The Impact of Motivation on English Language

Learning in the Gulf States

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Abstract

Numerous studies have shown that motivation is positively linked to success in learning the English language or any other second language. Generally, motivation and attitude work together to ensure learners' successful acquisition of a second language; hence, various motivational theories and models have been formulated to examine and explain this connection. However, there is a gap between theory and practice. Although it is widely documented that motivation is a proven means to success in language learning, several countries, like the Gulf States, remain reluctant to cultivate learners' motivation to learn a second language due to several reasons. Therefore, this research paper analyses the impact of motivation on English language learning by eliciting observations of researchers in the field. Finally, several suggestions and some recommendations regarding future research in this area have been highlighted.

Keywords: Attitude, Motivation, Learning, EFL/ESL, Achievement, Language instruction

1. Introduction

English can be difficult when taught in a foreign language (FL) setting, where authentic language input may not be readily available outside the classroom. Often, with a character-based language, language learners' motivation must be high since persistence and determination are needed to deal with the stress of a difficult language.

"Motivation represents one of the most appealing, yet complex variables used to explain individual differences in language learning" (MacIntyre et al. 2001, p. 462). These words accurately describe the complexity of the concept that researchers, classroom instructors and language learners themselves have faced since Gardner and Lambert brought to light the various aspects of motivation through their studies in the late 1950's. In the following literature review of the studies conducted on motivation, the authors will attempt to present a limited overview of motivation, supporting research from both inside and outside of the classroom. Unfortunately, few studies have been conducted to investigate learners' motivation in learning English in Kuwait, and in the Gulf States at large. It would be helpful for Kuwaiti teachers (and teachers in the Gulf States in general) to formulate instructional methods that enhance the English learning capacity of their pupils. This researchers hope that the study would yield results and recommendations that can be used to   inform educators and teachers in the Gulf States on appreciating better the attitude and motivation of their students and, thus,   to look for a suitable approach to teaching the English language.

2. Literature Review

Motivation has been broadly recognised by scholars, researchers, and teachers as one of the major variables that determine the level and success of second language learning (SLA). As emphasised by Dornyei (2001), "teacher skills in motivating learners should be seen as central to teaching effectiveness" (P. 116). Motivated learners are enthusiastic, eager to work hard, concentrate on the tasks given, do not require constant encouragement, willingly confront challenges, and could even motivates others, facilitating collaborative learning. The early attempt to understand the impact of motivation on English language learning stems from the field of social psychology (Gu, 2009). This research paper analyses the impact of motivation on English language learning in terms of the various motivational theories.

The motivation of learners greatly affects their willingness to take part in the process of learning. Numerous studies have reported the importance of viewing the concept of motivation as a multifaceted phenomenon. Oxford and

Shearin (1994) have examined a number of motivational theories and six variables that influence motivation in language learning (Al-Bustan & Al-Bustan, 2009, S454):

- Attitudes (i.e. sentiments towards the target language).

- Beliefs about self (i.e. expectations about one's attitudes to succeed, self-efficiency, and anxiety).

- Goals (perceived clarity and relevance of learning goals as reasons for learning).

- Involvement (i.e. extent to which the learner actively and consciously participates in the learning process).

- Environmental support (i.e. extent of teacher and peer support).

- Personnel attributes (i.e. aptitude, and language learning experience).

As argued by Pit Corder, "given motivation, it is inevitable that a human being will learn a second language if he is exposed to the language data" (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2009, 1). This statement was given four decades ago and, from then on, numerous theroetical perspectives and studies investigating the multifaceted nature of motivation and its impact on second language learning have emerged. At the same time, the world has also witnessed the growth of globalisation, European reconstruction, the demise of communism, extensive economic and political migration, greater mobility, and the rapid development of media technologies—all contributing to the relentless pace of global English (McKay, 2002). In other words, over the recent decades the world has transformed dramatically—it is currently distinguished by sociocultural and linguistic flexibility and diversity, where language learning, identity, and ethnicity have become multifaceted contemporary subject matters and the focus of considerable attention in the field of sociolinguistic.

However, it is only recently that those engaged in the field of second language learning motivation have actually started to investigate what this evolving global phenomena may suggest for how scholars conceptualise the motivation to acquire proficiently in global English as second language for individuals wanting to gain global recognition or identity (Shafaei & Nejati, 2008). In other words, motivation in second language learning is presently in the process of being completely reevaluated and reconstructed within the perspective of current concepts of self and identity.

