

Components of Motivation in the ESL/EFL Classroom

Dr. SYED AKBAR JAMIL¹, MUHAMMAD KHAWAR MEHMOOD KHAN²

^{1,2}English Language Centre, Umm Al-Qura University, Makkah,
Saudi Arabia.

Email: ¹saahmad@uqu.edu.sa; ²mkkhan@uqu.edu.sa



Dr. SYED AKBAR JAMIL



MUHAMMAD KHAWAR MEHMOOD
KHAN

ABSTRACT

Motivation is clearly a critical factor for second language and foreign language learning because it affects students' willingness to approach learning and using English language. Teachers who hope to provide meaningful instruction need to consider how to increase the motivational levels of their students in order to ensure student success in learning. This paper examines what university students studying English as a second language or a foreign language (ESL/EFL) have to say about what does or does not positively affect their motivation to study English language. The ways in which intrinsic and extrinsic motivation affect ESL/EFL learners are explained by examining student surveys and current research. How self-directed or autonomous learning stimulates intrinsic motivation is a major part of the paper, as is how teacher-centered classrooms tend to make ESL students more extrinsically motivated.

Keywords: Motivation, Extrinsic, Intrinsic, Education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

It has always been a major goal or challenge in language teaching to encourage our learners or to motivate try to make our learning /teaching process interesting for our students.

The term motivation is derived from the "Latin language" 'movere' which means to move and is commonly defined as a cluster of constituents that energizes the behavior of a learners and gives direction. The extraordinarily multi-dimensional nature of motivation is tough to study, but perhaps it best be analyzed by focusing on what causes students to perform a task. Motivation is directly connected to the words like choice, effort and persistence and is also based on why students decide to do something and how long they will continue a particular task. The components that influence motivation and its achievements within the context of an ESL/ EFL learning environment is what our study analyzed, without any hypothesis or any theory of motivation.

The focus of study was based on a group of ESL/EFL learners' responses, what students had to say about what does or does not positively affect their motivation in studying English language. This study was done through a motivational survey and the responses of the students were analyzed. Our analysis suggests, how

teachers can better foster a classroom environment which will encourage the development of motivation in an ESL/ EFL classroom.

2. TYPES OF MOTIVATION

According to the motivational theories, there are basically two types of motivations, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, based on when trying to explain how students learn and what can provide the best classroom environment. One type of motivation is described as 'external' or 'extrinsic motivation'. The roots of extrinsic motivational theory came from the behaviorist B. F. Skinner's research on behavior modification and systematic use of its rewards. Another type of motivation can be described as 'internal' or 'intrinsic motivation' which can be characterized an autonomous or self- directed learning, when students are in control of their own learning or in process of self-learning.

I. Extrinsic Motivation:

Behaviorist philosopher Barry Schwartz notes that students will usually respond only when the environment tempts them with an opportunity to get rewards or avoid punishments. Those who believe that motivation to learn is prompted by external rewards believe that people are basically passive. As we know, when a learner receives incentive or tangible reward to participate or to complete an activity, this is referred to extrinsic motivation or the factors which motivate the students to complete a task also called external or extrinsic motivation. When a student is extrinsically motivated, he/she spends time to complete a particular activity to get a reward. Bowman has conducted research which shows decreased motivation among college or university students who were offered only extrinsic rewards. Bowman claims that these rewards are too controlling, do not lead to learners' autonomy and serve to undermine self-determination. He also claimed that extrinsically motivated students eventually become "demotivated" which is a state characterized by the belief of students that their efforts are inconsequential to accomplish a specific task and they lack the ability to do so. In the area of ESL/EFL learning and motivation Park and Kim explained some students are more motivated by social traditions and extrinsic or an external source of motivation in learning English language. Park and Kim suggest that why memorization of grammar rules or English vocabularies among some of the ESL/ EFL learners is above average but the learners' long-term ability to stay motivated to master over English language will be inhabited if it relies solely on external controls such as parental approval. This seems to confirm what other students have shown regarding the use of extrinsic rewards as the main motivational strategy in learning a language. Cluck suggests that since students need to be self-motivated in learning English as ESL/EFL, the teacher who de-emphasizes extrinsic rewards such as bonus marks, verbal praise may foster a better language learning environment.

