



## Politics and foreign language learning: A study of Saudis' motivations to learn English following the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030

Rehan Almegren<sup>a 1</sup> 

<sup>a</sup> Department of Applied Linguistics, College of Languages, Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

### APA Citation:

Almegren, R. (2022). Politics and foreign language learning: A study of Saudis' motivations to learn English following the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 18(1), 135-158. Doi: 10.52462/jlls.171

Submission Date: 26/06/2021

Acceptance Date: 07/09/2021

---

### Abstract

This study examined Saudis' motivation to learn English after the announcement of the Saudi Vision 2030, a strategic social and economic development plan. The study participants included 175 male and female Saudi citizens aged 18–55 years old. Participants answered a Likert-style survey consisting of 27 statements. Their answers were analyzed using ANOVA and t-tests. The findings suggest that Saudis were more motivated to learn English after the announcement. This implies that countries' policies and political decisions can impact their citizens' motivations to learn foreign language. The findings also revealed that younger participants and female participants were more motivated to learn English than their older or male counterparts. The results also show that study participants were most interested in developing their vocabulary and least interested in developing their grammatical skills. This study is the first to investigate how political decisions affect the motives of citizens to learn a foreign language. It is of benefit to linguists, language teachers, language institutes and the business of teaching a foreign language.

*Keywords:* linguistics; language acquisition; language learning motivation; EFL; Saudi

---

## 1. Introduction

The details of Saudi Vision 2030 – Saudi Arabia's strategic plan to reduce its dependency on oil, diversify its economy, and develop its public services by the year 2030 – were announced on April 25, 2016. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman cited the development of Saudi citizens as central to the vision, saying "Our real wealth lies in the ambition of our people and the potential of our younger generation" (Vision 2030, 2021). Saudi Vision 2030 has three pillars: (1) a vibrant society of citizens with strong values living fulfilled lives; (2) a thriving and diverse economy which offers its citizens rewarding opportunities, is globally attractive and competitive, and leverages Saudi Arabia's unique position; and (3) a sense of national ambition (Saudi Vision 2030, 2021). This global-facing policy aims to change Saudi society rather dramatically. This study examines its effects on one aspect of Saudi society – namely, Saudis' motivation to learn English as a foreign language (EFL).

There is some precedent for studying foreign language learning in the context of countries enacting social and economic reforms of the kind described above. Lee (2012) and Melitz (2008) suggested that

---

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding Author  
E-mail address: [rmalmagran@pnu.edu.sa](mailto:rmalmagran@pnu.edu.sa)

better foreign language abilities translate to more job opportunities. Nunan (2013) suggested that some laborers work hard to improve their language skills in order to improve their income and earning potential. Indeed, Alzahrani (2017, p. 2) states that “At this micro level, the importance of language as a skill goes little beyond the laborers’ interest. However, this trend should encourage companies to consider language and how it can help them compete. Moreover, at a macro level, during government-led economic revolutions, language is important to ensure a strong position in the world economy”. Some studies have shown that various fields (including education, science, technology, and business) require high English proficiency to be successful or gain entry, and that this has made Chinese workers highly motivated to learn English (Liu, 2007). Indeed, English is more or less the language of globalization and thus plays an important role in career advancement and people’s ability to secure professional opportunities (Habbash, 2012). Saudis’ EFL learning has been identified as “integral to the 2030 Vision’s aim of making Saudi Arabia a regional hub where workers from three major continents can congregate in pursuit of mutually beneficial economic opportunities” (Bunaiyan, 2019, p. 19).

Therefore, this paper studies the relationship between the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030 and Saudis’ EFL learning motivations. It introduces concepts such as extrinsic and intrinsic motivation and investigates Saudis’ motivations to learn English through this lens. It also examines differences in Saudis’ motivation according to their age and gender and highlights which language skills Saudis focus on with Saudi Vision 2030 in mind. This will contribute to the body of literature as it investigates the relation between the foreign language learning motivation and its relation to political decisions.

### *1.1. Literature review*

This section provides an overview of Saudi Vision 2030, its link to language learning (specifically English language learning, and the literature on language learning motivation.

#### *Saudi Vision 2030*

As mentioned above, Saudi Vision 2030 is Saudi Arabia’s strategic economic and social development plan. It was unveiled in 2016 by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Saudi Vision 2030 aims to transform Saudi Arabia’s economy by making it less dependent on oil and reinvesting in Saudi society to improve Saudis’ quality of life (Pavan, 2017). Mohammed bin Salman has sought to transform the Saudi economy for years, and has voiced his skepticism about the country’s oil dependence which dates back to its founding in 1932 (Yusuf and Attasi, 2016). The Saudi Vision 2030 document has been hailed as the most influential document in Saudi Arabia’s recent history (Mohammad and Alshahrani, 2019).

#### *Saudi 2030 Vision and English language learning*

The three pillars of the vision mentioned in the introduction clearly emphasize the need to make the Saudi economy and Saudi society globally competitive through education (Pavan, 2017). Previous studies have established a clear relationship between economic opportunities available to Saudis and Saudis’ English language proficiency (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015; Habbash, 2011). This is because English is “one of the key factors in the success and continuity of international economic relations.” (Al-Zahrani and Rajab, 2017, p. 88). Indeed, English is a *lingua franca* of globalization, not only because its wide use facilitates effective diplomacy between countries but because English is the main language of information technology, digital learning, artificial intelligence, and scientific research (Al Mukhallafi, 2019, pp. 209–210).

English learning is at the fore of Saudi Vision 2030 because Saudis have, historically, had a relatively low level of English proficiency. Altwaijri (1982, p. 6) stated that “Saudi students study English for nearly ten years, yet their overall performance level in English is low.” Some studies (e.g., Alrashidi and Phan, 2015; Elyas and Picard, 2011; Habbash, 2011) emphasize that this low English language proficiency has a negative impact on the Saudi economy and makes it difficult for Saudi workers to enter or thrive within an increasingly globalized workforce. Despite the severity of the situation, Saudi students are only beginning to learn English in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of primary school beginning in the academic year 2021/2022 as the minister of education announced on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 2020 in an interview on al-Ekhbariyah TV channel.