Establishing a successful second language learning process is a challenging undertaking that is subject to numerous external and internal aspects in the societies where it is brought in. Motivation towards acquiring proficiency in English as well as the attitudes of teachers and learners are among the major aspects in the success of bringing in a foreign language in any institution. The attitude and levels of motivation towards English as a second language are modest; not hindering English language learning but also not creating the most excellent environment for English language learning in educational institutions (Klemens, 2009). Educators facilitating English language learning should identify the weaknesses in attitude and motivation among learners then deal with them by developing suitable strategies of English instruction which are motivating and can foster favourable attitudes towards learning English as second language.

Lambert (1963) has developed a 'social psychological model' where he has underlined cognitive aspects like intelligence and language abilities, and affective variables like motivation and attitudes. In his theory, he argues that the level to which a person effectively learns a foreign language will rely on motivation, attitudes towards the foreign language, and ethnocentric predispositions. Gardner (1985), another early advocate in this discipline, identifies L2 motivations as "the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" (p. 63); in particular, motivation is believed to include three elements: attitude towards language learning, willingness to learn the language, and level of motivation.

Researchers have often stressed the role of motivation in learning a second language. In his study of advanced German students of English enrolled at England's University of Reading, Lennon (1993) sees motivation as "the most important single factor influencing continuing development in oral proficiency" (p. 41). Per se, it has been the focus of many studies. A valuable foundation is given by Gardner's description of motivation. The 'desire' component is directly related by Gardner to the objectives learners attempt to attain through language learning, which is more generally called the 'orientation of the learner's motivation' (Graham, 1997, 96). Gardner (2010) has proposed that this factor can fall within either of these two categories, namely, an instrumental or an integrative orientation. In the latter, the language is acquired due to a desire to relate and belong to the community where the language is used; in the former, the language is seen as a way to achieve other objectives, like educational or professional aspirations, rather than as an objective in itself. It is also argued that an integrative orientation is more

enduring and more directly related to success than an instrumental orientation (Gardner, 2010). According to Garcia (2007), learners who are instrumentally motivated appear to be more driven by external aspects like incentives, which, as believed, are less stable.

Nevertheless, the issue is not as precise as may be presumed. As Au (1988) argues, conflicting findings or outcomes, ranging from nonexistent, negative, and positive correlations between proficiency and integrative orientation, have emerged from studies in various learning settings. For instance, Gardner and Lambert (1972) did discover that in bilingual Montreal an integrative motivation was more closely related to proficiency in the French language. Yet, in the Philippines, an instrumental motivation appeared to be more useful for English learners. This latter finding is not completely surprising and one would expect the same trend in any society where interaction with English-speaking nations is an integral component of the economy; in fact, a research in India discovered the value of an instrumental motivation in acquiring proficiency in English (Lins, 2007). Moreover, other researchers in various settings have challenged the value given to integrative orientation; Burstall and colleagues (1974 as cited in Graham, 1997, 98), for instance, discovered that for second language learners in UK schools both an integrative and an instrumental motivation contributed much to achievement.

The difficulty arises from the fact that Gardner (2010) does not argue anymore that integrative orientation is essentially more advantageous than other types; rather he claims more simply that learners who are integratively motivated are likely to be more proficient in a language than learners without this kind of orientation. On the other hand, another aspect of Gardner's description of motivation—affective component—is associated with variables like anxiety, self-esteem, and risk-taking (Kline, 2006). Referring to the language learning theory of Curran (1976), he proposes that problems may occur as students are expected to shift to a more independent language use as they view this as a 'high risk-low gain' scenario (Graham, 1997, 99). Hence, Beebe (1983) argues that "learners experience a crisis in motivation because they evaluate the situation as a bad gamble" (p. 45). This could shed light on the low achievement which appears to characterise a number of A-level students (Nakata, 2006). Feng and Chen (2009) highlighted the impact of teacher's behaviour on learning (Feng & Chen, 2009, 64):

> "An enthusiastic and considerate teacher can offer satisfaction to the learner's extra needs. This helps strengthen the learner's study motivation. On the other hand, a teacher's attitude towards the learner has major influence on the learner's learning. As regards emotional cramming, a teacher's physically and mentally pouring into his teaching, and being filled with affection, will help arouse the learning enthusiasm of the learners. However, if the teacher only works as a 'teaching craftsman' and puts no emotion into teaching, the classroom will become static to lessen the learning enthusiasm of the learners."

Modifications in teachers' perception of learning tasks, instructional methods, and motivation may all lead to more encouraging, interesting, and accommodating classroom environment, which seems to promote success in second language learning.

