

Original Paper

The Effects of Motivation on EFL College Students’ Achievement

Fahad Alqurashi^{1*}

¹ Department of English, Umm Al-Qura University, Makkah, Saudi Arabia

* Fahad Alqurashi, Department of English, Umm Al-Qura University, 21955, Makkah, Saudi Arabia

Received: November 2, 2014 Accepted: November 18, 2014 Online Published: February 26, 2019

doi:10.22158/selt.v7n1p83

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/selt.v7n1p83>

Abstract

The current study examined the motivation of 48 newly-admitted students at the English department of Umm Al-Qura University for the study and learning of English as a foreign language. The surveyed informants responded to a two-part questionnaire that measured their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in an attempt to explore the problems that many students encounter during their college life that negatively affect their academic progress. Students’ responses revealed that they were highly motivated to learn the target language—which may indicate that there are other factors related to students’ underachievement. The study recommends that students’ motivation be reexamined at different stages during their enrollment in the BA program and that other aspects related to students’ achievement, such as language aptitude, cognitive style and memory, and other affective factors, such as attitudes and anxiety, be scrutinized. In addition, promoting students’ motivation is a key step towards improving classroom atmosphere and making learning more effective and persistent. Learners need to have positive relationships with teachers. Positive affirmations, constructive guidance, and encouraging words serve as a secure base to enhance their self-esteem, create a positive learning experience, and build constructive attitudes towards learning the target language.

Keywords

(under)achievement, motivation, intrinsic, extrinsic, English, Saudi

1. Introduction

There has been a growing interest in recent years in studying English at the college level throughout Saudi Arabia. The number of students seeking admission to English BA programs is increasing every year (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). One of the factors contributing to this is increased recognition of the significance of English as an international language and, consequently, as the proverbial “key to many

doors” (Tsai, 2012). Speaking another language in a monolingual society such as Saudi Arabia, especially English, is considered an asset. School kids come into contact with a variety of English words on a daily basis in different situations such as for leisure, entertainment and browsing the web.

However, in spite of the great numbers of students admitted to English bachelor programs, the majority of students fail to finish the program requirements successfully in four years. It is clear that those students face significant academic challenges as EFL (English as a foreign language) students although they seem to have some sort of confidence that they can graduate. In theory, the reasons why students cannot progress smoothly in any academic program can include a perception that school is boring; feeling unmotivated; facing multiple academic challenges; and personal situations (Bridgeland et al., 2006).

This paper aims at investigating the levels of motivation to learn a foreign language among students who chose to join the English BA program at Umm Al-Qura University and how they may impact the outcomes of the learning process and affect their academic progress. Many students have difficulties finishing the BA program requirements in four years. For example, students often fail and repeat classes, and this postpones their tentative graduation dates. Repetitive failing drops grade point average and makes students ineligible for the next courses in a sequence, which means they have to rearrange their schedules and/or take summer courses. The school’s bylaws state that students with a grade point average below 1.00 are placed on academic suspension and this causes many students to graduate in six to eight years as opposed to four.

According to Ghadirzadeh et al. (2013), underachievement in the field of English language learning became widely observed among university students around the world. In recent years, many studies have been conducted worldwide on the relationship between language learning achievement and some basic factors that can influence academic performance like language learning strategies (Bremner, 1999; Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006; Fazeli, 2012), personality traits and learning styles (Erton, 2010; Al-Hebaishi, 2012; Pornsakulvanich et al., 2012), and motivation (Zubairi & Sarudin, 2009; Bernard, 2010; Alqurashi, 2011). These studies showed that such basic factors could have positive or negative effects on learners’ achievement, language proficiency, and engagement in classroom activities.

This study was initiated in response to concerns about the underachievement of many college level students whose major was English. Previous studies (e.g., Dörnyei, 1998; Norris-Holt, 2001; Bell & McCallum, 2012) have shown that several factors contributed to achievement in second/foreign language learning, including: language aptitude or the ability to learn languages, cognitive style and memory, and affective factors such as attitudes and motivation. The focus of attention of the present study is on the level of one of these basic affective factors, namely, motivation. The results of the study are expected to help educators and policy makers to identify the factors that contribute to low or limited English literacy achievement among Saudi learners. The findings of the study are expected also to address the widespread feeling of dissatisfaction among students, educators, policy makers and the public regarding the current situation of teaching and learning of the English language in Saudi Arabia.

1.1 English as a Global Language

The English language became an international language due to historical, political, and economic reasons. The spread of the British Empire during the colonial age and the economic power and cultural influence of the United States gave English this prominent position among other languages. Consequently, learning English has become a primary goal for many people to serve different educational, economic, and communicative purposes (Jambor, 2011). Many educators talk about the importance of teaching English around the world since English is now considered a global language and an international channel of communication (Wallace, 2002). These factors encourage increasing numbers of students to join academic programs in English language departments in universities around the world (Andrade, 2006).

