

Motivation toward English Language Learning among Students of Different Fields of Study: A Case of Iraqi University Students

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Abstract

This study aims at identifying motivation toward English language learning among students of different fields of study. More specifically, it tries to identify the two types of motivation (integrative/ instrumental) among those students and also the preferred activities used by them. This study is qualitative and quantitative, which uses two types of instruments: a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. In the survey, there are 150 responses collected from the participants who answered the questionnaire questions. In the interview, the researcher interviewed three participants. The results of this study show that the students of different fields of study were motivated instrumentally rather than integratively. Finally, the results also indicate that the participants identified different learning activities.

Keywords: Different fields of study, Iraqi students, learning English, motivation

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Introduction

After the Iraq invasion by American forces in 2003, Iraq has increasingly opened up more upon the global community, more significantly, in the last ten years. Iraqi learners have joined many language-learning institutes for the purpose of learning English. Being motivated is very important in learning a foreign language (FL) and encouraging learners to learn and use English. Motivation plays a vital role in understanding the target language. According to Ellis (1994), the motivation role in learning a foreign language is significant. Binalet and Guerra (2014) identify the necessity of motivation in learning. Motivation cause, as many other factors such as age, personality, aptitude, will, and so on, directly affect the success of learning a foreign language. It is a critical factor that may affect the learning process (Ellis, 1994; McDonough, 1983; Mohd Redzuan, Anak Buda, & Abdullah, 2014). According to Horwitz (1990), motivation is the learner's feelings toward a specific language and a culture of the community who uses this language. It is a learner's need for acquiring a foreign language and using it widely. Without motivation, learners will never learn the target language, and they will face difficulty to do (Gardner, 2007).

Iraqi students, like other Arab countries, have face difficulty using English as a means of communication other than in their everyday life or to communicate with foreigners. Although Iraqi learners spent years learning the target language (English), they still unable to use this language as a means of communicating effectively, and they are also suffering to be able to use English in the right. This may be related to their lack to be more motivated learners. According to Albodakh and Cinkara (2017), most Iraqi learners feel that it is challenging to acquire the English language because of their insufficient motivation. Without students' motivation, learning activities will never be achieved. It is advisable to choose teaching materials relevant to the students' motivation (Abdulrasoul, 2012). For these reasons, the current study will investigate students' motivation toward learning English and the preferred activities used by them to do so.

The Research Objectives

The current study considers the following objectives:

1. To investigate the types of motivation (instrumental/ integrative) towards learning the English language that Iraqi students of different fields of study have.
2. To identify the English language learning activities, which are preferred by Iraqi students of different fields of study.

Research Questions

This study will examine and answer the following questions:

1. What types of motivation (instrumental/ integrative) towards learning the English language that Iraqi students of different fields of study have?
2. What are the English language-learning activities preferred by Iraqi students of different fields of study?

Significance of the Study

In this study, it is hoped that the implications of this study contribute to the pedagogy of English language learning. If this study proves to be effective in identifying the type of motivation, then the findings will promote and implement in the Iraqi EFL curriculum. The

results of this study are hoped to have necessary potential pedagogic implications in the local EFL context in particular and in the teaching and learning English context in general.

The results of this study may alert university teachers and students of different fields of study (non-departmental teachers and students) on how motivation is vital in improving the English learning process. Finally, the implications of this study may alert university teachers to be more creative in constructing interactive learning activities for Iraqi university students to help them build up their language competence, which finally leads to enhance their language learning.

Theoretically, it is hoped that this study could contribute to motivation in learning the English language. Finally, it is also expected that EFL researchers could continue looking into the matter of motivation from other aspects and conduct studies that could benefit university students in learning the target language.

Review of Literature

Gardner and Lambert (1959) were the first researchers who investigate the two types of motivation: integrative and instrumental. Redzuan et al. (2014) stated that integrative motivation plays an essential role for those people who want to learn English to be able to integrate into their society in which English is the used language. On the other hand, instrumental motivation referring to the will of those who want to learn a target language for the purpose of getting a job or increase their salary (Carreira, 2005). Most previous studies have resulted that instrumental motivation was higher than integrative motivation in learning the target language (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009; Jefiza, 2012; Vaezi, 2009; Wong, 2011).