II. Intrinsic Motivation:

Intrinsic motivation is characterized as internal or more of a self-determined event where learners take their own responsibility for their learnings and have sense of control. Enhanced motivation is reliant on innate factors that cause people to challenge themselves, just as young learners do when exploring or encountering a new object for the first time. In ESL/EFL acquisition field intrinsic motivation can be simulated when teachers become more a manager or facilitator of language learning and relinquish their traditional center- stage authorization position.

According to Dickenson, intrinsically motivated students become more inclined to set their own goals and monitor their own progress which benefit not only to themselves, but the other language learners in the class with when they interact in small groups and paired work. Intrinsically motivated students therefore tend to be more creative and resourceful in using on ESL/EFL because they are less reliant on the teacher and rather personalize their own learning because the learning involves their natural interest.

III. Questionnaire and Participants: -

We have chosen young learners from the department of English from different universities, survey questionnaire was distributed to students in ESL/EFL classes over a period of two weeks. Some of the

questionnaire could not be used for this study due to written responses which were not answered with enough specificity or were left blank. It should be noted that since the study was not cross sectional, it would be unrealistic to suggest the results of the questionnaire were conclusive.

The survey questionnaire basically focused on these two questions: -

- i. In your experience, please explain what single reason or event there is for you to have been motivated to learn English language. What encouraged you to stay positive about learning English language? Please give details and explain in your words.
- ii. In your experience, please explain what single reason or event has discouraged you from being motivated to learn English language? Please give the details of something that did not help you learn English language.