### *Motivation*

Motivation can be broadly understood as “an internal drive that makes an individual does the best [they] can to satisfy [their] learning desires” (Daif-Allah and Aljumah, 2020, p. 66). In the context of this study, motivation refers to a person’s attitude, effort, and desire to learn a language (Gardner, 2007). Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972) stated that motivation plays a significant role in foreign language learning (FLL). Motivation can determine whether FLL efforts are successful (Alrabai, 2016) and can enhance the quality of students’ FLL efforts (Rahman, 2005; Zulfikar et al., 2019). Indeed, motivation impacts language learners’ self-confidence, intelligence, aptitude, choice of effective learning strategies, and more (Moskovsky et al., 2013). Dornyei (2010, p. 7) suggested that “learners with sufficient motivation can achieve a working knowledge of an L2, regardless of their language aptitude, whereas without sufficient motivation even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to attain any really useful language.” This sentiment is echoed in other studies by Lier (1996, p. 98) and Moskovsky et al. (2013, p. 35).

How then should we understand motivation? Brophy (1987) suggested that modeling, direct instructions, communication of expectations, and socializing can motivate learning. Hamachek (1989) suggested that motivation plays important psychological functions – it energizes, directs that energy, and helps people achieve their goals by helping them choose goal-attainment-appropriate behavior. Dornyei’s (1998a, 1998b) taxonomy of motivation consists of three different levels: language, learner, and situative motivation. The first is founded on traditional concepts of both instrumental, which is to learn for a reason e.g., a job, promotion, grades etc., and interrogative motivation which refers to learning in order to be part of the community of the target language. The second refers to individuals’ different traits that affect FLL. The third refers to a learners’ extrinsic and intrinsic motives. Here, we will briefly explore the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as they will become important to our study later on.

Intrinsic motivation refers to motivations that come from within a learner (Asmari and Javid, 2011). Intrinsic motivations include feelings of competence, curiosity, and the need to know or grow (Eggen and Kauchak, 1994, p. 428). Intrinsically motivated language learners learn because they enjoy it, not for the social or economic benefits of learning a language. This has a positive influence on their foreign language performance (Farooq et al., 2017). Some studies have suggested that even intrinsically motivated language learners could have their motivation diminished by obstacles such as overly authoritative teaching and parenting styles and extrinsic rewards (Brophy, 2004; Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Extrinsic motivation refers to motivations which are external to a learner. Such motivations drives the individual to succeed because they desire a given (or perceived) outcome of success. Extrinsic motivations can be multi-faceted (Harmer, 1991), and are not always positive – i.e. they might manifest as motivation to avoid punishment (Dornyei, 1998). In short, extrinsic motivation “involves

doing an activity to attain a separable consequence, whether tangible or otherwise” (Deci et al., 2017, p. 21). Kong (2009) suggested that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation complement each other and are important in English language learning. Other scholars such as Levesque et al. (2008) have suggested that both types of motivation signify autonomous learning, even if learners’ motivation is derived from different sources.

### *Previous research on motivation and English language learning*

Several scholars have studied motivation and English language learning in a variety of national contexts. Moskovsky and Alrabai (2009) explored Saudi learners’ intrinsic motivation to learn English as a foreign language through a survey of 55 Saudi EFL learners in public schools and universities. They found that the learners held an overall positive attitude toward EFL learning and that they had internal motivation that was substantially saved. Chen et al. (2005) studied the influence of culture on motivation to learn a foreign language by surveying 567 Chinese EFL learners. The survey covered motivation orientation, self-evaluated skills and expectancy. They found that there was an intervening construct in the expectancy between their study participants’ self-evaluated English skills and the orientation of their motivations. They also found that integrative motivation played an insignificant role and required motivation played a significant role in learners’ expectancy.

Other scholars have examined the relationship between gender and language learners’ motivations. Alresheedi (201 ) surveyed 75 female Saudi students’ EFL learning motivation and analyzed the results using Deci and Ryan’s (2000) theory of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and Gardner’s (1985) instrumental/integrative theory. They found that these EFL learners were most likely to rely on instrumental motivations, followed by intrinsic, integrative, and extrinsic motivations. Besides this study, the literature on gender and EFL learning motivation in the Saudi context is relatively thin.

Mahmoodi, Kalantari, and Ghaslani (2014) studied the relationships between motivation, self-regulated learning, and language achievement by surveying 130 Iranian EFL learners. They found that there was a close relationship between self-regulated learning and motivation, and that both of these variables worked together to simplify EFL learners’ learning processes and spur them to success. They also found no relationship between second language achievement and self-regulated learning, and suggested that various other factors – including teachers, materials, and the educational system – affected learners’ academic behaviors and educational goals regardless of whether they were self-regulated learners or not. Other studies, such as the study by Sharma (2018), have examined the factors that influence Saudi students’ and teachers’ English competence and their motivation to be competent English speakers. That study found that EFL teachers and students from different colleges at the University of Jazan possessed a low level of self-reported and actual communicative competence, and that students’ motivation to learn and their attitudes toward their English language teachers were strongly related.

This study will add to the literature by exploring the relationship between national political decisions, and international-level political changes (such as globalization), and Saudis’ EFL learning motivation. It also contributes to the literature by examining the relationships between gender, age, and EFL learning motivation in the context of Saudi Vision 2030. We hope that this study’s findings of this study will help foreign language learners, teachers, and governments to better understand and prepare for the changes in linguistic landscape that are made by political decisions.