There were two theories (drive and arousal) that identified that motivation connects with the concepts of drive and arousal. After that, psychology theories were developed to avoid restricting the behaviorist theories regarding learning and motivation. These theories showed that motivation is a process, which is affected by people's thoughts and believes. Cognitive perspective was depended on when the researchers dealt with motivation. Gardner (1985) identified four aspects of motivation: "a goal, effortful behavior, a desire to attain the goal and favorable attitudes toward the activity" (p. 50). Social psychology could be a base to evolve the original impetus in second language motivation (Abdulrasoul, 2012). In 1963, Lambert proposed a social psychological model, in which some cognitive factors were emphasized. These factors are language aptitudes, intelligence, attitudes, and motivation.

The term motivation has been defined differently among many researchers. According to Gardner (1985), motivation to learn a language is "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). Brown (1994) said that "Motivation is the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect" (p.152). According to Kumar (2005), "motivation" is derived from the Latin word "mover" which means that to put into action or to move. It is the process of putting the learner into physiological or psychological action by which she/ he can fulfill her/ his needs and desires (Abdulrasoul, 2012).

Learning English could be considered to be most important for all university students. To make the students more motivated in language learning, it is vital to consider the classroom activities that best fit them. Choosing more effective classroom activities may enable students to have more motivation to learn English. Qin (2012) maintained that learners prefer activities such as “reading aloud,” “doing listening exercises,” and “reciting tests,” while the teachers prefer communicative activities.

Previous Studies on Motivation in Iraq

Many researchers such as Bao, Abdilah, & Chowdhury (2012), Abdulrasoul (2012), Albodakh and Cinkara (2017), and Hussein and Al Bajalani (2019) conducted studies about Iraqi EFL motivation. These studies were varied among them regarding the types of motivation, the role of motivation in language learning, the instruments were used, and the participants.

Bao et al. (2012) investigated the factors influencing Iraqi’s second language (L2) learning in Australia. They found that the two types of motivation (instrumental and integrative) were positively correlated. Those two types motivate Iraqi learners towards English learning and communication. Their study also showed that women were poorly encouraged to learn English.

In her efforts to analyze the motivation of Iraqi students for joining departments of English, Abdulrasoul (2012) conducted a study to do so. The questionnaire was used as an instrument to elicit the data from the students. The findings showed that the students were motivated integratively more than instrumentally.

Additionally, their study (Albodakh & Cinkara, 2017) tried to find out the relationship between Iraqi EFL students’ motivation and vocabulary size. This study used two kinds of instruments (questionnaires regarding Motivation for Foreign Language Learning (MFL) and Vocabulary Size Test). The findings showed that female students were motivated highly for the two types of motivation (extrinsic and intrinsic). Regarding the relationship between learner motivation and vocabulary size, the results neglected the relation between them.

Subsequently, in their study, Hussein and Al Bajalani (2019) tried to identify the role of motivation in promoting autonomy among Iraqi EFL university students in Kurdistan Region in Iraq. To collect the data, this study used a mixed-method approach, which used a questionnaire and an interview. The results showed that motivation has positive effects in developing the EFL students’ autonomy.

Methodology

Participants

The participants of the survey were 150 undergraduate students from departments of computer sciences, chemical, and biology available at the University of Diyala in Iraq. Those students were at first, second, third, and fourth year of study for the academic year 2018/ 2019. The following table one shows the background information of the participants.

Table 1. *The background information of the participants*

Department	Number		Age
	Female	Male	
Computer Sciences	34	20	19 - 23
Chemical Biology	27	19	19 - 21
	22	28	20 - 22
Total	83	67	19 - 23

To get more in-depth information about the types of motivation, the researcher asked three students to be interviewed in this study. Those students were the fourth year of study at three different departments. The following table two shows the background information of the interviewed participants at University of Diyala in Iraq.

Table2. *The background information of the interviewed participants*

Participants	Department	Gender		Age
		Female	Male	
No.1	Biotechnology		✓	22 years
No.2	Medical Physics	✓		22 years
No.3	Biology		✓	22 years

Instrument

In this study, two types of instruments were used. The researcher used a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The questionnaire consists of fourth parts. The first part focuses on the students' background information, the second part focuses on integrative motivation, the third focuses on instrumental motivation, and the fourth one focuses on preferred learning activities. The items of the questionnaire were adapted from Wimolmas's Survey of Motivation (2013) and Redzuan et al. (2014). A five-point Likert scale was employed to rate the questions of this questionnaire ranging from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree.' The questionnaire items were sent to the three experts to check their validity. They agreed on all of them except for some things that were needed to revise. On the other hand, the researchers assessed their reliability using Cronbach's alpha scale. The value was 0.887, which was acceptable.