1.2 Psychology of Motivation

Motivation is defined as “the learner’s orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language” (Norris-Holt, 2001). Other researchers understand motivation as a process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviors and the force that drives us to act, whether in something as simple as getting a drink when we are thirsty or something more complex such as studying hard to gain more knowledge (Cherry, 2010). It is important to understand the psychological background of motivation in order to understand its influence on the process of learning. Different schools of psychology analyzed the nature of motivation and its relationship to learning (Louis et al., 2010). The behavioral, cognitive, and humanist schools are three approaches that investigated the significance of motivation as a key driving force for learning.

The primary focus of the behavioral school is on observable behaviors and does not differentiate between motivation as something different from learning (Gazzaniga, 2010). Behavioral theories generally describe motivation and learning in terms of how behavior is or is not reinforced by the different patterns and relationships in the environment (Hanrahan, 1998). Behaviorists look at learning as an aspect of conditioning that is affected primarily by consequences: the use of positive and negative reinforcement where the application of reinforcers provides incentives to increase behavior and the application of punishers provides disincentives that result in a decrease in behavior (Huitt & Hummel, 1997). Accordingly, learning is influenced by external factors while motivation can be a byproduct of classroom contexts that teachers should structure carefully to ensure that learning can proceed in a systematic fashion. For example, students are appropriately rewarded for mastering very specific learning objectives (Brophy, 2004).

The cognitive theory regards learning as an active mental process of acquiring, remembering, and using knowledge where information is integrated or internalized into one’s cognitive or intellectual structure (Woolfolk, 1998). Learning as a human action, according to this view, results from a process of thought rather than an automated response based on preprogrammed rules (Cecil, 2008). The cognitive school makes a clear distinction between learning and motivation. Learning occurs through the internal processing of information which may lead to a change in knowledge thus making a change in behavior

possible. New information presented to learners has to be logically structured and linked to something that is already learned in order to be more easily understood (Huitt, 2003). Motivation according to this approach is primarily intrinsic; learners' need and desire to acquire, store, retrieve and reorganize knowledge provide them with better understanding (Butler, 1999). *Motivation* is studied with a focus on human behavior in terms of the examination and consideration of received information, as opposed to an inbuilt set of instructions that govern responses to different situations (Dowd et al., 2010). The sociocultural context is treated as an important factor that influences learners' motivation. In particular, classroom contexts, ethnicity, and culture influenced goals (e.g., Maehr & Pintrich, 1995), efficacy (Bandura, 2000), and interests (Hidi & Anderson, 1992).

Humanists believe in human values, interests, capacities, and needs, emphasize the importance of the inner world of the human being, and place the individual's thoughts, feelings and emotions at the forefront of all human developments (Wang, 2005). The humanist approaches learning as a self-directed and needs-motivated process based on human generation of knowledge, meaning, and expertise through interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence (Reese, 2002). Intrapersonal intelligence provides learners with self-regard, independence, and self-actualization and makes them strong and confident to express their feelings and convey their opinions and beliefs while interpersonal intelligence comprises empathy and social responsibility and makes learners sensitive to others' feelings, concerns and needs, and able to establish and maintain cooperative and constructive relationships (Esmaeili & Jamkhaneh, 2013). Humanists believe that learners are motivated to learn when they feel free to act which provides them with unlimited potential for growth and progress. Learning is viewed as a function of the whole person that cannot take place unless both the cognitive and affective domains are involved (Ben-Harush, 2009). Language learning, in particular, is determined by the interaction of a number of student-related and contextual factors, and the using of the humanistic method of teaching can increase students' motivation and class sociability (Ghaith & Diab, 2008).

1.3 Motivation in L2 Learning

Motivation to learn another language has been a primary research topic recently (e.g., Bernard, 2010; Zhang, 2012). Researchers on second language acquisition point out that motivation is among the significant factors which influence individual levels of success in any intellectual activity such as language learning (Lifrieri, 2005). Motivation is a basic component for learning in the sense that "... without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long term goals, and neither are appropriate curricula and good teaching enough on their own to ensure student achievement" (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 65). Furthermore, motivation is considered "an internal momentum, reason, need, and activator, which cause a person to move to reach a particular purpose" (Zafarghandi & Jodai, 2012, p. 3). A strong trend in social psychology looks at motivation as a fundamental constituent "since learning the language of another community cannot be separated from the learners' social dispositions towards the speech community in question" (Moiinvaziri, 2008, p. 126). Educators should more thoroughly explore the factors that are involved in encouraging students to

