

Role of Motivational Factors on EFL Learning Situations of Saudi EFL Students

¹Dr. Safia Asad, ²Mohd. Asad Siddiqui,

¹Assistant Professor, Faculty of English Language Center, King Khalid University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

²Research Scholar, English Department, Integral University, Lucknow, (U.P), India

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to explore the role of motivational factors on EFL learning situations of Saudi EFL students. We can get different types of teaching all over the world. But we can see more differences in language teaching because of different circumstances. There is a big difference in teaching English as a second language in a native English-speaking country as compared to teaching English as a foreign language in a non-native English-speaking country. English teaching in Saudi Arabia faces many problems. One of the major reasons for this problem is low motivational level of the learners. Higher motivation depends on various factors for e.g., personality, society and many more. The main goal of this paper is to create a healthy environment for both teachers and students regarding this issue. Here we will not only discuss the importance of motivation in language teaching and learning but also the ways to improve the motivational level of Saudi students.

Keywords: Motivation, EFL, ESL, Context, English, Saudi Arabia

I. INTRODUCTION

We know that motivation plays an important role in our life. From childhood to adulthood, it is the key factor in pushing anyone to achieve a particular aim. If we talk about learning a foreign language, motivation is the only factor which insists a learner to grab the knowledge regarding a target language. We can get different types of teaching all over the world. But we can see differences in language teaching because of different circumstances. There is a big difference in teaching English as a second language in a native English-speaking country as compared to teaching English as a foreign language in a non-native English-speaking country. English teaching in Saudi Arabia faces many problems. One of the major reasons for this problem is the low motivational level of the learners. Higher motivation depends on various factors for e.g., personality, society and many more.

The most important challenge for an EFL teacher is to handle students of low-level motivation. And this should be the core point of our attention. This paper will present some ideas which will help both teachers and students to achieve their goal. We all know that motivational factors are very important especially for EFL learners in the KSA. So, this is the main responsibility of a teacher to boost the motivational level of a student. This paper will discuss lots of steps to raise the motivation level in the Saudi context.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous scholars and men of letters have interpreted and defined Motivation as per their own perspectives and pragmatic usages to benefit the readers as per their own implications.

Solak (2012) emphasizes that motivation is the main element that insists us to get our aim. It always inspires us to reach the goal. He refers to Wigfield and Tonks (2002) and Gardner (2001), who maintain that motivated individuals endeavor hard to achieve their goals and objectives in life. To them, success is a positive reinforcement that employs certain strategies to reach the goals that have already been set. Many theories assist us in collaborating with our own thoughtfulness and intellectual strength and open before us a variety of tools to get our desired aim and prioritized preferences like Lewin's field theory, Atkinson's achievement theory and Rotter's social learning theory (quoted in Madrid et al, 2001) where human behavior depends on individuals' expectations of achieving success. Therefore, '*motivation can be considered as goal-directed behavior*' (Demir quoted in Solak, 2012, p. 241).

Contemporary fast-moving society has undoubtedly increased anxiety, stress and the fear of being failure at competitive level ultimately giving a sense of vague unexpectedness and insecure environment that is not supposed to be a healthy Phenomenon That's why it becomes mandatory task of the theorists to work extensively on stress reduction and growth in accomplishing the desired tasks.

Referring to Freud's Psychoanalytic theory and Hull's drive theory, Madrid (2001) states that stress reduction exerts a great impact on human behavior that leads to ultimate accomplishment in life. To Madrid, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis emphasizes emotional factors and sees motivation as a fundamental element that controls the process of SLA. Therefore, motivation is an essential factor that forces learners to excel in achieving their educational targets.

Society and culture are the two important and integrated segments which cannot be separated and categorized as the two different parameters That is why, the factors that may boost the level of motivation among the learners are likely to be different in various cultures depending on their social needs, expectations and preferences under the highly set and established norms and regulations of their cultural ethics and moral values as well.

How practically Vibulphol, J. (2016) defines motivation as a process that 'kick starts' the machine, 'lubricates' the parts, and 'fuels' the engine to keep it running. Without motivation, learners may not start the act of learning at all and for those who have started to learn, they may not be able to maintain their learning once they face hardships in the process as it is said that climbing the rock might not be as difficult as holding the position for a sustainable period with same expertise and accomplishment. (Dornyei, 2001; Gardner, 2007; Palmer, 2009). Since the manufacturing of every machine is different from others, its starting, lubrication, and fueling processes seem to be different too. A similar rule tends to apply to Saudi EFL adult learners in comparison to Pakistani ESL adult learners.

