Motivational Factors That Impact English Language Learning in an Arab Model School, Jordan: An Empirical Investigation

1K.Sarojani Devi Krishnan, 2Qusai Ali Khalaf Al_Lafi and 3Zahid Hussain Pathan

1Universiti Utara Malaysia. 06010 Sintok, Malaysia.
2Taif University, Taif, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,
3University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan.

Corresponding Author: K.Sarojani Devi Krishnan

Abstract
Motivation is one of the key factors impacting successful English language learning in EFL settings. In order that language is acquired effectively by learners, it is essential that factors that motivate language learning be identified. In Jordan, mastering the English language has become a critical issue as students need to pass Tajwahi, the university entrance English test before furthering their studies at the tertiary level which will secure them a professional job and high status in society in the future. Hence, this study investigates the factors that motivate high school Jordanian students to learn English in an Arab Model School. The research design adopted was mixed-methods approach. The sample comprised 80 10th grade students. The socio-educational model by Gardner (1985) was used as the theoretical framework for this study. A questionnaire adapted from Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery was used to elicit information on motivational factors that influenced students' learning of English. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data. Interviews were also conducted with 10 students selected from the sample to gain in-depth insights into the above-mentioned motivating factors. The findings of the study depicted four factors in descending order of importance: parental encouragement, social factor, desire to learn English, and teacher's style. The findings were significant in providing information to the relevant authorities so that efforts can be taken as appropriate to motivate students to acquire the English language effectively for their educational and professional benefits in the future.

Keywords: language motivation, language learning, acquisition, EFL, proficiency

INTRODUCTION
Motivation is the key to learning (Dornyei, 2001). It refers to the inner source, desire, emotion, reason, need, impulse or purpose that moves an individual towards a particular action. Gardner (1985) defines second language acquisition (L2) motivation as “the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity” (p.10). Ormrod (2000) states that “motivation is something that energizes, directs, and sustains behavior; it gets students moving, points them in a particular direction, and keeps them going”. From the perspective of social psychology, Moiinvaziri (2008) claims that learning a target language is linked to the individual’s social dispositions towards the target language community. In essence, Gardner (1990) describes motivation in second or foreign language learning as comprising three main elements, i.e. first, a desire to learn the language, second, effort expended towards learning the language and third, favourable attitudes towards learning the language. In other words, motivation in learning a foreign language is a process in which a learner has desire, persistence and a positive attitude to achieve the goal of learning the target language. Other definitions of motivation can be categorized under behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism (Brown, 2007). With reference to second language acquisition in particular, motivation is best classified as extrinsic versus intrinsic and integrative versus instrumental motivation. Gardner and Lambert (1972) suggests that a learner who is integratively-motivated learns a language to be identified with the wider target language community. An instrumentally-motivated learner, on the other hand, learns the target language to achieve functional goals such as obtaining a degree, gain social recognition or a good job. In their study in Canada, the findings suggest that learners of French language with an integrative motive achieved higher proficiency in language learning as compared to those who were instrumentally-motivated.

Research conducted by Gardner concentrated on motivation as well as other factors that impacted a learner’s success in L2 acquisition. According to Gardner (1982), a learner’s success in learning L2 can be attributed to a combination of more than one factor and this is illustrated in his socio-educational model. In his model, four factors which are interrelated come into play: the social and cultural milieu, individual learner differences, setting or context of learning and linguistic outcomes. The model places a primary role on the aptitude and motivation constructs as they are seen to have a strong influence on learning: aptitude because the
student with higher levels of language aptitude will tend to be more successful at learning the language than students less endowed; and motivation because students with higher levels of motivation will do better than students with lower levels.

FACTORS OF MOTIVATION

Many researchers and theorists describe the construct of motivation not as a single component but that of multi-componential. Oxford and Shearin (1994) in their analysis of twelve motivational models state that factors of motivation can be classified under socio-psychology, cognitive development and socio-cultural psychology. They claim that six factors have an impact on language learning: attitude, beliefs about self, goals for learning, involvements whereby learners actively and consciously participate in the process of language learning, environmental support and personal attitude.