Figure – 1

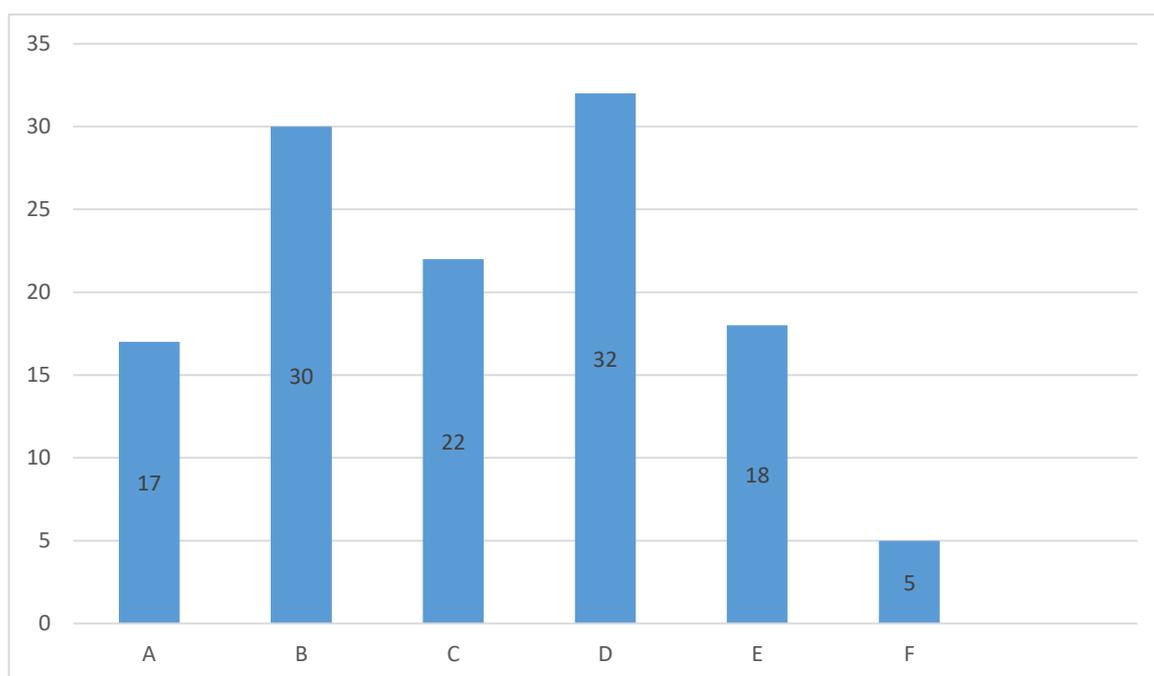


Table -1

Positive Motivational Constituents-

- A. As a teacher of English language, I liked or having an interesting class.
- B. Communication with native English speakers.
- C. Better understanding of English movies, music, news, and TV shows.
- D. The belief that English language ability is necessary for future jobs.
- E. Encouraged by parents, friends, and society to learn English language.
- F. English language is the global or international language.

4- DISCUSSION OF QUESTIONS IN TABLE -1

- a) As a teacher of English language: I liked or having an interesting class. It is very clear that teachers can influence student motivation and achievement. But frequent question often asked by teacher is, why do some students put forth more effort and persist on academic tasks for one teacher and not for others. Thayer - Bacon explained that students who see teachers who care and develop interactive relationship with students based on trust and respect take more responsibility for their own learning and demonstrate high level of intrinsically motivated behavior.

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- b) Dweck suggests that teachers create learning environment in which students feel safe to take risks with an emphasis on helping students to develop learning goals as opposed to performance goals (i.e., marks and test). A caring teacher is then in a better position to maintain students' interest in language learning and help the students remain engaged in learning. A student who was influenced positively by a teacher to stay motivated to learn English language in this study included. Some might suspect that teacher who uses praise frequently in the class will probably be more like by the students and that fact will increase the chance that students will develop intrinsic motivation. The trouble with this concept is that overly praising the students' achievement can become a form of external reward and can move students towards over-reliance on the teacher. This can have results which are counterproductive to successful learning language learning. Sikkula-Leino's motivational study suggests that a good alternative when praising a student is for the instructor to praise the effort of the student as opposed to outward performance measurement. Teachers can help assure their students that setbacks and failure are natural stage in the ESL/ EFL learning process and put an emphasis not on immediate demonstrations of intellectual powers, but rather on perseverance and acquisition of language skill over-time.
- c) Communication with native English speakers: Many universities have a policy of hiring native English language teachers to help students who have never traveled overseas to better understand are to get exposure of the culture behind English language. Native speakers possess natural language teaching methods that can help arouse interest among students who have had chance to communicate with their native English-speaking teacher and perhaps better motivate students to learn English. It does not mean that non-native teachers couldn't motivate their students, but native speaking teachers can provide natural environment of language learning.
- d) Better understanding of English movies, music, news, and TV shows: Teachers can capitalize on the interest. Students already have an aspect of English-speaking countries culture exports such as music, TV shows can perhaps help students' interest to learn English language. The teachers can harness the natural interest of students in a non-threatening classroom environment when the teacher plays the role of guide in moving students from questioning to discuss their answers to their class as a whole. Much of the media that students enjoy, can be used in the class to motivate them. These media contents may serve to foster intrinsic interest in English speaking/ listening can help to motivate in an EFL/ESL class. Using short audio/video clips with specific linguistic focus is entirely different from the "just push play" approach which does not give a chance to our students to describe what they saw or listen and get an opportunity to personalize their learning.
- e) The belief that English ability is necessary for future jobs: In this era of globalization, it appears that many students feel that being proficient in using English is an important factor in landing a well-paying job. However, since the promise of a good job is really a form of instrument extrinsic motivation, perhaps this kind of counterproductive carrot and stick approach to encourage students to learn English language can turn into an external crutch and can handicap their own intrinsic motivation. Kohn points out that both carrot and sticks can be effective at getting only one thing: temporary compliance. If learning English language just for a future job which will pay good money becomes the main focus, then this gets students focused on only the outcome rather than the uplifting and enriching experience of being intrinsically motivated to learn a language.
- f) Encouraged by parents, friends, and society to learn English language: Fulk explained that outside pressure to get success puts English language learners in the position of mastering English language to please the parents more than from desire to learn the language for their own sense of personal achievement. Dweck's research suggests that teachers and parents should not overly praise easy success because we may be teaching students that low-effort products are what they should be most proud of. She argues that friends, parents and society tend to exaggerate positives and candy- coat negatives making them not the most objective people in aiding real academic development. Dweck also suggests that teachers can privately praise their students' efforts and that parents, friends and society
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can continue to provide a supportive role from the sidelines, but without being "heavy handed" either with praise or criticism to help facilitate students' autonomy.