### *1.2. Research questions*

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Have Saudis' EFL learning motives changed since the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030?
2. Were those changes in motives felt only by individuals, or were they shared and/or spread within family groups?
3. Are Saudis' EFL learning motivations in this context intrinsic or extrinsic?
4. Are there gendered differences in Saudis' EFL learning motivations in this context?
5. Are there age-related differences in Saudis' EFL learning motivations in this context?
6. What aspects of Saudis' linguistic behavior have changed in the post-Saudi Vision 2030 context?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

This study's participants included 150 Saudis (75 male and 75 female). Of these 150, 50 were aged 18–30, 50 were aged 31–40, and 50 were aged 41–55. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous, and participants provided their written consent to participate in the study. This study passed an ethical review by the Princess Nourahbint Abdulrahman University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

### 2.2. Instrument

This study used a 27-item Likert-style survey to gather quantitative data about participants' linguistic behaviors. Many researchers have used similar instruments for similar purposes (e.g., Alresheedi, 2014; Hashimoto, 2002; Maherzi, 2011; Mehrpour and Vojdani, 2012), not least because this method been proven to be successful in measuring people's attitudes (Croasmun and Ostrom, 2011). Participants responded to each item on a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). We included some negatively worded items to avoid the potential problem of participants answering to all the questions in the same way (Croasum and Ostrum, 2011). The survey was originally written in Arabic and was translated into English. Of the 27 items, 12 were adopted and modified from Alresheedi's (201 ) research instrument. Overall, our survey included statements which sought to examine participants' extrinsic and intrinsic motivations, EFL learning motivation in general, and motivation to learn specific language skills. The instrument's validity was checked by colleagues, and we tested its reliability in a small pilot study of 20 people (10 male and 10 female).

### 2.3. Data collection procedures

Participants were informed about the purpose of the research. The questionnaire was distributed to them. Participants were given 20 minutes to finish it and were allowed more if needed. The researcher was available to answer any questions.

### 2.4. Data analysis

We used the frequency with which participants gave a given answer to determine the distribution of respondents' responses, and used their mean answers and standard deviations of their responses to determine their attitudes toward the questionnaire and form the axes of our interpretations. We used one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine differences in the respondents' answers by age and a t-test to determine differences in their answers by gender.

### 3. Results

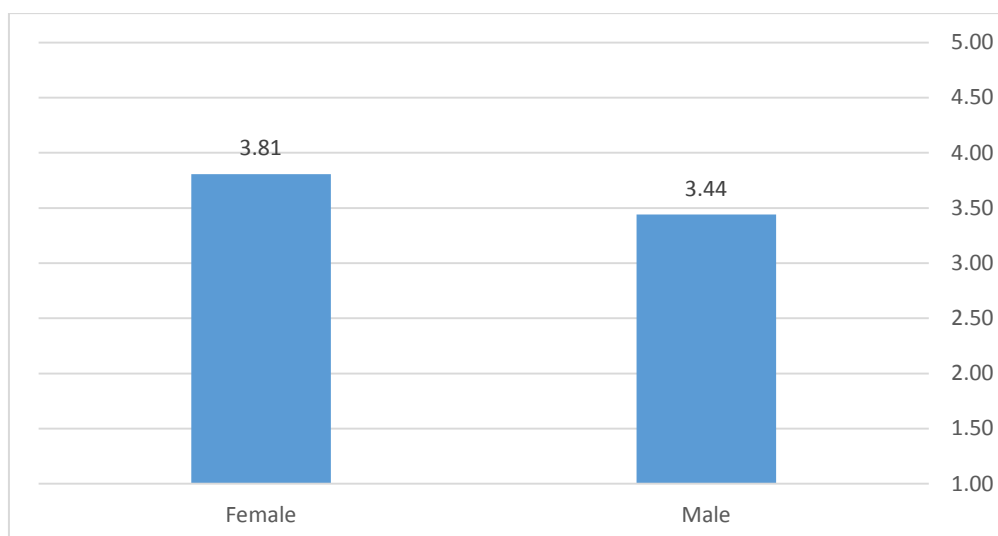
Table 1 lists the survey results for five questions related to changes in EFL learners' motivations upon the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030. The letter S in all tables stands for the statement number.

**Table 1.** Five related questions about EFL learners' motivations in the post-Saudi Vision 2030 context.

S	Statement	f/p	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
1	My feeling about the English language changed after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030.	f	3	12	32	52	51	3.91	1.03	3
		p	2.0	8.0	21.3	34.7	34.0			
2	My feeling about learning English changed after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030.	f	3	14	18	61	54	3.99	1.02	1
		p	2.0	9.3	12.0	40.7	36.0			
3	I felt a desire to learn English after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030.	f	3	19	14	59	55	3.96	1.07	2
		p	2.0	12.7	9.3	39.3	36.7			
4	I researched how to develop my English language skills after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030.	f	3	30	27	54	36	3.60	1.12	5
		p	2.0	20.0	18.0	36.0	24.0			
5	I registered in an English language learning institute or program after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030.	f	14	62	45	19	10	2.66	1.04	4
		p	9.3	41.3	30.0	12.7	6.7			
The general mean =								3.62	0.83	

Table 1 shows that the general mean of the respondents' answers was 3.62 with a standard deviation of 0.83. This indicates that Saudis were more motivated to learn English after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030. The results also indicate that Saudis were highly motivated to change their attitudes toward English, but that they were less motivated to do their own research to improve their English or take the step of enrolling in an EFL institute or program.

Figure 1 compares results of question 1-5 from the survey of male and female study participants' EFL motivations, showing that women were generally more motivated (3.81) than men (3.44) to learn English in the wake of Saudi Vision 2030's unveiling.