perform tasks well and to find out the underlying possible factors which affect students' interest in English learning, especially on a more practical ground to stimulate students' motivation (Ellis, 1997). The advent of several theories and categorizations has contributed to an understanding of academic motivation, generally, and language learning motivation, specifically, by suggesting a number of orientations or types of L2 motivational tendencies. The framework of the socio-psychological theory (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993) identifies two major types of motivational orientations—the *integrative orientation* and the *instrumental orientation*. Integrative orientation refers to the eagerness of the learner to interact with, assimilate, understand and accept the L2 community while instrumental orientation refers to the possible and precise benefits achieved from knowing another language, such as having a higher opportunity of employment and being able to demand a higher salary (Zhang, 2012). Some researchers critiqued the usage of this categorization because it could not meet all of the dynamic aspects of motivational orientations in the sense that “the old characterization of motivation in terms of integrative vs. instrumental orientation is too static and restricted” (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993, p. 4).

Proponents of the self determination theory classify motivation as two types of self-determination: *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* (La Guardia, 2009). Intrinsic motivation deals with behavior performed for its own sake in order to experience pleasure and satisfaction. It occurs when people are moved to do something for fun, as a challenge, or because of their internal attention toward the activity, rather than for external outcomes. An example would be a person who enjoys learning a language because of the satisfaction felt when new concepts are mastered or because of the inherent interest and joy associated with this activity (Bernard, 2010). Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, refers to the motivation that comes from outside an individual and involves performing a behavior as a means to an end and to attaining an outcome. The motivating factors are external, or separate from the task itself. People are extrinsically motivated when they are engaged in activities in order to accomplish some goal that is separate from the activity in and of itself, that is, to receive some extrinsic reward (e.g., good grades) or to avoid punishment (Dörnyei, 1998).

Affective variables such as motivation, attitude, orientation, and anxiety have been recognized to be as important as innate language aptitude for successful L2 learning (Hashimoto, 2002). Further studies on motivation as a psychological construct led many theorists and researchers to recognize motivation, not as a single entity, but as a multi-factorial one (Stapa, 2009; Tahaineh & Daana, 2013). Oxford and Shearin (1994) analyzed a total of 12 motivational theories or models and introduced six elements as key factors that impact motivation in language learning:

- 1) Attitudes (i.e., sentiments toward the learning community and the target language)
- 2) Beliefs about oneself (i.e., expectancies about one's attitudes to succeed, self-efficacy, and anxiety)
- 3) Goals (perceived clarity and relevance of learning goals)
- 4) Involvement (i.e., the extent to which the learner actively and consciously participates in the language learning process)

5) Environmental support (i.e., the extent of teacher and peer support and the integration of cultural and outside-of-class support into the learning experience)

6) Personal attributes (i.e., aptitude, age, sex, and previous language learning experience)

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because motivation is an important construct in examining any cases of learning difficulties that students may face and highlighting any conflicting or mismatching tendencies with those of teachers practices (Kern, 1995). Analyzing students' motivation enables educators and policy makers to understand students' expectations of, commitment to, success in, and satisfaction with their language classes (Banya & Cheng, 1997). The results of this study are expected to enable the English department of Umm Al-Qura University to review some causes that may have hindered successful learning in the BA program in the past and focus on students' perspectives regarding the process of learning the English language. The findings of the study will identify students' academic preferences within the language learning process which will assist EFL teachers and administrators to promote learning motivation, since educators are expected to understand students' preferences for language learning in order to enhance their success.

2. Methods

2.1 Study Context

This study was carried out to evaluate the motivational component in university students learning the English language with the expectation that motivation has a role in increasing or decreasing the multiple difficulties that students enrolled in the English department of Umm Al-Qura University face in finishing the BA program in four years. The students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language is surveyed in order to explore how different aspects related to local learning environments have influenced their opportunities to succeed. The present study attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1) To what degree are students motivated to learn English as a foreign language?
- 2) Which type of motivation, intrinsic or extrinsic, has a greater influence on students' learning?

2.2 Participants

The study examined a group of 48 participants, all of whom are students at the English BA program at Umm Al-Qura University. All the participants are male students because, as a male professor in a gender-segregated learning environment, the researcher taught only male students for survey purposes. The participants represented a wide range of proficiency levels in the English language with achievement levels ranging from extremely successful to struggling. At the time of this research project, the 48 participants were enrolled in four sections of Writing I, a three hour per week class, which aims to enable students to write more effectively in the target language. This class is one of the five core courses that students take in the first level when they join the English BA program. Each of the four sections was taught by the researcher himself who holds a Ph.D. in applied linguistics and instructional technology, with ten years of EFL teaching experience. The students' participation was voluntary and

was not associated with any extra credit or compensation.