Another aspect contributing to motivation levels could be the manner in which students attribute reasons for their underachievement or success. The core argument of Attribution Theory states that individuals have a tendency to attribute their performance to the effort they give, the difficulty of the activity, or to their capability (Zhang, 2009). Learners more likely to attribute their performance to task difficulty or capability have a tendency to have poorer motivation, because these aspects are regarded to be unchangeable, or outside the learner's control. In contrast, attributing failure or success to effort may result in higher levels of motivation, since it can be controlled by the learner (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2009). Numerous studies have demonstrated the strong positive correlation between success and motivation. Gardner (2010), for instance, reports that joined ability and motivation form a large portion of the discrepancy of success in language learning.

In contrast, studies indicating that achievement promotes motivation have been similarly compelling. Burstall and colleagues (1974 as cited in Ellis, 1997, 115), in their investigation of British students of French in secondary school, discovered stronger correlation between the success of first-year students and their levels of motivation in second year than between motivation levels in the first year and achievement in the second year, resulting in the assumption that achievement boosts motivation. The uncertainty and inconsistency surrounding the field of motivation in language learning arises partly from concepts of motivation that are problematic "in terms of their distance from everyday, nontechnical concepts of what it means to be motivated" (Ellis, 1997, 115). Dickinson (1987), distancing from the instrumental/integrative model, brings up 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' motivation, which he views as directly associated with the level of self-determination and independence which learners may use in the learning setting. Likewise, a weak appreciation of the goals involved in the process of learning may weaken the determination to succeed. This could also be factual if the goals of learners seem to be at odds with the teacher's approach to the

learning setting (Lockhart, 1994). These perspectives are perhaps more similar to a traditional psychological and educational concept of motivation than such notions as orientation.

3. Research Question

To what extent does motivation have an impact on expediting and enforcing English learning in the Gulf States.

4. Significance of the Study

This paper is an analytic study of the impact of motivation on English language learning by drawing on observations of researchers in the field.   It aims at exploring the types of motivation factors that affect students in learning English as a second language. It also focuses on the possible reasons why the Arab Gulf countries are still reluctant to cultivate learners' motivation to learn English as a second language

5. Purpose of the research

It is well known that research on themes relating to different disciplines give insights and broaden   the horizons of prospective researchers to carry out investigations on topics relating to their own teaching and learning contexts. It is, therefore, hoped that this study provides vision for future researchers on the given topic.

6. Limitations of the Research

Motivation is not subject to English language only; it could also be the driving force for learners   in any field of study anywhere in the world. However, the focus of this paper is twofold: Firstly, to highlight the impact of motivation on English language learners; and secondly, to measure the extent of such an impact on those living in the Gulf region i.e. Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC) countries.

7. Data Collection

This is a secondary source study; in other words, information is collected from primary sources such as action/empirical research, case studies, observations and so on. The paper could involve one or more of   these processes such as generalizations, analysis, interpretations and evaluation of the original information from the primary sources. It is, therefore, an inductive type of research.

8. Discussion

English language has become one of the world's most spoken languages. As stated by Bernaus (2005), numerous countries across the globe which have their own languages have made the English language their second language. Majority of the public agencies and organisations in these nations have established English as their official language. This is because of globalisation which has demanded the adoption of a single language in the world that can facilitate communication. Higher learning institutions are examples of organisations where the English language is extensively used and disseminated (De Beaugrande, Grosman, & Seidlhofer, 1998). Nevertheless, the Gulf States are among those which have exhibited reluctance in using English in learning institutions.

The implementation of English as a second language among the Gulf States has been complicated because of the presence of mother tongues which are profoundly embedded in the linguistic history of communities in this part of the world. Nevertheless, the expansion of globalisation has obliged all countries to adopt an international language hence English has been finally accepted in different learning institutions in the Gulf States (Wahba, Taha, & England, 2006). Kuwait is among these nations which are seeking to offer English language learning to students. Unfortunately, the task has met numerous hindrances, primarily among which poor motivation among the learners and teachers as well as unenthusiastic approach to English language learning.

The worldwide adoption of the English language introduces the value of English learning for majority of Kuwaiti learners. However teachers have discovered that it is hard to engage or motivate students in the classroom. Furthermore, most instructors invest more effort and time in teaching technical aspects of the language, taking for granted the communication between learners and teachers, hence learners have a slight opportunity to practice English in the classroom (Alshaar, 1997). More unfortunate is the fact that examinations serve an integral function in English learning. Acquiring high test scores is a prevailing motivation for most learners (Al-Bustan & Al-Bustan, 2009).