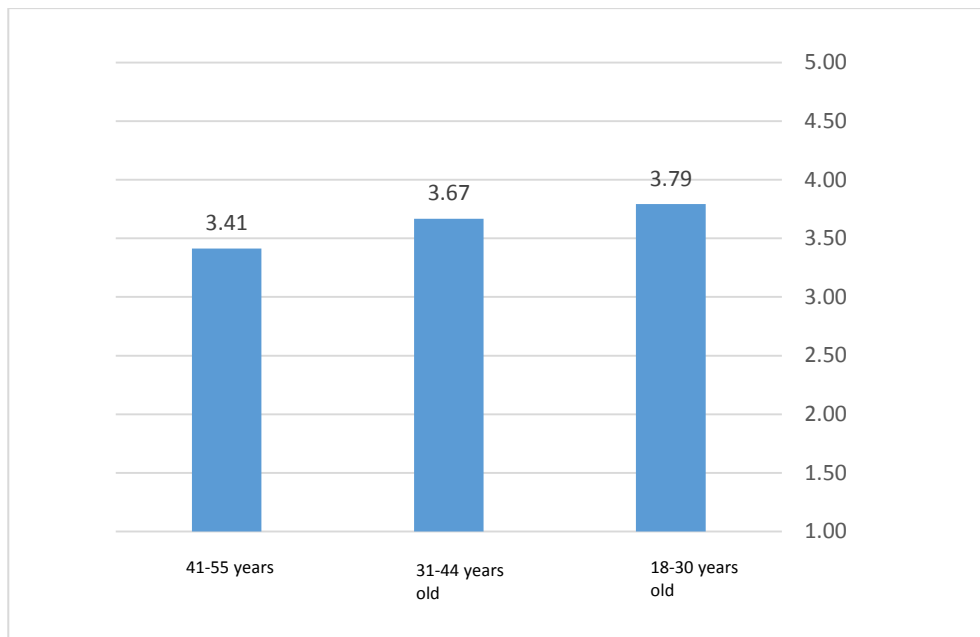
**Figure 1.** Male and female study participants' EFL learning motivations.

Table 2 shows the results of the t-test. The results indicate that the differences shown in Figure 1 are statistically significant, as the t-value reached (2.745) with a significance level of 0.007.

**Table 2.** Results of the t-test confirming differences between Saudi EFL learners' motivations by gender.

Motives for learning the English language	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.111	.294	-2.745	148	.007	-.368	.134	-.633	-.103
Equal variances not assumed			-2.745	144.59	.007	-.368	.134	-.633	-.103

Figure 2 breaks down our study participants' EFL learning motivation by age. It shows that 18–30-year-olds had the highest EFL learning motivation (mean = 3.79), 31–40-year olds were second-most motivated (3.67), and 41–55-year olds were least motivated (3.41). This implies that younger people were more motivated to learn English in the wake of Saudi Vision 2030's unveiling.



**Figure 2.** Comparing respondents' EFL learning motivations by age.

Table 3 shows the results of the ANOVA analysis. This analysis showed that there were no statistically significant differences in EFL learners' motivations by age – the F value was 2.732, with a significance level of 0.068. This result implies that the age-related differences in EFL learners' motivations shown in Figure 2 are not statistically significant.

**Table 3.** ANOVA analysis results regarding EFL learners' motivations by age.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.755	2	1.878	2.732	0.068
Within Groups	101.038	147	0.687		
Total	104.794	149			

Table 4 shows the survey results for five questions related to whether respondents felt that they were responsible for their own EFL learning or whether they felt this responsibility extended to their family. The mean answer here was 3.47 with a standard deviation of 0.77, indicating that the respondents tended to believe that they felt a sense of responsibility for their family members' EFL learning as a result of Saudi Vision 2030.

**Table 4.** Survey results for five questions related to self- or other-oriented responsibility for EFL learning.

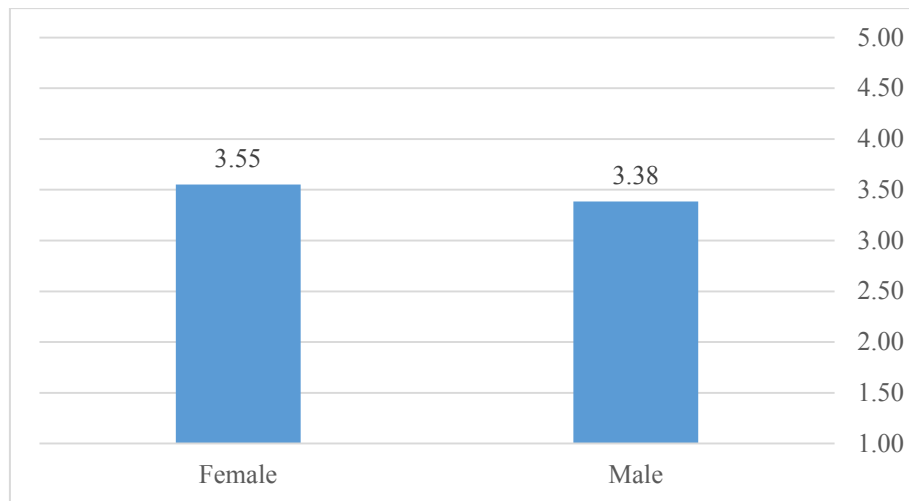
S	Statement	f/p	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
6	After the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, I felt the desire to learn English myself.	f	15	54	46	23	12	2.75	1.09	5
		p	10.0	36.0	30.7	15.3	8.0			



7	After the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, I felt that I wanted my family members to learn English as well as myself.	f	2	9	16	64	59	4.13	0.92	1
		p	1.3	6.0	10.7	42.7	39.3			
8	After the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, I urged my family members to develop their English language skills.	f	2	18	18	59	53	3.95	1.04	2
		p	1.3	12.0	12.0	39.3	35.3			
9	After the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, I urged my family members to register in an EFL learning institute or program.	f	5	31	30	50	34	3.51	1.15	3
		p	3.3	20.7	20.0	33.3	22.7			
10	After the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, one of my family members registered in an EFL learning institute or program because of my advice.	f	13	49	28	46	14	2.99	1.17	4
		p	8.7	32.7	18.7	30.7	9.3			
The general mean =								3.47	0.77	

The results of this table indicate that most respondents felt (statement #7) and discussed (statement #8) the need to improve their English skills with their families, and urged (statement #9) their family members to take steps in this regard. However, the relatively high mean scores for these statements (4.13, SD = 0.92; 3.95, SD = 1.04; and 3.51, SD = 1.15) and relatively low mean scores for statement #10 (2.99, SD = 1.17) means that although these feelings were strongly felt, relatively few people actually acted on these feelings.