2.3 Instrument

The data-collection instrument used for this research project was a questionnaire adapted from a previous study (Zubairi & Sarudin, 2009) and formulated to identify students' motivation for learning English as a foreign language. The questionnaire items were developed based on a combination of items appearing in foreign language learning literature (Schmidt et al., 1996; Kimura et al., 2001). The questionnaire consisted of two parts, each of which contained eight items, to gauge students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to learn the target language. All of the questionnaire items have been translated into the Arabic language by the researcher to ensure that the participants understood the content of the items in order to give the right response. The accuracy of translation has been checked by a translation specialist in the College of Languages and Translation of Imam University, a Saudi school located in Riyadh.

2.4 Procedures

Data collection was conducted by the researcher himself during a regular *Writing I* class at the end of the fall semester in the academic year 2013/2014. The students were told about the significance of the research and objectives before administering the questionnaire and it was stressed that their input would not affect their English course grades. Then, the questionnaire was distributed to the participating students and they were requested to indicate their responses to the questionnaire items and to ask for any clarifications they might need. Once they finished answering the questionnaire, they were requested to check their responses for incompleteness or missing answers. All of the students responded to the questionnaire items within twenty-five minutes. Absent students were not given an opportunity to respond to the questionnaire.

3. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the students' responses were analyzed using statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) software widely used in social science research. The questionnaire had two parts, each of which consisted of eight items. Students responded to the sixteen items to rate the various aspects of motivation and their responses were categorized and scored based on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (don't know), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree). Reliability was calculated to judge the consistency of results across items on the same test. The method used to calculate reliability of this test was Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient. The instrument of data collection in the present study demonstrated a reliability coefficient of 0.78.

The content of the questions as well as the response frequencies and percentages are shown in Tables 1 and 2 below, with the "strongly agree" and "agree" response categories collapsed to form one "agree" category and the "strongly disagree" and "disagree" categories collapsed to form one "disagree" category.

Table 1. Extrinsic Reasons for Learning a Foreign Language

Questionnaire item	Agree		Don't know		Disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
	(n=48)		(n=48)		(n=48)	
1. I will need it for my future career.	40	83.3	--	--	8	16.7
2. I think that it will make me a more knowledgeable person.	44	91.7	2	4.2	2	4.2
3. I think that it will someday be useful in getting a job.	44	91.7	4	8.3	--	--
4. Other people will respect me more if I have knowledge of a foreign language.	25	52.1	16	33.3	7	14.5
5. My lecturer(s) encouraged me to learn a foreign language.	27	56.3	7	14.6	14	29.1
6. I need to complete a foreign language requirement to graduate.	37	77.1	4	8.3	7	14.6
7. My friend(s) encouraged me to learn a foreign language.	28	58.4	6	12.5	14	29.2
8. People will think highly of me.	21	43.8	17	35.4	10	18.8

Table 2. Intrinsic Reasons for Learning a Foreign Language

Questionnaire item	Agree		Don't know		Disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
	(n=48)		(n=48)		(n=48)	
9. It will allow me to meet and converse with a variety of people.	44	91.7	4	8.3	--	--
10. I will be able to participate in the activities of other cultural groups.	26	44.2	19	39.6	3	6.3
11. I enjoy meeting and listening to people who speak other languages.	45	93.7	2	4.2	1	2.1
12. Learning a foreign language is an enjoyable experience.	44	91.7	4	8.3	--	--
13. If I were visiting a foreign country, I would like to be able to speak the language of the people.	46	95.8	1	2.1	1	2.1
14. It is important for everyone to learn a foreign language.	36	75.0	9	18.8	3	6.2
15. I want to read the literature of another culture in the original language.	40	83.4	4	8.3	4	8.3
16. I would really like to learn many foreign languages.	39	81.2	5	10.4	4	7.3

4. Discussion

Generally speaking, the results of this study indicated that newly-admitted students at the English department of Umm Al-Qura University had high motivation levels to study and learn the English language. In particular, the vast majority of surveyed informants, more than three quarters, agreed with four items of the extrinsic motivation: 1) *I will need it for my future career*, 2) *I think that it will make me a more knowledgeable person*, 3) *I think that it will someday be useful in getting a job*, and 6) *I*

need to complete a foreign language requirement in order to graduate. The number of students who responded with “disagree” did not exceed 8 in any one of these four items. This result indicates that most of the surveyed informants were extrinsically motivated to learn English. In other words, these items represented different external sources of motivation for their desire to learn the foreign language. Such external rewards have the potential to turn the learning situation into positive experiences that help language learners to exercise and extend their capacities (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Learners who have positive experiences tend to sustain motivation over the long term which promotes their progress in L2 learning (Oxford & Shearin, 1994).

