lecturer and friends	10%
	Read aloud or in mind	66,6%
	Read and reproduce the text word for word	11,2%

3rd	Ask for help from lecturers and friends	11,2%
	Separate comprehensible parts and try to remember	5,5%
	Divide into parts and read	5,5%
4th	Read aloud or in mind	72,4%
	Write out the text in brief	11,1%
	Read and try to recall	5,5%
	Make records and listen	5.5%
	Make notes and underline the main parts	5,5%

Thus, it becomes clear that students with “high” GPA while working with text perform complex mental actions, which leads to an understanding of the material, students with “medium” GPA mainly perform verbal and practical actions, while to students with “low” performance tend to mechanical memorization and text reproduction.

It was also revealed that students with "low" academic performance do not realize the difference between understanding and reproducing an educational text: at best, they perform actions that ensure the reproduction of material close to the text, which does not mean its understanding at all. The results of the study indicate that the problems in text comprehension directly affects the students' learning motives since it impedes the achievement of academic success (Karapetjan V.S., Kelojan M.A., 2014, Kelojan M. A., 2014).

Conclusions

Summarized results of the reading comprehension action in different academic achievement groups prove that:

(a) students with high-GPA mainly perform mental actions of different complexity levels (“*Make connections between knowledge and draw parallels”, “Make connections between different topics and courses”, “Read slowly and visualize”, “Compare and analyze”, “Differentiate primary and secondary information”, “Read slowly and reproduce with comprehension”, “Use other sources of information”* etc.);

(b) students with medium GPA do verbal and practical actions *(“Read several times and reproduce in own words”, “Make notes and underline”, “Divide into parts and read”,*

"Use dictionaries", "Write out the text in brief", "Learn by example", "Simplify material", "Explain in own words", "Write down unclear parts to find out" ("Connect with the past knowledge", "Use of pictures, charts, schemes to understand and memorize" etc.), that, of course, have cognitive elements;

(c) students with low GPA are used to read the texts and try to reproduce with text words *("Read and reproduce the text word for word", "Learn by heart", "Ask for help from a lecturer and friends", "Read aloud or in mind", "Separate comprehensible parts and try to remember", "Make records and listen"* etc.).

Comparing the reading comprehension actions in different grades of learning it is identified an insignificant dynamic of actions, e. g. some low GPA students on the 4th grade become use such actions (*"Write out the text in brief", "Make notes and underline"*) that are typical for medium GPA students.

Thus, we can notice that the actions or strategies of medium and especially low GPA students are poor for ensuring deep comprehension of academic texts, which in its turn decreases learning motivation.

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