From these presented numbers, Figure 3 presents specifically that women (3.55) made more practical changes to improve their English language skills than men (3.38).



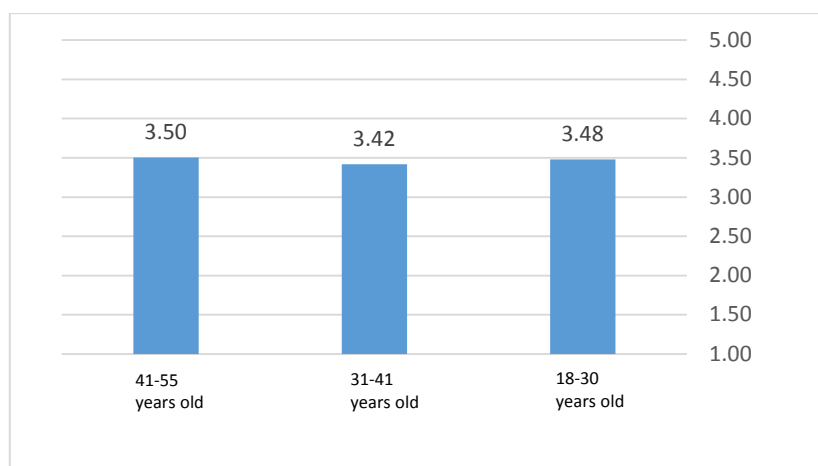
**Figure 3.** Comparing changes in male and female study participants' active attempts to improve their English.

Table 5 shows the results of another t-test. This one indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in male and female study participants' desire to learn English after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030 – the T-value reached (1.34) with a significant level (0.184).

**Table 5.** Results of the t-test to confirm gendered differences in respondents' attempts to improve their English after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	11.795	0.001	-1.34	148	0.184	-0.168	0.126	-0.417	0.081
Equal variances not assumed			-1.34	133.87	0.184	-0.168	0.126	-0.417	0.081

Figure shows differences in the changes in study participants' attempts to learn English after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, by age. It shows that 41–55-year-olds made the largest changes in behavior (mean = 3.50), 18–30-year-olds made the second-largest changes (mean = 3.48), and 31–40-year-olds made the least changes (3.42).



**Figure 4.** Comparing changes in EFL learning behavior by age

Table 6 shows the results of the ANOVA test for the data reviewed in Figure 4. The ANOVA analysis confirmed that there were no statistically significant differences by age, as the F value reached 0.155, with a relatively high significance value of 0.857.

**Table 6.** ANOVA results regarding differences in respondents’ efforts to improve their English by age.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.187	2	0.094	0.155	0.857
Within Groups	88.759	147	0.604		
Total	88.946	149			

*Measuring motivation – intrinsic or extrinsic?*

Table 7 displays the study participants’ responses to questions about their extrinsic motivations for learning English in the context of Saudi Vision 2030. The results indicate that the most important extrinsic motivation for Saudi EFL learners in this context was academic or career advancement (mean = 4.01, SD = 1.03), followed by reputation and social status (3.71, 1.05), respect from colleagues (3.05, 1.25), guilt for not learning English (3.02, 1.26), and job or promotion opportunities (2.73, 1.09).

**Table 7.** Measuring respondents’ extrinsic motivations for learning English.

S	statement	f/p	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
11	When I learn English, my colleagues will respect me more.	f	22	26	45	36	21	3.05	1.25	3
		p	14.7	17.3	30.0	24.0	14.0			
12	Learning English is more important for my career and academic development than my personal development.	f	3	13	22	54	58	4.01	1.03	1
		p	2.0	8.7	14.7	36.0	38.7			
13	I have a reputation for knowing other languages, so I am trying to study English as well.	f	3	19	35	55	38	3.71	1.05	2
		p	2.0	12.7	23.3	36.7	25.3			
14	I know I have to learn English but sometimes I feel like it's a waste of time.	f	47	69	21	9	4	2.03	0.97	6
		p	31.3	46.0	14.0	6.0	2.7			
15	I try so hard to learn English because I feel guilty if I do not.	f	18	43	26	44	19	3.02	1.26	4
		p	12.0	28.7	17.3	29.3	12.7			

16	If I would not get a better degree, job, or promotion without English, I would not study it.	f	15	60	36	29	10	2.73	1.09	5
		p	10.0	40.0	24.0	19.3	6.7			
The general mean =								3.09	1.11	

Figure 5 shows the convergence of male and female respondents’ extrinsic EFL learning motivations. The arithmetic means of female’s extrinsic motives was 3.12, which was higher than the extrinsic motives of males was with an arithmetic mean of 3.06.