- g) English language is the global or international language: Most of the universities are doing more to help students have more opportunity to study abroad by organizing different exchange programs. These opportunities can play a crucial role in helping students have authentic communication experience with native speakers and prepare students for rapidly unfolding globalization in which English language plays an important role teachers can also connect their students who do not get a chance to study abroad, by using some useful ideas which may include classroom teaching material which can provide comparative cultural background to help students to master the English language as a global language.

Figure – 2

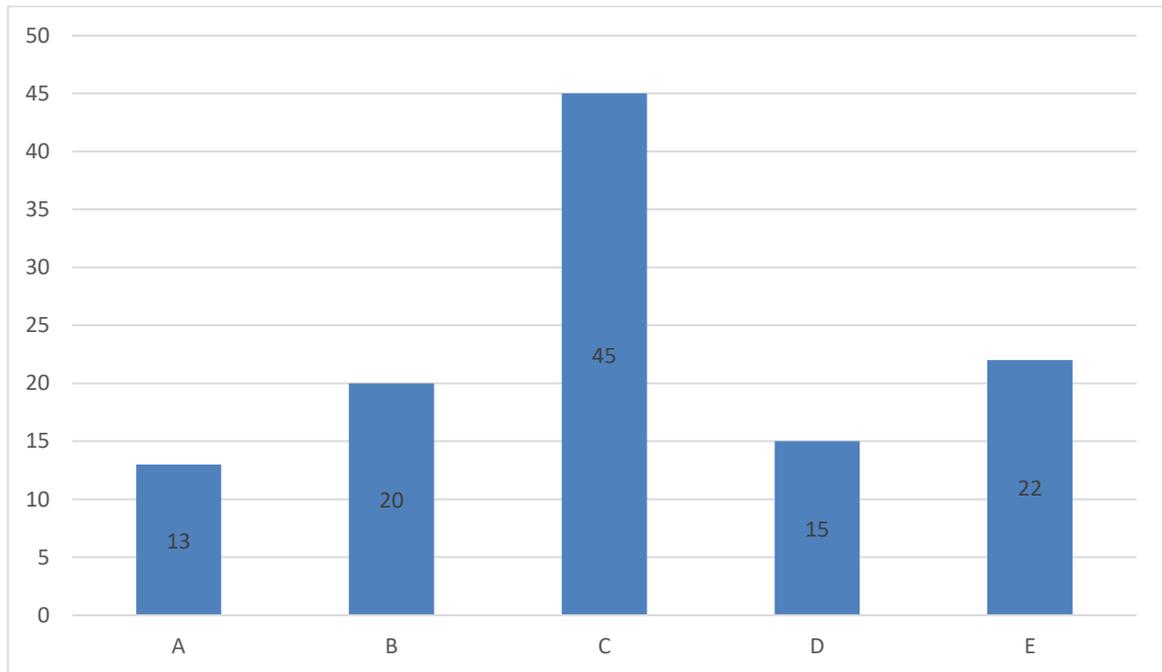


Table – 2

Negative Motivational Constituents

- A. Don't like the president testing system
- B. Discouraged by comparison with other students and ultra-competitiveness.
- C. Find English language grammar difficult.
- D. English classes were not interesting as expected.
- E. Frustrating or embarrassing experience with native speakers or fellow students or teachers.