In line with the above, Gardner (1982) identified a number of factors which are interrelated when learning a second language. Based on Gardner’s (1985) socio-educational model, he developed the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) to assess various variables related to individual differences. The AMTB has been adapted and used in many studies on L2 motivation (e.g. Baker & Macintyre, 2000; Gardner, Day & Macintyre, 1992; Gardner & Macintyre, 1991, 1993; Gardner Tremblay & Masgoret, 1997; Masgoret, Bernaus & Gardner, 2001; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995; Mondada & Doehler, 2004; Inbar, Donitsa-Schmidt & Shohamy, 2001; Ushioda, 2001; Brown, Robson & Rosenkjar, 2001; Lamb, 2004). The AMTB consists of over 130 items and has been tested for reliability and validity (Gardner & Macintyre, 1993). The AMTB comprises items based on five categories i.e. integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation, motivation, instrumental motivation and language anxiety (Gardner, 2001). Gardner (2001) acknowledges other factors besides integrative motivation that have an influence on motivation such as instrumental motivation and attitudes towards the teacher and course.

In the Jordanian context, English Language has become an important issue in recent years. In spite of the great efforts exerted in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan secondary schools to teach English, one can hardly come across fluent school graduates (Ministry of Education, Jordan Report, 2010). Furthermore, the Ministry of Higher Education in Jordan has made it compulsory for all students to pass an English proficiency placement test known as Tawjahi before they are admitted into courses at the university. Zughoul (1985) states that low motivated students who are learning English language do not pass the English language test, hence, will not be able to further their studies at the universities or find good jobs. Based on the important role of motivation in learning English language as a second language in the Jordanian context, the present study which focused on identifying factors that motivate students in learning English is deemed necessary to ensure that students pass the Tawjahi to gain entry into programs at the tertiary level as well as to secure good jobs in the future.

The present study was an attempt to investigate factors that motivate 10th grade Jordanian students in an Arab Model School in learning English. Four factors were investigated in this study, namely, social factor, parents’ encouragement, teacher’s style and desire to learn English. The study was significant in providing information to the Ministry of Education, Jordan, language instructors, parents and students on the factors that motivate students to learn English in the context of the Arab Model school. Hence, necessary efforts can be taken by the relevant authorities to ensure that the teaching and learning of English can take place effectively amidst a conducive environment. In this way, mastery of the language can be acquired and students are able to further their studies locally or abroad at the tertiary level and hence are able to secure themselves a good job in the future.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study aims to investigate the factors that motivate 10th Grade Jordanian students in learning English in an Arab Model School.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the factors that motivate 10th Grade Jordanian students in learning English in an Arab Model School?

METHODOLOGY

The research method employed in this study was mixed-methods approach. A questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were used to collect the data relevant to the research question of the study.

PARTICIPANTS

The sample consisted of 80 10th grade students (40 males and 40 females) selected randomly for the present study. They were 16 years of age, locally-based Jordanians and their mother tongue was Arabic language.

INSTRUMENTATION

Two instruments were used to collect data to address the research question. The first instrument was a questionnaire adapted from Gardner’s (1985) AMTB. The questionnaire consists of 17 items on four factors of motivation: social factor (4 items), parental encouragement (5 items), teacher’s style (4 items) and desire to learn English (4 items). The
items were also translated into the Arabic language by the researcher and were counter-checked by two language experts who were fluent in both English and Arabic language. Students rated each item based on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the items based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1).

To gain deeper insights into the reasons underlying the factors, 10 students were interviewed to probe further into the four factors of motivation under study. The responses of the students were transcribed and content analysis was used to extract the reasons pertaining to the factors of motivation that impacted their language learning.

PILOT STUDY
A pilot study was conducted with 30 students from the population and the items in the questionnaire were revised accordingly based on students’ responses. Item reliability analysis was run and a reliability index of 0.86 was obtained for the items in the questionnaire indicating high reliability.

DATA ANALYSIS
The responses of the students in the questionnaire were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17 to obtain the results for each individual factor under investigation. Descriptive statistics on responses pertaining to Strongly Agree (SA) and Mostly Agree (MA) as well as the sum of both (Total Agree = SA + MA) were analysed and tabulated.