**Figure 5.** Comparison between male and female responses about external motives

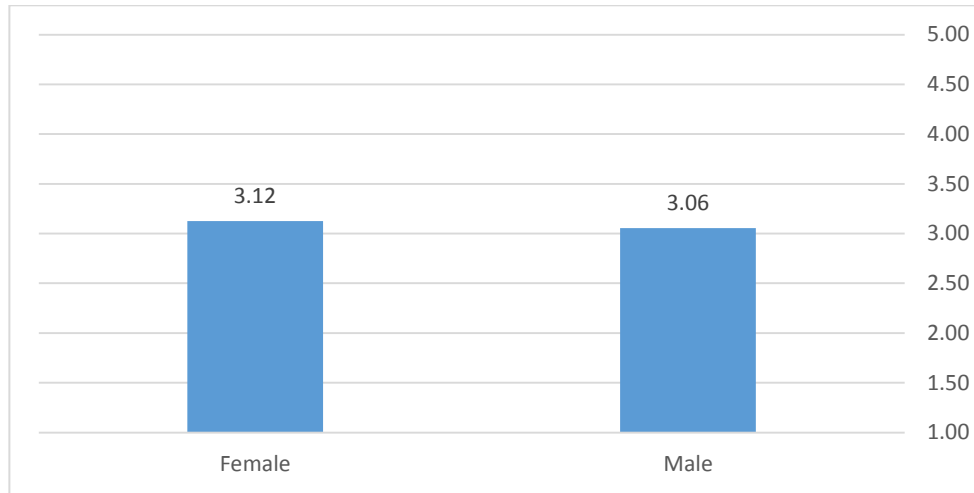
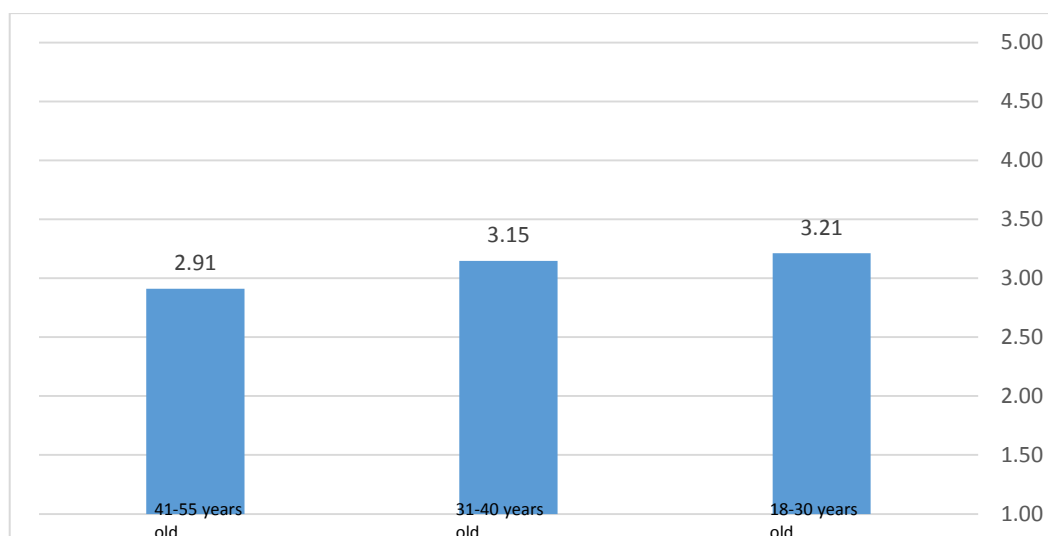


Table 7 shows the results of the t-test for the data presented in Figure 5, above. It found that there were no statistically significant differences between male and female respondents’ extrinsic EFL learning motivations, as the T-value reached (0.700) at a significant level (0.485).

**Table 7.** Results of the t-test confirming gendered differences between respondents’ extrinsic EFL learning motivations.

	Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	0.684	0.41	-0.7	148	0.485	-0.069	0.098	-0.263	0.126
Equal variances not assumed			-0.7	145.29	0.485	-0.069	0.098	-0.263	0.126

Figure 6 shows how respondents’ extrinsic EFL learning motivations decreased as they aged. For instance, 18–30-year olds’ mean values were 3.21, 31–40-year olds’ mean values were 3.15, and the 41–55-year olds’ mean values were 2.91.



**Figure 6.** Comparing the external motivations of survey respondents by age.

Table 8 shows the results of the ANOVA analysis to confirm differences in EFL learners’ extrinsic motivations by age. It found that there were statistically significant differences between study participants by age; as stated above, the younger the participants, the greater their external motivation for learning English. Here, the F value reached 3.631, with a significance level of 0.029.

**Table 8.** ANOVA results regarding differences in respondents’ extrinsic EFL learning motivations by age.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.541	2	1.271	3.631	0.029
Within Groups	51.438	147	0.35		
Total	53.979	149			

Moving on, we will now discuss our study participants’ intrinsic motivations. Table 9 displays the survey results for six questions asking after respondents’ intrinsic EFL learning motivations.

**Table 9.** Survey results for six questions asking after respondents’ intrinsic EFL learning motivations.

S	statement	f/p	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
17	I like to learn English because it is fun.	f	4	12	19	65	50	3.97	1.01	2
		p	2.7	8.0	12.7	43.3	33.3			
18	I enjoy speaking English outside of class.	f	4	13	30	53	50	3.88	1.05	3
		p	2.7	8.7	20.0	35.3	33.3			
19	I do not understand why some people do not like English.	f	12	26	39	46	27	3.33	1.19	5
		p	8.0	17.3	26.0	30.7	18.0			
20	I would have studied English even if it was not a requirement for graduation	f	4	17	26	55	48	3.84	1.08	4
		p	2.7	11.3	17.3	36.7	32.0			

	or employment.									
21	Learning English gives me a sense of success.	f	3	7	17	63	60	4.13	0.93	1
		p	2.0	4.7	11.3	42.0	40.0			
22	I have no intention of using English after graduation.	f	57	56	20	11	6	2.02	1.08	6
		p	38.0	37.3	13.3	7.3	4.0			
The general mean =								3.53	0.65	

The table shows that our study participants’ most prominent intrinsic motivation was a feeling of success (mean = 4.13, SD = 0.93), followed by the love of learning and enjoyment of English (3.97, 1.01) – also reflected by participants’ high motivation to speak English outside of class (3.88, 1.05). This was in turn followed by study participants’ desire to learn English even if learning English had no academic or practical benefit (3.84, 1.08). These findings were enhanced by the fact that the scores of negatively worded statements, such as statements #19 and #22, had relatively low scores (3.33, 1.19 and 2.02, 1.08 respectively).