Sometimes the linguistic variation and dialectal difference plays a crucial role a getting a desired work done with meritorious expertise, and the outstanding learners may not be able to show positive results in learning due to their linguistic demotivation, that causes too much harm to their natural strength. Referring to motivation, Dornyei (quoted in Solak, 2012: p.241-242) comments, "...the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalized and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out". To him, motivation is directly related to what people prefer to do, their patience to continue the behavior, and their trying on it. Motivation, thus, provides the primary impetus to initiate learning L2 and functions as the driving force to sustain the long and tedious learning process.

Theorists like Zhao Lei (2011, p. 100) advocate, "Motivation concerns the direction and magnitude of human behavior and it can be defined by answering why people decide to do something, how hard they are going to pursue it and how long they are willing to sustain the activity". Therefore, ESL/EFL adult learners should not opt for English as their major until they are not intrinsically motivated towards it because it is the first and foremost condition for learning L2 which makes the process smooth no matter how laborious, long, and tedious it is. Lack of motivation and aptitude for learning L2 can restrict the students from learning the target language. Hui-Ju Liu & Chien-Wei Chen, (2015) strengthen the similar views that motivation is a core element along with language aptitude in determining the success of learning another language. Positive and strong learning motivation is essential for achieving proficiency in a foreign/second language.

Wang and others (2015:1) think that in the domain of second/foreign language (L2) motivation, there is a strong correlation between L2 motivation and language learning success. In contrast, if the learners lack motivation, or may have low interest in English, they are likely to encounter disappointment and setback while learning it. Therefore, the primary objective of the ESL/EFL teachers and administrators should be to inculcate the essence of motivation in the learners for the speedy learning of the target language.

A few researchers classify motivation into two major types: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Lei Zhao (2011) refers to Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory, who made two basic distinctions based on the different reasons or goals that give rise to actions—intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Some of the students join a course with intrinsic motivation while others acquire motivation through various extrinsic reasons such as for getting future reward or stimulus, for gaining power and status, or losing something in their life (fear factor) in case of failure. Quoting Hedge (2000: 23), Lei Zhao (2011) highlights Hedge's emphasis that motivation is of crucial importance in the classroom, whether learners arrive with it or whether they acquire it through classroom experiences.

Intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable (Ryan and Deci 2000). Students with intrinsic motivation have their reasons for L2 learning that are derived from the inherent pleasure and interest in the activity; the activity is undertaken because of the spontaneous satisfaction that is associated with it (Noels 2001: 45). However, not all activities are sufficiently novel, challenging, or aesthetically pleasing to be intrinsically motivating. Extrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome (Ryan and Deci 2000).

Number of factors do affect the proper usages of hidden caliber and intellectual strength as far as the result-oriented tasks and accomplishments are concerned because research on linguistic motivation focuses on many factors that affect positively or adversely on the motivational level of the language learners, which is the prime area of concern in this regard.

As per Dornyei (2009), “Motivation,” “re-motivation” and “demotivation” are important factors that play crucial roles in academic study— the process of sustained English language acquisition. Wang (2015) divides the concept of academic motivation into two types: general motivation and task-specific motivation. According to his classification, linguistic motivation can be termed as general motivation covering all the language skills, whereas focusing on the specific language skill or area such as vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation, etc. can be categorized as task-specific motivation. That is why the EFL/ESL learners should be given a reasonable level of autonomy in the class so that they can express their talent in their favorite linguistic area and achieve their desired objectives in mastering the specific arena

Learning a foreign language is directly related to human behavior and his motivational spirit and that is the point that there are always some underlying reasons, behind the motivation or demotivation, in foreign language learning contexts. Wang & others (2015) endorse the similar views that the correlation between learning a foreign language with the help of motivation has never been proved. However, they acknowledge the truth that motivation can control human behavior, so learning a new language is also a kind of behavior that can be monitored and streamlined by the teachers to produce desirable linguistic results among the learners.

Socio-cultural effect cannot be ruled out in this context and cross-cultural communication does work as a major hindrance in case of learning a foreign language specially for the Arab society and the rest of the Gulf world, as Ahmad (2015) categorically claims that the socio-cultural environment plays a vital role in the enhancement of linguistic motivation. Through his research, he proves that the proficiency level of Saudi EFL learners is generally below the expectation due to multi-traditional and socio-cultural barriers. Saudis consider Arabic as a linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage; therefore, all other languages including English are generally neglected.