On the other hand, the interview consists of five questions. The interview questions were adapted from Wong (2011). These questions could be identified as follows:

1. Do you think that motivation plays a crucial role in learning a foreign language (English)? Why?
2. In your opinion, which type of motivation (integrative or instrumental) has a significant impact on learning English? Why?
3. Is an integratively motivated learner or an instrumentally one using English correctly? Why?

4. In your opinion, is it essential to make learners know about the two types of motivation (integrative/ instrumental)? Why?
5. Do you think that the chosen activities by a teacher play an essential role in identifying or enhancing learners' type of motivation? Why?

Research Procedures

The questionnaires were distributed to the 150 students during their regular class sessions. The researcher himself did that to avoid confusion if any. The students were provided with some explanations regarding the study's purpose and with some instructions to respond to the questionnaire item. Those students were not informed about the types of motivation included in this questionnaire. The questionnaire was then collected upon completion.

On the other hand, the researcher interviewed three students. He interviewed each student face-to-face separately. Before interviewing the students, he explained the two types of motivation (integrative/ instrumental). In this interview, each student was asked five questions mentioned earlier. This interview was audio recorded.

Data Analysis

This section is divided into two subsections. The first section focuses on analyzing the data elicited from the questionnaire, while the second focuses on analyzing the data produced from the semi-structured interview.

Data Elicited from the Questionnaire

The researcher used the 'Statistical Package for the Social Sciences' (SPSS) to analyze the data, which were obtained from the questionnaire. A descriptive analysis was used to get information about motivation and preferred activities.

Table 3. *Descriptive Analysis of Instrumental Motivation*

No.	Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I only use English to do my assignments and exams.	150	1	5	4.10	1.06
2	I always copy sentences directly from books/articles even though I do not understand the meaning.	150	1	5	4.43	0.81
3	I only read English materials that are related to my assignments.	150	1	5	2.70	1.02
4	I learn English to pass my exams and to get an excellent job in the future.	150	1	5	3.06	1.15
5	I learn English because I am interested in furthering my higher education.	150	1	5	2.51	1.25
6	I learn English because it is crucial for traveling overseas.	150	1	5	2.90	1.16
7	I learn English to look more sophisticated and knowledgeable.	150	1	5	4.25	1.36
8	I learn English to have a better career in the future.	150	1	5	2.61	1.14
9	I learn English because it can lead to more success and achievements in life.	150	1	5	2.56	1.37

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10	I learn English because being proficient in English makes other people respect me.	150	1	5	3.54	1.23
Total		150	1	5	32.66	11.55

Table three represents a descriptive analysis for instrumental motivation. Based on the students' responses, most items regarding instrumental motivation got high mean scores. The mean scores in this table ranged from (M= 4.43 to M= 2.51) respectively.

Table four explains a descriptive analysis for integrative motivation. Based on the students' responses, most items regarding integrative motivation got low mean scores. The mean score in this table ranged from (M= 3.01 to M= 1.44) respectively.

Table 4. *Descriptive Analysis of Integrative Motivation*

No.	Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I learn English because it can help me understand English books, movies, pop music, etc.	150	1	5	1.48	0.95
2	I learn English because I want to know and learn about native English speakers' ways of life.	150	1	5	1.44	0.73
3	I learn English because it allows me to discuss exciting topics worldwide.	150	1	5	2.62	0.98
4	I learn English because I am very interested in joining activities organized by a local and international institution.	150	1	5	2.13	0.94
5	I learn English because it allows me to transfer my knowledge to other people. For example, I am giving directions to tourists.	150	1	5	2.04	1.10
6	I learn English because it makes me more open-minded and friendly like English native speakers.	150	1	5	1.94	0.95
7	I learn English because it allows me to behave like native English speakers. For example, the accent and using English expressions.	150	1	5	2.98	1.39
8	I learn English because I am interested in the culture of people around the world.	150	1	5	2.22	1.34
9	I learn English because I am interested in getting to know other people from other cultures.	150	1	5	3.04	1.48
10	I want to learn English as best as possible to have better proficiency and understanding of the language.	150	1	5	3.01	1.20
Total		150	1	5	22.9	11.06