The items that scored the highest percentage of “Don’t know” response were 4) *Other people will respect me more if I have knowledge of a foreign language;* and 8) *People will think highly of me,* with 33.3% and 35.4% respectively. Both items are related to how the surveyed informants felt people would think of them. The presence of such concerns may reflect problems in how these students perceive themselves and what they think about themselves in terms of learning another language. Previous studies found identity to be a crucial factor in students’ development and learning because it is related to their sense of belonging, values, competence and achievement (Wang, 2008). Since emotions and internal thoughts are precursors to developing the positive attitudes and opinions toward the target language that help L2 learners to a new L2 identity (Lazaro-Salazar, 2013), language teachers should utilize appropriate techniques in order to maximize students’ potential and promote their motivation to learn L2 (Yu, 2014).

Fourteen students disagreed with items 5) *My lecturer(s) encouraged me to learn a foreign language,* and 7) *My friend(s) encouraged me to learn a foreign language.* This is the highest number of surveyed informants who gave negative responses to any item in the whole questionnaire. This could be attributed to the feeling that certain people, lecturers and friends, for example, did not contribute to motivate the surveyed informants to learn English. Both items contained the term “encouraged” which is a prominent external driving force that learners need to continue their efforts to accomplish their goals. Educators in the field of language learning have proposed that teachers should try to understand what inspires students and alleviate what they find difficult in order to boost their motivation to learn the target language (Merisuo-Storm, 2007). In addition, mutually offered peer support has been found to be an effective tool for increasing motivation. Peer support is defined as “a system of giving and receiving help founded on key principles of respect, shared responsibility, and mutual agreement on what is helpful” (Mead et al., 2001, p. 135). Understanding each others’ situations empathically through the shared experience allow peers to benefit from the support and increase their motivation (Smith & Piietroni, 1997) Peer-supported learning.

Based on their responses to the items of the second part of the questionnaire (intrinsic motivation), respondents appeared to experience positive motivation and enthusiasm for learning the target language that could greatly affect their learning momentum, orientation, and efficiency. In particular, 75% or more of the students agreed with seven items contained in the section. Students seemed intrinsically

motivated due to the pleasure that they experience during the task of learning the foreign language itself and/or from the sense of satisfaction in completing or even working on the task that they chose for themselves. Previous studies found such pleasure and satisfaction to be important aspects of building positive language experiences that “emphasize intrinsic motivational factors relating to perceptions of L2 ability and the personal desire to master the language and achieve a high level of L2 competence” (Ushioda, 2001, p. 109).

Not a single student disagreed with items 9) *It will allow me to meet and converse with a variety of people*, or 12) *Learning a foreign language is an enjoyable experience*. Both items refer to learning English for non-educational purposes. Rather, the two items are related to activities or situations where the target language can serve pleasure purposes. This explicit result may indicate that the students had a feeling that their competence in English was growing which gave them confidence to use English outside the classroom. Practicing the target language during voluntary activities is a determining factor for meaningful language acquisition that empowers learners to continuously activate and regenerate motivation and systematize knowledge by incorporating it into a personal experience (Caon, 2006).

Item 14) *It is important for everyone to learn a foreign language*, scored the highest number of respondents with a “Don’t know” response. Nine of the forty eight surveyed informants did not agree or disagree with this questionnaire item. This response suggests that they might have a feeling that learning a foreign language is a unique task that not everyone should pursue. It indicates that the students already reached a point of realization that learning a foreign language takes time and dedication and that only serious learners could tolerate such a tedious experience for practical, aspirational, intellectual or even sentimental reasons. This attitude reveals a perception that people could live happily without speaking a foreign language in this monolingual society.

The total number of agree responses to the first part (extrinsic motivation) was 266 while the total number of agree responses to the second part, intrinsic motivation, was 320. This indicates that the surveyed informants had more intrinsic motivation to learn English as a foreign language than extrinsic motivation. Even though both types of motivation are important for students to maintain their momentum to learn the target language, the surveyed informants seemed more driven by internal rewards and appeared to perform learning activities for the sake of their inherent satisfaction and pleasure. The students’ responses gave the impression that they are intrinsically motivated to act assertively to achieve the goals they set for themselves, enjoy learning activities, and consider them opportunities to explore, progress, and actualize their potentials (Coon & Mitterer, 2010).

Being intrinsically motivated does not mean that students will not seek external rewards. It just means that such external rewards are not enough to keep them motivated. An intrinsically motivated student, for example, may want to get a high grade on an assignment, but if the assignment does not interest that student, the possibility of a high grade is not enough to maintain that student’s motivation to exert any effort into the project. Extrinsically motivated students perform activities for known external rewards, whether tangible (e.g., money) or psychological (e.g., praise) in nature (Brown, 2007). After all, both

types of motivation are keys to learning that are responsible for explaining the failure or success of a learner (Dörnyei, 1998). Teaching methods should focus on techniques to promote students' motivation. Previous studies found that teachers who used humor and created a friendly, supportive and relaxed classroom atmosphere that encouraged risk-taking were helpful in alleviating anxiety and facilitating learning (Young, 1990). Friendly teacher behaviors such as smiling, using gestures, having a relaxed body position, and using a variety of vocal expressions were found to effectively enhance students' motivation to learn the English language (Hsu, 2010).