Languages spoken in the Republic of India belong to several language families. The major ones being the Indo-Aryan languages spoken by 78.05 percent of Indians and the Dravidian languages spoken by 19.64 percent of Indians. Both families together are sometimes known as Indic languages. According to the People’s Linguistic Survey of India, India has the second highest number of languages (780) after Papua New Guinea (840).

Interestingly, Persian and English both played an important role in India as Persian was the court language during Mughal Period and reigned as an administrative language for several centuries until the era of British Colonization.

India is ranked as world’s second- largest English-speaking country after the United States, with over one billion people speaking it. English in India is primarily used in business, education, and official documents. Indian foreign language learners do get advantage in speaking as they become habitual of using it right from their childhood, here environment plays a vital role in developing English skills both written and oral, in a pragmatic sense.

Motivation is a force that establishes links with the individuals’ thoughts that control human behavior affecting their attitudes and linguistic performance. Loko Grace Ifeoma (2015:10) explains the term motivation that it is a kind of instigating agent that gives enormous vigor to a person who moves forward to achieve his ultimate goals in life. However, the question of whether the motivational features of one model can affect the other one has not been answered by the researchers. Therefore, it is important to investigate this question to contribute positively to the research arena. The paper at hand also provides an opportunity to compare the learning habits, attitudes, stamina, and styles of Saudi EFL learners with Pakistani ESL learners, opening new avenues for future researchers.

The Status of English in Saudi Arabia

As per the requirements of business, education, economical and scientific advancements it becomes extremely significant to learn English in all its varied forms. It is the need of the hour in the world of Globalization and swiftly changing scenario and Saudi Arabia is all set to achieve the desired results in English language learning with all its full motivational spirit and endeavoring task-oriented working. The official status of English in Saudi Arabia is that of a primary foreign language, and the country continues to show considerable interest in the language. It is the most needed foreign language to be taught and learned in the country and is primarily serving as the de facto foreign language of study. Saudi Arabia is a vast country with considerable linguistic uniformity as Arabic is the dominant spoken native language, though there is also substantial dialectal diversity. English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is not a 'neutral' language. It is loaded with political, religious, social, and economic overtones and is a topic of heated debate.

While the influence of globalization and modernization policies adopted in KSA has led to an increase in the use of English in the country; there are processes of resistance to English that question its validity and contribute to a shift in the language to suit local beliefs and practices. One of the reasons why English is considered so important in the KSA education system is its perceived economic value. KSA relies heavily on the large number of foreign companies that critically contribute to the economic development of the country. Even as early as 1978, almost 90 per cent of workers in crucial establishments such as hospitals, restaurants, and shopping malls were expatriates with only 10 per cent of the workers being Arab nationals with a good command of English (Al-Braik 2007). At that time one of the main objectives of teaching EFL in KSA was to produce students who could communicate satisfactorily in English with these expatriates. With the introduction of Saudization policies (a term used in KSA to refer to the process of affirmative action for Saudis) in the 1990s, it became even more necessary for Saudi nationals to achieve communicative competence in English so that they could take over service industry positions as well as positions within the core industries (Looney 2004).

This economic demand driven by a social imperative propelled the demand for improved English instruction.

In addition to having linguistic characteristics, Saudi English can also be seen as construing and projecting a local sociocultural worldview. The relationship between Saudi English, education, Islam, and Saudi cultural values can be examined in at least two ways. One way of doing this would be to conduct a content analysis of textbooks used in Saudi Arabia. A second way of examining the complexities of how language and ideology work together would be to carry out a linguistic analysis of texts in Saudi English that project Islamic and/or Saudi perspectives.

Thus, it is essential that educational institutions prepare students for the workforce especially when they are teaching English. In most Saudi Universities English Departments have been established in the Faculties of Arts, Languages, Education and Translation. However, recognition of the need for English in the Saudi educational system has not always been matched by acceptable educational outcomes. This is indicated by the inadequate number of well-trained and highly qualified teachers of English. Lack of recognition has hindered progress towards reaching the Kingdom Vision of 2030 that focuses on empowering citizens through reshaping the educational system and turning learners into skillful, educated, and independent individuals.