Table five shows the descriptive statistics for the preferred activities included in the questionnaire. It also shows that the mean score for these activities was varied among the students. The action belongs to listening and copying notes got the highest mean score (M= 5.18). In contrast, the training that focuses on practicing speaking with friends inside the class got the lowest mean score (M= 1.34). As it is shown, the students preferred all other activities differently.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Preferred Activities

No.	Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	To learn English, I like to practice speaking with my friends in class.	150	1	5	1.34	0.76
2	To learn English, I like to listen and copy notes from the board.	150	1	5	5.18	2.21
3	To learn English, I like to play games in English.	150	1	5	2.80	1.20
4	To learn English, I like to read a lot of English materials.	150	1	5	4.32	2.83
5	To learn English, I like to do role-plays and dramas.	150	1	5	1.37	0.82
6	To learn English, I like summarizing what I have learned in class.	150	1	5	2.90	1.16
Total		150	1	5	20.89	9.73

Data Elicited from the Semi-structured Interview

To increase and validate the results of this study, three students were interviewed. Before starting the interview, the researcher explained with examples the two types of motivation (integrative/ instrumental) for each interviewee. Those interviewees (students) were required to answer five questions verbally. Their responses could be explained as follows:

Q1. Do you think that motivation plays a crucial role in learning a foreign language (English)? Why?

All interviewees agreed that motivation plays a crucial role in learning English. The following quotations are explaining the agreement as mentioned earlier.

Motivation is a base of every aspirant and a basis of every worldly goal desired by people from various fields and disciplines, it is a human instinct that varies from one person to another to reach a desire. As for the English language, like other new languages, concerning the mother tongue, it is necessary to have a motivation to learn, master, and understand what it is to benefit from it in various fields of life. Since the English language is the number one globally nowadays, we must have a particular motivation for keeping up to date with the importance of this language (Student No. 1).

“Yes, of course, if a person has his motivation or derived from his surroundings, then this is a good element for learning the English” (Student No. 2).

“I think that motivation is very important for learning the English language, but the type of motivation is different from one person to another” (Student No. 3).

Q2. In your opinion, which type of motivation (integrative or instrumental) has a significant impact on learning English? Why?

Regarding this question, the interviewees' responses did not become consistent. Student No. 1 mentioned that integrative motivation is better for learning English. While Student No. 2 did not decide which type of motivation has a significant impact on learning English. Finally, Student No. 3 said that the kind of motivation depends on the situation itself, whether a learner requires learning English for the purpose of getting a job or for integrating into an English community. The following direct quotes show this variation in their responses.

From my very humble point of view, being able to use English for the purpose of doing your assignments or find or a job could not be considered as a mastery of English in its real sense. It means that motivation will be unreal or temporary because you learned the language for a particular purpose. On the other hand, learning English to integrate with a community or a group of people is very important. Motivating integratively to learn the English language will enable you to be a more proficient English speaker that makes you able to communicate or interact with others and know about their traditions and cultures. It makes learners like English and increase the continuity of learning. For me, English is my love, and I will continue to learn this language and never give up (Student No. 1).

“I cannot decide, but I can say that learning English is very important” (Student No. 2).

Learning English depends on the situation itself. Sometimes, we need to learn English because we want to find a job. On the other hand, sometimes, we need to retain it for nothing to integrate into an English community. For me, I understand English to do my assignments and at the same time to communicate with others (foreigners) (Student No. 3).

Q3. In your opinion, is an integratively motivated learner or an instrumentally one using English correctly? Why?

In this question, the interviewees have to decide whether a learner who is motivated integratively or instrumentally uses English correctly. Two interviewees agreed that integratively motivated learner is using English entirely. On the other hand, the third interviewee disagreed with the response of the other two interviewees when he explained that an instrumentally motivated learner is using English better than an integratively one. These responses could be shown in the following quotes.