5- Discussion of questions in table -2:

- a) Don't like the present testing system: Most of the students in most of the universities learn English language by repetition and memorization to pass the examination, there are often few chances to practice using English language in a real-world setting. English language test taking in many universities appear to serve the purpose of sorting students rather than becoming a tool that creates students' communicative development. We have observed through our survey that most of our students have problems in speaking and writing. Language teachers can turn the students' focus towards the importance of achieving their long-range goals incrementally and positively affect students' intrinsic motivation in studying English language. Some research seems to point to a more useful role for testing by reporting that students who were given quizzes to help students monitor their own progress had

increased intrinsic motivation as opposed to students who took quizzes that were evaluated by the teachers.

- b) Discouraged by comparison with students and ultra -competitiveness: As our survey reflects that in most common negative motivational factor is discouragement from comparisons to other students or the pressure brought on by competition for grades. Extrinsic rewards in an ESL/ EFL classrooms, such as grades and teachers' praise can make some students feel like winners while other students who are great performers can be made to feel like losers as a result of strict grading policies. Collaborative learning and pair work discussion activities are excellent ways to get students working together and to give them a chance to be able to use English language in oral and written form in ways in which the pressure to "be the winner" is removed. When teachers give students more chances to interact with others in class learning not getting the good marks becomes the goal instead of creating an overly competitive atmosphere in the classroom, teacher can enhance sense of community and cooperation by capitalizing on the students own knowledge and interest to make learning more interesting and fun.
- c) Find English Language grammar difficult: Why students find English language grammar difficult can be left for another study, but the issue of why student report a feeling of hearing less motivation is perhaps due to the widespread use of the grammar translation method of teaching used by most of the non-native English language teachers. Behind the popularity of the grammar translation method of teaching lies the teachers' belief that the use of mother tongue (L1) is helpful for learning English language. Unfortunately, this myth usually means that oral/aural skills are neglected, and language learning becomes restricted to a very narrow non-communicative range that does not prepare students to use the language in everyday life. Grammar translation method of teaching is teacher-centered which limits students' autonomy in using the language. This not only inhibits the development of intrinsic motivations which stimulates best in students in an autonomous learning environment, but also make free flowing and spontaneous use of English language difficult. The worst-case scenario involves teachers with less oral a competency who use grammar translation method because of their own insecurity in speaking English language to students and who shy away from the "face-threatening" task of fully participating in a in or teaching oral communication activities in classroom. We can use grammar translation method to explain certain rules with limitation but result of our survey suggests that dependence on the method has a negative impact on students' motivation.
- d) English classes were not interesting as expected: Littlewood believes that there is a direct correlation between interesting content and teaching method which engage the language learner's participation. Men students mentioned in our survey, that their motivation towards the study of the English language decreased as a result of their English language classes being uninteresting. In order to student progress ESL/ EFL classroom needs to provide students with the chance for purposeful communication inside classroom as well as outside classroom. This can help to promote intrinsic motivation and get the students more focused on issue to which they can relate and concentrate on their meaning across. Theme-based or content-area ESL/ EFL curriculum can be a way to give students more incentive to speak in class while still adhering to the institutional needs for offering a language course, cross cultural comparisons topic facing by university students and other social issues can all serve to liven up the classroom and heightened the students' interest.
- e) Frustrating or embarrassing experience with native speakers, fellow students, or teachers: McCarty wrote in a book entitled "Motivating your students", "Motivation is not that you do to the people, it is something you do with people". The large majority of those who listed in survey, the negative experience with native speakers, fellow students or teachers cited their own lack of ability to pronounce English language properly which resulted in the native speaker fellow students or teachers not comprehending the exchange. Many teachers or ESL/ EFL have mirroring or copying the communicating communicated skills of native speakers which are similar to those used in conversational English and sometimes, they have lost the real essence of language teaching.