Figure 7 demonstrates differences in study participants’ intrinsic EFL learning motivations by gender (females mean = 3.66, males = 3.40).

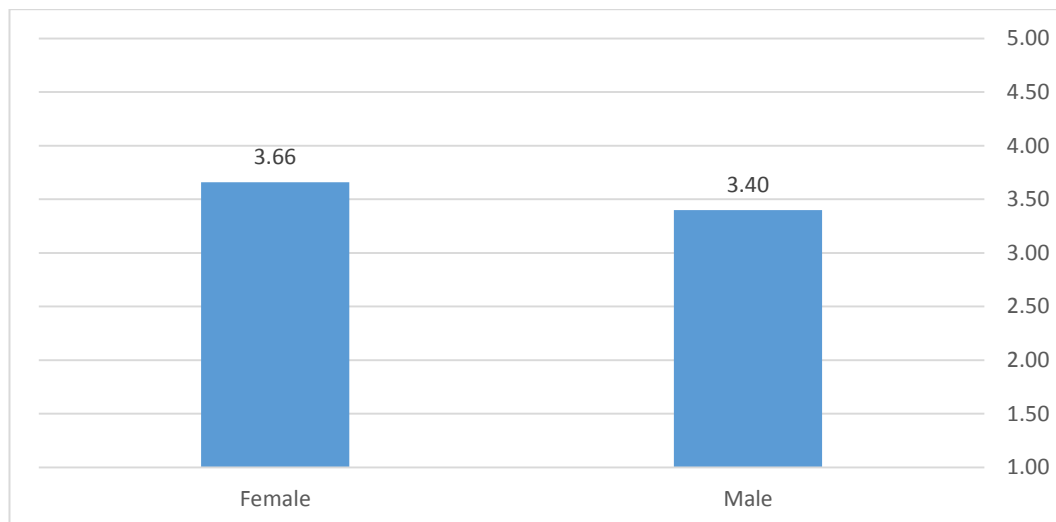


Figure 7. Comparing male and female respondents’ intrinsic EFL learning motivations by gender.

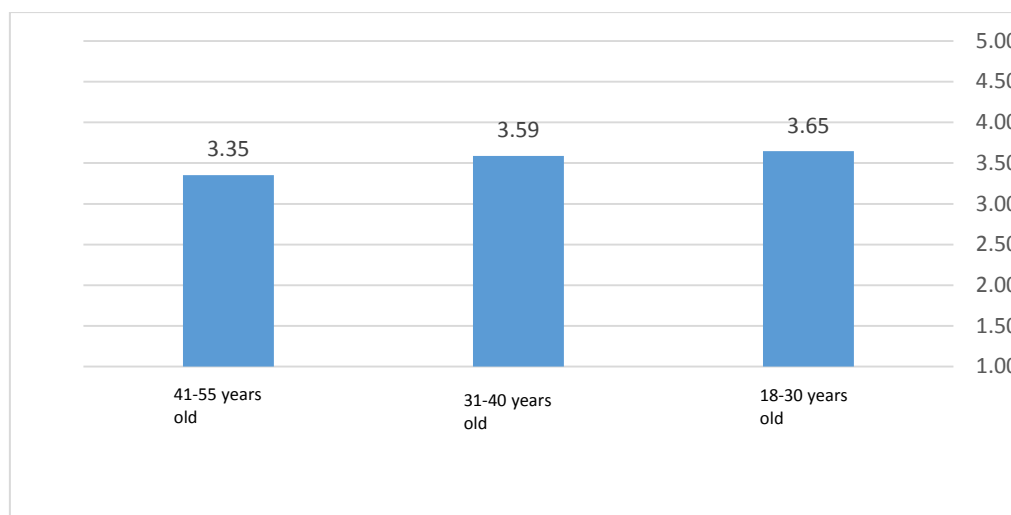
Table 10 displays the results of another t-test. This test showed that the gendered differences in study participants’ intrinsic EFL learning motivations were significant and statistically significant, as the t-value reached 2.462 with a significance level of 0.015.

Table 10. Results of the t-test regarding gendered differences in study participants’ EFL learning motivations.

	Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper

Equal variances assumed	0.208	0.649	-2.462	148	0.015	-0.258	0.105	-0.465	-0.051
Equal variances not assumed			-2.462	143.354	0.015	-0.258	0.105	-0.465	-0.051

Figure 8 displays differences in study participants’ intrinsic EFL learning motivations by age. The younger our study participants were, the higher their intrinsic motivations were – 18–30-year-olds showed the highest motivation (mean = 3.65), followed by 31–40-year-olds (3.59) and 41–55-year-olds (3.35).