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the motivation of 48 freshman students for studying and learning English as a foreign language. The surveyed informants responded to a two-part questionnaire that measured their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Students' responses indicated that they were highly motivated to learn the target language. The overall findings of this study indicated that newly-admitted students at the Department of English of Umm Al-Qura University did not have serious problems with respect to motivation to learn English as a foreign language and that the problems that many students run into during their college life that negatively affect their academic progress may have other causes. There should be other studies conducted to investigate other factors related to students' achievement. In particular, students' motivation should be reexamined at different stages during their enrollment in the BA program, for example, when they are halfway through the program and/or in their final semesters before graduation. In addition, there should be various studies to scrutinize the role of other aspects related to students' achievement like language aptitude, cognitive style and memory, and other affective factors, such as attitudes and anxiety. Administrators, language teachers, and material developers are required to achieve a high level of awareness of the importance of these interrelated aspects which should inspire them to improve the classroom atmosphere and facilitate English language learning in different ways. These issues warrant consideration to be the focus of future studies.

The findings of the current study give a clear picture that newly-admitted students in the English Department have a high level of motivation to learn the English language and provide several pedagogical implications. Such students' motivational tendencies for learning the English language represent a determining factor in enhancing their self-esteem, creating a positive learning experience, developing language performance and building constructive attitudes towards the target language. Therefore, teachers should try to promote students' motivation to make learning more effective and consistent. In particular, classroom teaching should include various interesting, exciting and fun activities that help to provide students with a more relaxed socio-emotional environment for learning. Positive teacher-student relationships, positive affirmations, constructive guidance, and encouraging words are very helpful to relieve stress, raise students' confidence and encourage learning. When students' needs to be valued and respected are met, their attachment to school and engagement in the process of learning increases which, in turn, has long-lasting influence on their academic and social

development.

This study had some limitations. Firstly, all of the data collected were quantitative data obtained through a questionnaire. No qualitative data were collected to broaden the scope of the study. Secondly, all of the participants were male students because the researcher did not teach female students due to the segregation of gender in education in Saudi Arabia. These two points should be taken into account when designing future research studies. Collecting qualitative data is an important step to give a better view on the various factors that may have impact on the degree of motivation of students who learn English as a foreign language at college level. Including female participants is important as well to compare the results and broaden the scope of research on motivation of EFL learners in Saudi Arabia.

Acknowledgment

This research project has been supported by the Institute of Scientific Research at Umm Al-Qura University (Grant No. 433 06 005).

References

- Al-Hebaishi, S. M. (2012). Investigating the relationships between learning styles, strategies and the academic performance of Saudi English majors. *International Interdisciplinary Journal of Education*, 1(8), 510-520. <https://doi.org/10.12816/0002890>
- Alqurashi, F. (2011). Teaching English for Police Purposes in Saudi Arabia: An Exploratory Study. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(4), 844-849. <https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.2.4.844-849>
- Andrade, M. S. (2006). International students in English-speaking universities: Adjustment factors. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 5(2), 131-154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240906065589>
- Babae, N. (2012). Motivation in learning English as a second language: A literature review. *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education*, 4(1), 1-7.
- Bandura, A. (2000). Exercise of human agency through collective efficacy. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9, 75-78. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.00064>
- Banya, K., & Cheng, M. H. (1997, March). *Beliefs about foreign language learning—A study of beliefs of teachers' and students' cross cultural settings*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Orlando, FL.
- Bell, S. M., & McCallum, R. S. (2012). Do Foreign Language Learning, Cognitive, and Affective Variables Differ as a Function of Exceptionality Status and Gender? *International Education*, 42(1), 85-105.
- Ben-Harush, A. (2009). Humanistic Theory versus Social Cognition and Their Applicability in a Supervisory Role. *Educational Psychology for Teachers of Adults*. Retrieved from <http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/files/2009-ben-harush-exam2.pdf>