A number of researchers have stated that it is difficult to be successful in second language learning. They considered second language learning to be a complicated task affected by external and internal forces. Motivation is one of the primary forces influencing second language learning. These researchers claimed that motivation has been broadly recognised as a major aspect which determines the success and level of second language learning. They regard

motivation as one of the primary components that contribute to proficiency in second language; it influences the level of dynamic and personal engagement in second language learning.

Attitudes towards a certain language may be either favourable or unfavourable. Several students may have unfavourable attitude towards the foreign language and seek to be proficient in it in order to overcome others in the community but commonly favourable attitudes reinforces motivation (Garcia, 2007). Attitude towards a language is a vital notion because it serves a major function in language instruction and learning. As argued by Pan and colleagues (2010), success in second language learning requires favourable attitudes toward the language. Nonetheless, because of the drastic changes across the globe, there was an increased pressure on more educational institutions to interact or communicate with the outside world. So as to fulfil and deal with such growing pressures English language learning in Kuwait has become one of the requirements of daily activities. In a study carried out by AL Othman (1996) on four colleges of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training in Kuwait, a further education institution, he argues that students, in general, show a strong instrumental motivations towards learning English language in order to get a job, please parents, persue a degree, opt for higher education etc. In my own experience since then students' motivation has not changed; on the contrary, their attitudes to learn the language is consistently and conspicuously plummeting probably because they are too relaxed.

In his study at Applied Technology High School (ATHS) in the UAE Al Noursi (2013) states: "The findings indicated that the students hold positive attitudes toward learning English language" (P.26) and the reason for such an attitude, he adds, "is probably due to the strong and growing conviction of the government that English competence and computer skills are a must for the younger generation in the twenty-first century." (p.21). Moreover, Mallalah (2004) finds out in his study that high school Kuwaiti students had high motivation to learn English because of their favourable attitudes toward English native EFL teachers. A variety of reasons were also detected such as,   being cheerful, hard working, democratic, kind,   friendly, intelligent and so on.

This is a clear indication that good and effective language teaching strategies adopted by the teachers can encourage students to develop positive attitudes toward learning the language.

Furthermore, Randall and Samimi (2010) in their research at the British University in Dubai observe highly motivated students to learn English. In this respect they note "What is clear, however, is that English (in which we include social, daily life 'communications with others') are rated very highly by the group" (p.48). In this vein,   it should be well noted that English is the language of science and technology, innovations and breakthroughs, democracy and modernization and the language of a dominant civilization which everyone in this part of the world would like to cope up with.

Even though numerous studies on teaching models, instructional materials, learning theories, and language learning are being carried out, on a regular basis, a great deal of it has been limited by the cultural beliefs of the West. Few studies have focused on the issue of how the teaching environment has affected the learning of learners where the learners are not English majors but taking English subject because of educational necessities and professional reasons (Oxford, 1996). This reality could at least generate the assumption that local English education barriers are still in existence for a long time now. Simply, the hindrances to learning English as a foreign language at higher learning institutions go beyond the limitations imposed by the learners' background and capacity.

Methods developed previously do not usually consider the significance of the motivation of the learner to learn a language. Identifying the numerous reasons why learners dislike difficult tasks is essential but recognition alone is not enough to change the situation. Other measures should be adopted. The motivation to be proficient in a language depends on how learners explain their failure or success (Murray, Gao, & Lamb, 2011). Language instruction is most frequently explained and analysed from the perspective of teachers and/or scholars. As argued by Lockhart (1994), "However while learning is the goal of teaching, it is not necessarily the mirror image of teaching. Learners, too, bring to learning their own beliefs, goals and attitudes, and decisions, which influence how they approach their learning" (p. 52). In other words, learners have a tendency to have particular preferences and assumptions in their learning approaches. Several researchers assume that most people learn best when knowledge is introduced or taught in a manner that complements their learning preferences,

Very few studies have been conducted concerning the learning orientations of ESL university students in Kuwait (Alshaar, 1997). Motivation, favourable attitudes, and satisfying learners' learning preferences, will certainly result in successful English language learning. Studies show that favourable learning attitudes can result in dynamic or involved learning. Dynamic learning, which includes writing, reading, brainstorming and participation in problem-solving tasks, can have an encouraging effect on students' learning. Learners are more interested to or involved in learning when they are dynamic and have the opportunity to decide over the process of learning (Oxford,

1996). Most researchers believe that a more accurate knowledge of the preferences and levels of motivation of language learners can have a positive impact on the practice of helping language learners acquire proficiency in English as a second language.