Based on my experience, a person who will be able to master the language increasingly, will master it gradually. He is the one who is keeping in touch with English speakers or watching foreign series or films. It will lead to an increase in his love and passion for this

language, and he will have a strong desire to learn it, to go into more in-depth details, and to acquire more challenging vocabulary.

While a person who is learning English for a specific goal, he will never continue learning” (Student No. 1).

I think a learner who is motivated integratively is issuing English perfectly. This kind of learner learned English by listening to songs, watching films, or chatting with foreigners. On the other hand, in our class, we miss being motivated because of the focus only on English grammar (Student No. 2).

“An instrumentally motivated learner is using English perfectly because he/ she needs this language in his/ her work and to use it proficiently” (Student No. 3).

Q4. In your opinion, is it essential to make learners know about the two types of motivation (integrative/ instrumental)? Why?

By asking the interviewees about their opinions regarding the importance of making learners know the two types of motivation, one interviewee strongly agreed that learners should know about that. He insists on the lecturers’ role in enabling their learners to differentiate between integrative and instrumental motivation. On the other hand, the two other interviewees rejected this idea. The following direct quotes explain their responses.

Yes, of course, the professor has to develop this idea and to make the student able to distinguish between the two types. This will lead to an expansion of the learner’s thinking and widen his mind. As for our reality, professors are not cooperating in this field, and they do not motivate students to learn English as much. They use to complete their lectures, and they do not give the English language spiritual value; on the contrary, they use it for what is found in the "constitution," which is the textbook (Student No. 1).

“I do not think so. There is no need to make a learner knows about integrative and instrumental motivation” (Student No. 2).

“No, it is not necessary. Each one should learn English because it is the language of a new era” (Student No. 3).

Q5. Do you think that the chosen activities by a teacher play an essential role in identifying or enhancing learners’ type of motivation in learning English? Why?

In this question, the researcher is trying to know if interviewees have agreed that the activities play an essential role in identifying or enhancing learners’ kind of motivation and at the same time if they have any preferred activities. All interviewees agreed with this idea, but they did not mention or identify any activities. Their agreements on this could be shown in the following quotations.

“Yes, of course, it has a very great impact. But this thing is almost missing in our lectures. Most of the lecturers adhere to one or two activities no more, and they never renew or diversify them” (Student No. 1).

“Yes, of course, not only the activities inside the class but also the activities outside it. I think the activities have an important role in increasing the type of motivation in learning the English language” (Student No. 2).

“Yes, of course, because they can enhance a learner motivation towards learning English” (Student No. 3).

Discussion

The findings elicited from the participants show that most of the students motivated instrumentally rather than integratively. This is in contrast with the study of and Bao et al. (2012), which shows that the correlation between integrative and instrumental motivation is very high and motivates learners towards learning the English language. It also contrasts the study of Abdulrasoul (2012), which finds that Iraqi EFL learners are motivated integratively rather than instrumentally. Their responses explain that they think that this language is needed do their assignments and sometimes to pass their exams. On the other hand, they give less attention to the benefit of using the language in communicating with foreigners. Some of those students represent their desire to learn the target language of knowing and understanding the language of other people. This means that they have the will to use the English language to communicate with people from different cultures. This is in line with some researchers such as Gardner (2007) and Bao et al. (2012).

Regarding the preferred actives, the results show that the participants choose to listen and to copy notes from the board as the most preferred activity. They also select reading as a preferred activity to learn English. This means that those participants avoid speaking in English since they focus on listening and reading in their learning. On the other hand, they give or pay less attention to making summaries, playing games, doing role-play, and practicing speaking in the target language. This means that there is no will by them to use the English language as a means of communication or interact with foreigners using English.

Conclusion

Iraqi students have faced difficulty using English as means of communication in their everyday life. Although they spent years learning the English language, they lack to be motivated learners. To shed light on this, the current study tried to investigate students' motivation towards learning English and the preferred activities used by them to do so.

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, it is concluded that most of the participants from different fields of study were motivated instrumentally to learn English. On the other hand, some of them were motivated integratively. This study proves that most participants from non-departmental (non-English) students do not care about English as means of communication with others from different areas around the world. Still, they focus on facilitating assignments or any other works related to their field of study.

Consequently, the preferred activities to learn English have no value since the participants pay more attention to those related to writing and reading and pay no attention to speaking activities. This may be related to their type of motivation (instrumental).

About the author

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