- Bernard, J. (2010). Motivation in foreign language learning: The relationship between classroom activities, motivation, and outcomes in a university language-learning environment. *Dietrich College Honors Theses*. Retrieved from <http://www.repository.cmu.edu/hsshonors/74>
- Bremner, S. (1999). Language learning strategies and language proficiency: Investigating the relationship in Hong Kong. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 55(4), 490-514. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.55.4.490>
- Bridgeland, J. M., DiIulio, J. J., & Morison, K. B. (2006). *The silent epidemic: Perspectives of high school dropouts*. Washington: Civic Enterprises, LLC. Retrieved from <http://www.civicerprises.net/pdfs/thesilentepidemic3-06.pdf>
- Brophy, J. E. (2004). *Motivating students to learn*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Brown, L. V. (2007). *Psychology of motivation*. New York: Nova Publishers.
- Butler, R. (1999). Information seeking and achievement motivation in middle childhood and adolescence: The role of conceptions of ability. *Developmental Psychology*, 35, 146-163. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.35.1.146>
- Caon, F. (2006). *Pleasure in Language Learning: A Methodological Challenge*. Perugia: Guerra Edizioni.
- Cecil, D. P. (2008, February). *Cognitive and behavioral approaches: To blend or not to blend*. Paper presented at NACSW Convention, Orlando, FL. Retrieved from <http://www.nacsw.org/Publications/Proceedings2008/CecilDCognitive.pdf>
- Cherry, K. (2010). *What is Motivation?* Retrieved from <http://www.psychology.about.com>
- Coon, D., & Mitterer, J. O. (2010). *Introduction to psychology: Gateways to mind and behavior with concept maps*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25, 54-67. <https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1999.1020>
- Dörnyei, Z. (1998). Motivation in second and foreign language learning. *Language Teaching*, 31, 117-135. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026144480001315X>
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Teaching and researching motivation*. Harlow, England: Longman.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Dowd, E. T., Clen, S. L., & Arnold, K. D. (2010). The specialty practice of cognitive and behavioral psychology. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 41(1), 89-95. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018321>
- Ellis, R. (1997). *Second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Erton, I. (2010). Relations between personality traits language learning styles and success in foreign language achievement. *H. U. Journal of Education*, 38, 115-126.
- Esmacili, N., & Jamkhaneh, E. B. (2013). The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Mental

- Health in Humanism College Students at IAU, Qaemshahr Branch, Iran. *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research*, 3(2), 68-76.
- Fazeli, S. H. (2012). The relationship between the extraversion trait and use of the English language learning strategies. *Indian Journal of Science and Technology*, 5(4), 2651-2657.
- Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Attitudes and Motivation in Second-Language Learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Gardner, R. C., & MacIntyre, P. D. (1993). On the measurement of affective variables in second language learning. *Language Learning*, 43, 157-194. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1992.tb00714.x>
- Gazzaniga, M. (2010). *Psychological Science*. New York: Norton & Company.
- Ghadirzadeh, R., Hashtroudi, F. P., & Shokri, O. (2013). Study of the Effective Factors on the University Students' Underachievement in English Language Learning. *English Language Teaching*, 6(11), 122-129. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v6n11p122>
- Ghaith, G. M., & Diab, H. (2008). Determinants of EFL Achievement among Arab College-Bound Learners. *Education, Business and Society Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues*, 1(4), 278-286. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17537980810929993>
- Hanrahan, M. (1998). The effect of learning environment factors on students' motivation and learning. *International Journal of Science Education*, 20(6), 737-753. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0950069980200609>
- Hashimoto, Y. (2002). Motivation and willingness to communicate as predictors of reported L2 use. *Second Language Studies*, 20(2), 29-70.
- Hidi, S., & Anderson, R. (1992). Situational interest and its impact on reading and expository writing. In K. A. Renninger, S. Hidi, & A. Krapp (Eds.), *The role of interest in learning and development* (pp. 215-238). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Hong-Nam, K., & Leavell, A. G. (2006). Language learning strategy use of ESL students in an intensive English learning context. *System*, 34, 399-415. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2006.02.002>
- Hsu, L. (2010). The impact of perceived teachers' nonverbal immediacy on students' motivation for learning English. *Online Asian EFL Journal*, 12(4), 188-204.
- Huitt, W. (2003). The information processing approach to cognition. *Educational Psychology Interactive*. Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University. Retrieved from <http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/cognition/infoproc.html>
- Huitt, W., & Hummel, J. (1997). An introduction to operant (instrumental) conditioning. *Educational Psychology Interactive*. Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University. Retrieved from <http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/behavior/operant.html>
- Jambor, P. (2010). The reluctance of Korean education in the face of change. *Academic Leadership*, 8(3).