Teachers and scholars have long recognised the ability of learners to enhance instruction and learning. When the perspective of learners are considered for its important effect on second language learning, educators will have a greater knowledge of the learners' distinctive levels of motivation and learning attitudes. Satisfying learners' preferences can boost the motivation to succeed in learning the English language. In this case, learners will exhibit greater performance in the foreign language if they have the motivation to become proficient in English. According to Crooks and Schmidt (1991), motivation has been characterised as the attitude of the learner towards the objective and idea of second language learning. It is believed that learners who exhibit higher performance in second language learning are those who have high levels of motivation.

The findings of Sadiq Midraj and colleagues (2008), in their study of the influence of affective factors on the performance of Arab EFL Learners, demonstrate that motivation significantly determines scores in the language proficiency test. Potential students of Emirati University who were internally motivated had greater English language success than learners who are extrinsically motivated or studied the language for practical purposes (Midraj et al., 2008). The results of this study substantiated the theories of Gardner, Lambert, and other scholars that there is a positive correlation between motivation and success in second language learning. Furthermore, these findings substantiate the theories of Gardner and Lambert that students who are integratively motivated have a tendency to achieve more than instrumentally motivated learners (Midraj et al., 2008).

Hence, the study of Midraj amd colleagues (2008) strengthens the idea that every socio-cultural setting has its own distinctive motivators that should be identified and examined so that educators and English courses can more appropriately deal with the aspects that contribute to success in learning a second language. More accurate knowledge of learners' motivational attributes may help ESL/EFL teachers to develop language instructional courses that foster the motivation most advantageous to the cultivation of more proficient ESL/EFL students. Furthermore, it can assist instruction designers in developing and teachers choosing tasks and projects that encourage learners' motivation.

9. Result Related to the research Question

Based on the above discussion and the primary research findings, it becomes quite apparent that motivation plays a significant role in enhancing and expediting students' English language learning in the GCC schools and universities. Factors affecting English language learners' motivation are discussed below.

10. Recommendations and Suggestions

Instructional programs for Arab learners must be reliable and enhance their integrative motivation so as to foster and boost their interest in spending time and exerting effort on learning outside the traditional confines of the classroom. Basically speaking, these programs must complement learners' goals and needs, and they must be internally motivating to learners. Tasks must not generate a sense of artificiality that is hard to counteract by making learning insincere and problematic because this promotes poor motivation in learning and weakens learners' internal motivation (Wahba et al., 2006). Teachers of Arab learners have to promote risk taking in the classroom and employ interactive tasks to help students ease their anxiety. This could also result in students building a positive relationship with speakers of the language.

Furthermore, teachers must use activities and employ a teaching ideology that encourages the growth of intrinsic motivation while boosting the integrative motivation of learners. There are various language activities that can be employed to foster intrinsic motivation, to promote the desire to communicate, and to boost learners' integrative orientation while enhancing learners' language abilities. Language instruction centred on authentic activities naturally deals with the requirements of second language learners by enabling individual attributes to be a part of the process of language learning (Klemens, 2009). Learners who are interested and involved in authentic activities are more likely to keep up with the effort that learning demands. Furthermore, authentic activities have the capacity to bring out language students' knowledge creation and motivate them. Thus, language students can become determined and interested in learning. In this case, learning itself becomes its motivator and can lead to a strong desire for continuous learning.

11. Conclusions

Motivation is one of the most essential aspects determining success in learning the English language. On the contrary, attitudes towards a specific language could be either favourable or unfavourable. In this case, some students may

have unfavourable attitudes towards the foreign language and aspire to be proficient in it in order to be more important than others in the community but usually favourable attitude reinforces their motivation. Unfortunately, few studies have been conducted to investigate Kuwaiti learners' motivation in learning English. It would be helpful for Kuwaiti teachers to formulate instructional methods that enhance the English learning capacity of their pupils. This research would also guide Kuwaiti teachers in appreciating better the attitude and motivation of their students and to look for a suitable approach to teaching the English language.

It is also important to recognise aspects that foster internal motivation in English language learning; however, it is also important to take into consideration extrinsic motivation, even though this form of motivation is unstable. Furthermore, future studies should be derived from other motivational models and theories and explore different learning approaches, which may allow teachers and researchers to fully enhance English language learning. Motivation can affect proficiency in a particular language, but this connection is characterised by mutual causation because unfavourable and favourable learning attitudes and experiences can affect the learners' motivation. A motivated learner may boost his efforts to become proficient in a particular language, but a learner who is consistently incapable of fulfilling his/her learning goals may become less motivated.

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