FINDINGS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE DATA
The overall findings of all the four factors of motivation are summarized in Table 1 below. The highest and lowest percentages were compared across the four factors.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics on factors of motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors of Motivation</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (SA) Percentages/Frequencies</th>
<th>Mostly Agree (MA) Percentages/Frequencies</th>
<th>Total Agree (SA+MA) Percentages/Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>43.2% (35)</td>
<td>35.0% (28)*</td>
<td>78.2% (63)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents' Encouragement</td>
<td>49.0% (39)**</td>
<td>38.5% (31)**</td>
<td>87.5% (70)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher's Style</td>
<td>34.1% (27)</td>
<td>34.1% (27)</td>
<td>68.2% (54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to learn English</td>
<td>48.5% (39)*</td>
<td>26.0% (20)</td>
<td>74.5% (59)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Highest percentage  *Second highest percentage

The findings in Table 1 show that for the Total Agree category, the most frequently-cited factor by students was parents’ encouragement with the highest percentage of 87.5%, followed by social factor, 78.2% and desire to learn the English language, 74.5%. The least cited factor was teacher’s style with a percentage of 68.2%.

FINDINGS OF THE INTERVIEW DATA
The findings of the interview with the respondents based on the following questions are summarized below.

Question: What motivates you to learn the English language?
Four of the students stated that the main reason which motivated them to learn English was parents’ encouragement. They claimed that their parents wanted them to learn English for the following reasons:

i. To pass Tawjahi,
ii. to be able to further their studies at the university,
iii. to get a job since English is the language of the working sector, and
iv. they wanted the students to be like the other family members who could also speak English.

Two of the students stated that they learnt the English language for social and prestige reasons, that is they felt proud of speaking English in front of their friends, and that English reflects the language of the learned.

Four of the students admitted that the reason that motivated them to learn the English language was their desire to speak the English language fluently and pass the English language test. In addition, they claimed that they had many friends from America and therefore wanted to speak English like them.

Question: What do you think about the method used by your English teacher to teach English?
Seven students claimed that they liked their teacher’s way of teaching because he or she used a lot of technological devices such as the computer, cassettes, and videos as well as group discussions and drilling activities. In short, students implied that their teacher’s way of teaching by integrating technology motivated them to learn the English language.

DISCUSSION
The findings show that among all the factors, parents’ encouragement played the most important role in motivating students to learn the English language. A number of reasons were quoted from the interview on why parent’s motivated them to learn the English language. Some of the reasons were that their parents wanted them to learn English to pass the Tawjahi and further their studies at the university. The findings support Bartram’s (2006) study who highlighted that parents can help their children to learn a foreign
language by motivating them to read newspapers and watch programmes in the target language on TV.

The second most important factor is the social factor. The findings from the interview suggest that the students were interested in learning the English language for two reasons. They felt that learning English language would help upgrade their social status and prestige. The findings support Qasho’a’s (2006) study who stated that the success in second language learning is affected by social factors. He highlighted that 70% of The United Arab of Emirate (UAE) secondary schools students like to learn English to participate in the activities of other cultural groups, to learn about their lifestyles and to exchange social issues.

The third highest percentage was obtained for desire to learn the English language. Students said that their desire to learn English was to be able to speak the language fluently and to pass the university entrance English test (Tawjahi). This finding supports Clement and Vallerand’s (2000) study. They highlighted that the desire to learn the second language (L2) plays an important role in helping them to achieve some practical goals such as finding a good job in the future, pass courses, and interact with people who speak English.

The lowest percentage was obtained for teachers’ style. The students agreed that teacher’s style motivated them to learn the English language. From the interview, students stated that their teacher used many technological aids to motivate them to learn English. The teacher also used group discussions and methods in teaching which students found interesting. These findings support Qasho’a’s (2006) study. He stated that the teacher’s role (personality and teaching methods) shapes the learner’s motivation and attitudes toward learning L2. When the learner comes to the classroom with low intrinsic motivation, he could be motivated extrinsically by the motivating choice of approaches and personal styles of the teacher.

CONCLUSION
This study was conducted to investigate the factors that motivate 10th grade Jordanian students in learning the English language in the Arab Model School. As the English language has emerged as an important language in the Jordanian context, this has implications for students to achieve goals related to attaining high status and good career positions in society besides other benefits. Therefore, it is deemed important that the aim of this study to investigate the factors underpinning students’ motivation to learn the language can help provide the necessary input to the respective authorities to help motivate students in learning the language effectively. The findings of this study revealed that all the four factors investigated motivated students to learn English. These include parental encouragement, social factor, the desire to learn English language and teacher’s style. In short, it was found that students were instrumentally-inclined rather than integratively-inclined to learn the English language. This was obvious when students quoted reasons for learning English such as to pass the Tawjahi (university entrance English examination) to secure a good job in the future. Overall, the findings of this study has implications on the teaching and learning of English in Jordan.

REFERENCES