- Jambor, P. (2011). *English Language Necessity: What it means for Korea and non-English speaking countries*. ED528279.
- Kern, R. G. (1995). Students' and teachers' beliefs about language learning. *Foreign Language Annals*, 28(1), 71-92. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.1995.tb00770.x>
- Kimura, Y., Nakata, Y., & Okumura, T. (2001). Language learning motivation of EFL learners in Japan: A cross-sectional analysis of various learning milieu. *JALT Journal*, 23(1), 47-68.
- La Guardia, J. G. (2009). Developing who I am: A self-determination theory approach to the establishment of healthy identities. *Educational Psychologist*, 44(2), 90-104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520902832350>
- Lazaro-Salazar, M. V. (2013). Diving into the depths of identity construction and motivation of a foreign language learner. *Argentinian journal of Applied Linguistics*, 1, 6-23.
- Lifrieri, V. (2005). *A sociological perspective on motivation to learn EFL: The case of escuelas plurilingües in Argentina* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Pittsburgh.
- Louis, K. S., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K. L., & Anderson, S. E. (2010). *Investigating the links to improved student learning: Final report of research findings*. Twin Cities: University of Minnesota, Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement.
- Maehr, M. L., & Pintrich, P. R. (Eds.). (1995). *Advances in motivation and achievement: Culture, motivation, and achievement*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Mahboob, A., & Elyas, T. (2014). English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *World Englishes*, 33(1), 128-142. <https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12073>
- Mead, S., Hilton, D., & Curtis, L. (2001). Peer Support: A theoretical perspective. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 25(2), 134-141. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0095032>
- Merisuo-Storm, T. (2007). Pupils' attitudes towards foreign-language learning and the development of literacy skills in bilingual education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 226-235. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.04.024>
- Moiinvaziri, M. (2008). Motivational orientation in English language learning: A study of Iranian undergraduate students. In A. Shafaei, & M. Nejati (Eds.), *Global practices of language teaching: Proceedings of the 2008 International Online Language Conference* (pp. 126-136). Boca Raton, FL: Universal-Publishers.
- Norris-Holt, J. (2001). Motivation as a contributing factor in second language acquisition. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 7(6).
- Oxford, R., & Shearin, J. (1994). Language learning motivation: Expanding the theoretical framework. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78, 12-28. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1994.tb02011.x>
- Pornsakulvanich, V., Dumrongsiri, N., Sajampun, P., Sornsri, S. et al. (2012). An analysis of personality traits and learning styles as predictors of academic performance. *ABAC Journal*, 32(3), 1-19.
- Reese, S. (2002). Understanding our differences. *Techniques*, 77, 20-23.
- Schmidt, R., Borale, D., & Kassabgy, O. (1996). Foreign language motivation, internal structure and

- external connections. In R. Oxford (Ed.), *Language learning motivation: Pathways to the new century* (pp. 9-70). Honolulu: Hawaii University Press.
- Smith, F., & Piетroni, R. (1997). Peer-supported learning. *British Journal of General Practice*, 47(421), 527-528.
- Stapa, S. H. (2009, November). *The roles of teachers and students in computer supported collaborative learning*. Paper presented in 5th International Conference in Open & Distance Learning, Athens, Greece. Retrieved from http://www.artemis.eap.gr/ICODL2009/ICODL_5/My%20Webs/ICODL/A1-PDF/8.pdf
- Tahaineh, Y., & Daana, H. (2013). Jordanian Undergraduates' Motivations and Attitudes towards Learning English in EFL Context. *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4(2), 159-180.
- Tsai, Y. (2012). The Effects of Intercultural Learning on English Learning Motivation among Students Studying Abroad. *New Horizons in Education*, 60(1), 23-34.
- Ushioda, E. (2001). *Language learning at university: Exploring the role of motivational thinking*. In Z. Dörnyei, & R. Schmidt (Eds.), *Motivation and second language acquisition* (pp. 93-125). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center.
- Wallace, C. (2002). Local Literacies and Global Literacy. In D. Block, & D. Cameron (Eds.), *Globalization and Language Teaching* (pp. 101-114). London: Routledge.
- Wang, G. (2005). Humanistic approach and affective factors in foreign language teaching. *Sino-US English Teaching*, 2(5), 1-5.
- Wei, M. (2007). The interrelatedness of affective factors in EFL learning: An examination of motivational patterns in relation to anxiety in China. *TESL-EJ*, 11(1), 1-23.
- Woolfolk, A. E. (1998). *Educational psychology*. Toronto, ON: Allyn and Bacon.
- Young, D. J. (1990). An investigation of students' perspectives on anxiety and speaking. *Foreign Language Annals*, 23, 539-553. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.1990.tb00424.x>
- Yu, P. S. (2014). Heritage Language Learning Motivation, Self-Perceived Identity and Maintenance among Chinese-American College Students. *Journal of Language and Cultural Education*, 2(1), 26-47.
- Zafarghandi, A. M., & Jodai, H. (2012). Attitudes toward English & English learning at an Iranian Military University: A preliminary survey. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education*, 2(1), 102-123.
- Zhang, B. (2012). Student Motivation for Learning Chinese as a Second Language in Hong Kong International Secondary Schools. *US-China Foreign Language*, 10(2), 921-932.
- Zubairi, A. M., & Sarudin, I. (2009). Motivation to learn a foreign language in Malaysia. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 9(2), 73-87.