Importance of motivation in EFL context

Motivation can be defined as a tool which inspires anyone to do a task willingly. It involves beliefs, values, interests, perceptions, and actions. According to Yule (2006), "motivation may be as much a result of success as a cause" (p. 168). Volition can be considered as a powerful tool which our will needed to complete a task and a hard work to fulfill a task successfully. Educational psychologists recognize the importance of motivation to support student learning in general and language acquisition in particular. They concentrate on using it as a very important cause to involve the affective goals to influence the degree of effort that learner makes to learn English. Affective goals are concerned with the students' attitudes toward themselves, learning, and English language as a subject at school in the EFL context. Motivation is not only a major factor but also has a powerful influence on English learning and acquisition. That success in a foreign language is likely to be lower if the underlying motivational orientation is instrumental rather than integrative. So motivation is always needed for the fulfillment of a task of language learning.

Increasing Motivational level in EFL Learners in Saudi Arabia

It is a fact that learning any foreign language, specifically from the perspective of middle eastern countries like Saudi Arabia, has been a challenging task for the students, due to the apparently dominant cultural and religious language Arabic, spoken all around the region, since ages. Hence, any serious attempt in promoting a foreign language like English, needs a thoroughly studied pattern of strategies and accurate

planning, to implement it in the educational sphere in Saudi society. Saudi students willing to acquire mastery over English Language, could not go through this powerful medium of communication, right from their early stages of formal schooling and education, as in fact, they became familiar with English Language only after the age of thirteen in their Intermediate and Secondary stages. EFL Learners need to have an interaction with the formal and most significant stages of core basic elements that the Primary students need to be acquainted with the required essentials for English.

Motivation works as an important ingredient in specifying the readiness of learners to communicate and assists them in identifying their own hidden potentials. It is the motivational force that arouses, incites, or stimulates action in a pragmatic manner. Motivation refers to the combination of attempts and the intense desire to obtain the objective of learning the language, plus desirable attitudes towards learning the language, in a serious manner. Result oriented targets and objectives determine their success and accomplishments in a speedy manner and make them able to experiment within their own capabilities. Taking serious initiatives and responsibilities not only make them self-dependent but also excites them with brighter and much fruitful aspect of their efforts making them more confident in learning the technical and practical usages of the language, in a widened arena.

Motivation encourages an EFL student to work harder to achieve any result-oriented goal or objective. (Daif-Allah and Aljumah, 2020, p. 66). Gardner says that motivation tells what extent a person wants to fulfill his desire. (Gardner, 2007). Motivation improves the quality of students' efforts and make them Self-resilient. (Rahman, 2005; Zulfikar et al., 2019). Motivation truly affects language learners' self-confidence, intelligence, aptitude, choice of effective learning strategies and so many other qualities. (Moskovsky et al., 2013).

Intrinsic motivation might be extremely helpful as it is all about the activities for the inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequence. Here the EFL Learner is moved to act for the challenge or fun entailed rather than pressures, rewards, or any other thing. In a nutshell, it is all about the motivations which come from within the learner and always insists him to get success and obtain desired results. (Asmari and Javid, 2011).

If a learner is being motivated by intrinsic motivation, he will truly enjoy his learning process and this type of learning process has a positive influence on his foreign language performance (Farooq et al., 2017). But according to some studies even intrinsically motivated language learners could have their motivation lessened by hindrances such as improper exercises and parent's attitude and extrinsic behavior. (Brophy, 2004; Ryan and Deci, 2000).

But the perspective regarding learning English as a foreign language has been completely changed since 1929 in Saudi Arabia. Affirming the scientific and technological advancements, now the Saudi people are being aware about the importance of English language and its varied role in business, arts, science, agriculture, economy, medicines and all the other areas. Not only the Saudi boys but even the girls are also being motivated to learn English as a foreign language. Many students are going to European countries for higher studies every year. And they truly understand, if they want to compete at international level, they will have to learn English because of being a global language.

III. CONCLUSION

Henceforth, it is clearly visible that people's foreign language learning is affected and determined by the policies, domestic politics, and foreign policy of their country's government. The context of Saudi Vision 2030 clearly shows how citizens' EFL learning motivations develop in reaction to their leaders' decisions, and that these motives are widely intrinsic. We also found that women were more motivated than men, younger study participants were more motivated than older ones, and all participants focused most on developing their vocabulary and least on their grammatical acumen.

We hope that this study will open doors to linguists, researchers, language teachers, and learners and facilitate a deeper understanding of the effect that political decisions have on our motives and strategies for learning languages, specifically in Arab world.

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¹Dr. Safia Asad, ²Mohd. Asad Siddiqui,

¹Assistant Professor, Faculty of English Language Center, King Khalid University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

²Research Scholar, English Department, Integral University, Lucknow(U.P), India