7-DISCUSSION

According to Gross Davis the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject and for the teaching is the key to help and stimulate motivation in the classroom stating: "whatever level of motivation your student bring to the classroom will be transformed, for better or worse, by what happens in the classroom."

Dornyei notes that the teacher's level of enthusiasm and commitment is one of the most important factors that affect the learner's motivation to learn. Teachers who are motivated to teach and have not "lost the spark" for teaching can expect better results. Teacher's belief in the curriculum and methodology behind a lesson he or she is teaching is very positively correlated to the ultimate success of the lesson.

It seems clear from our survey that many problems with students not being motivated to learn English language can be remedied by the teachers of English language who constantly make changes to their own curriculum to keep it more interesting. Teachers should make curricula that have a variety of fresh and relevant activities to inspire students' interest and make more of an effort to not simply follow the prescribed textbooks, but to be more creative and innovative in preparing for their classes. When teaching students who are bringing independent learning skills, perhaps prescribing falls students what their assignments and choices are is less effective, as these kinds of students may already have skills in working with other students as member of an independent language learning groups.

When students complain that their work in class is not meaningful and monotonous, one answer to this problem is to foster a more interesting classroom for students by providing more opportunities for group work. It is better to give more autonomy and encourage them to take the initiative in their own communicative activities which will increase intrinsic motivation and help to reduce their anxiety. By using small groups in ESL/ EFL classroom, students will have a tendency to try to use more of the target language and produce a variety of speech acts. Students learning English language cooperatively can be in a better position in this kind of non-threatening atmosphere to use the English language more freely they already know. The well-known social linguist Halliday points out that language is required and internalized through interpersonal interactions, and his work provides a good theoretical justification for giving students more opportunities to argue discuss and suggest their opinions in group activities.

In the end. Helping students to become motivated to achieve a higher level of English language and pursue their learning without constant external or extrinsic praise should be the permanent goal and only skillful teaching can accomplish that. When our learners become more independent, they can take they take they can take on self -selected activities with minimal teacher supervision and self-propel themselves to become more competent in the target language with minimal teaching supervision and assistance. So, learners can tend to meet new learning circumstances with more confidence rather than retreat from the new language learning tasks. Learners can develop new learning strategies independently to strengthen and improve both learning skills and overall language proficiency. In teaching situation when the students are less independent, prescribing to students what their choices are, where they are located, and how many students may participate in each activity may be necessary. Gradually, as students gain proficiency in working independently and develop the necessary skill for making new choice, the teacher will drop the more "top down" approach of instructions. The teacher will be able to work with several groups and each student can work individually, in assigned tasks, working to help students to build their skills of self-learning and to move from one task to the next, encouraging them to make their own choice of learning without an assistance from teacher. For those students who still need special assistance from teacher, the teacher can refocus and restart in an effort to help them to encourage to actively participate to complete assigned tasks.

8 CONCLUSION

The ongoing question about where motivation comes from and how to best promote it in the ESL/ EFL classroom will take more time and study to resolve. Motivation is a key factor to success in second and foreign language acquisition and that material that is more meaningful can spark students' curiosity about learning English language. In an age where there is more pressure on students to master English language, teachers would

serve their students well by being willing to adopt a more non-authoritarian approach of teaching English as a second or foreign language and respecting the students' interest and learning style of preferences. While it is important to better understand motivation to enable students to learn self-starters, it is well recognized that there is no grand theory of motivation or single magical formula that will ensure success in motivating all ESL/EFL students. Hopefully teachers will invest more time and effort in adopting new teaching approaches and methods that can help students to learn English in an optimal learning setting where all become winners.

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