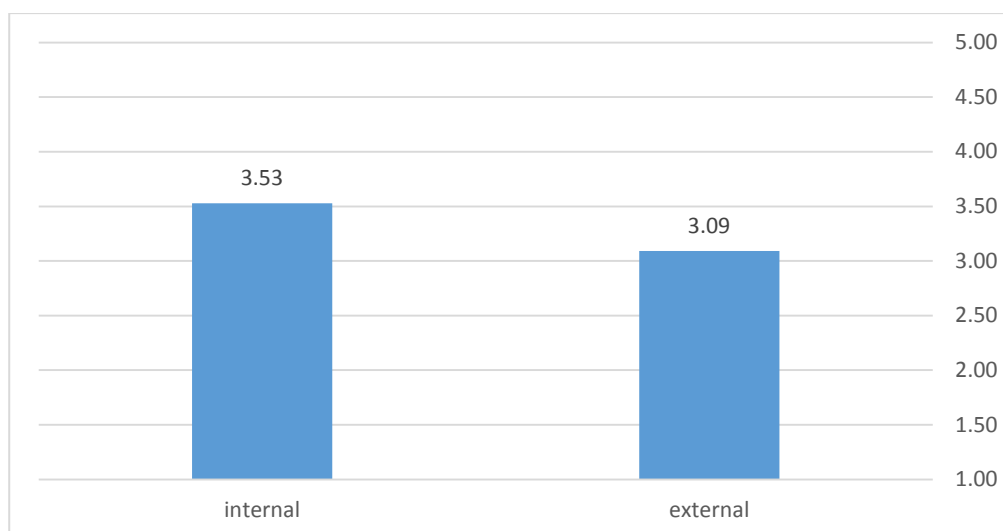
**Figure 8.** Comparing study participants’ intrinsic EFL learning motivations by age.

Table 11 displays the results of the ANOVA analysis for the data reviewed in Figure 8. It showed that there were no statistically significant differences between study participants’ intrinsic EFL learning motivations by age; the F value was 2.897 and the significance level was 0.060.

**Table 11.** Results of the ANOVA analysis of differences in study participants’ intrinsic EFL learning motivations by age.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.401	2	1.201	2.897	0.060
Within Groups	60.918	147	0.414		
Total	63.319	149			

Figure 9 compares study participants’ answers for questionnaire items asking after their intrinsic and extrinsic EFL learning motivations. The figure shows that respondents were more motivated by intrinsic (mean = 3.53) than extrinsic (3.09) means.



**Figure 9.** Comparing the mean values of study participants' answers for questions on their intrinsic and extrinsic EFL learning motivations.

Table 12 displays the results of another t-test. This test indicates that there are statistically significant differences between study participants' extrinsic EFL learning motivations by age, as the T-value reached a significant level (0.000). This indicates that the younger a study participant was, the higher their sense of extrinsic EFL learning motivation.

**Table 12.** Results of the t-test for differences between study participants' intrinsic and extrinsic EFL learning motivations by age.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.11	0.293	-6.058	298	0	-0.4389	0.07244	-0.5815	-0.2963
Equal variances not assumed			-6.058	296.123	0	-0.4389	0.07244	-0.5815	-0.2963

### *What linguistic elements do new Saudi English speakers focus on?*

Now we will move on to examining which linguistic elements new Saudi English speakers focus on. Table 13 displays the survey results for questions asking after respondents' practice and development of certain aspects of English.



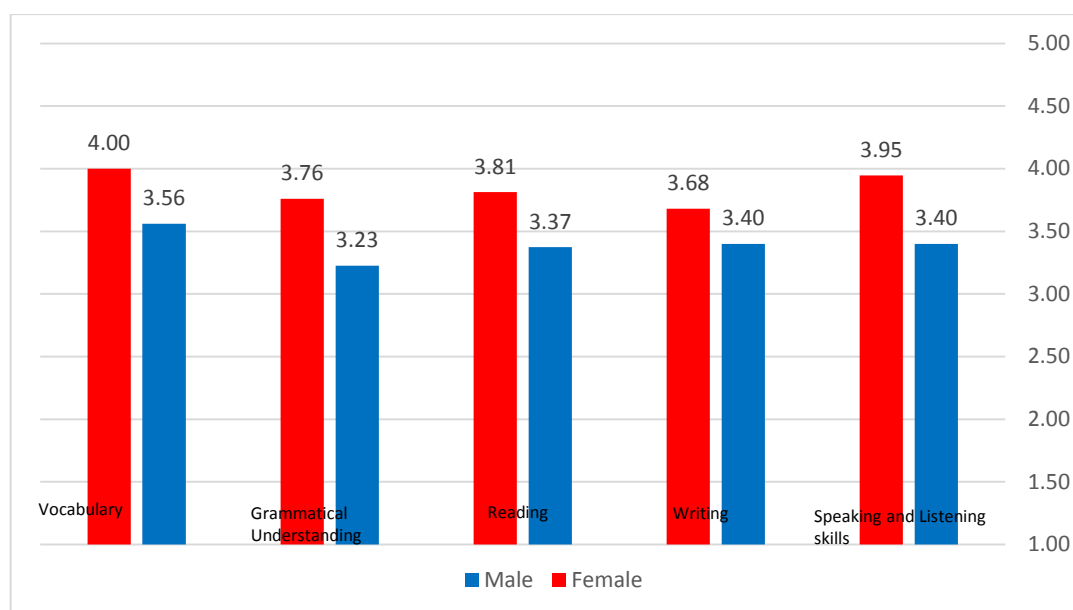
**Table 13.** Changes in Saudis' linguistic behavior following the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030.

S	Statement	f/p	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
23	After the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, I was keen to develop my spoken and listening English skills.	f	3	22	32	57	36	3.67	1.06	2
		p	2.0	14.7	21.3	38.0	24.0			
24	After the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, I was keen to develop my written English skills.	f	6	26	32	53	33	3.54	1.13	4
		p	4.0	17.3	21.3	35.3	22.0			
25	After the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, I was keen to develop my English reading skills.	f	4	23	36	54	33	3.59	1.08	3
		p	2.7	15.3	24.0	36.0	22.0			
26	After the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, I was keen to develop my understanding of English grammar.	f	5	25	43	45	32	3.49	1.10	5
		p	3.3	16.7	28.7	30.0	21.3			
27	After the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, I was keen to increase my English vocabulary.	f	6	17	26	56	45	3.78	1.12	1
		p	4.0	11.3	17.3	37.3	30.0			
The general mean =								3.62	1.01	

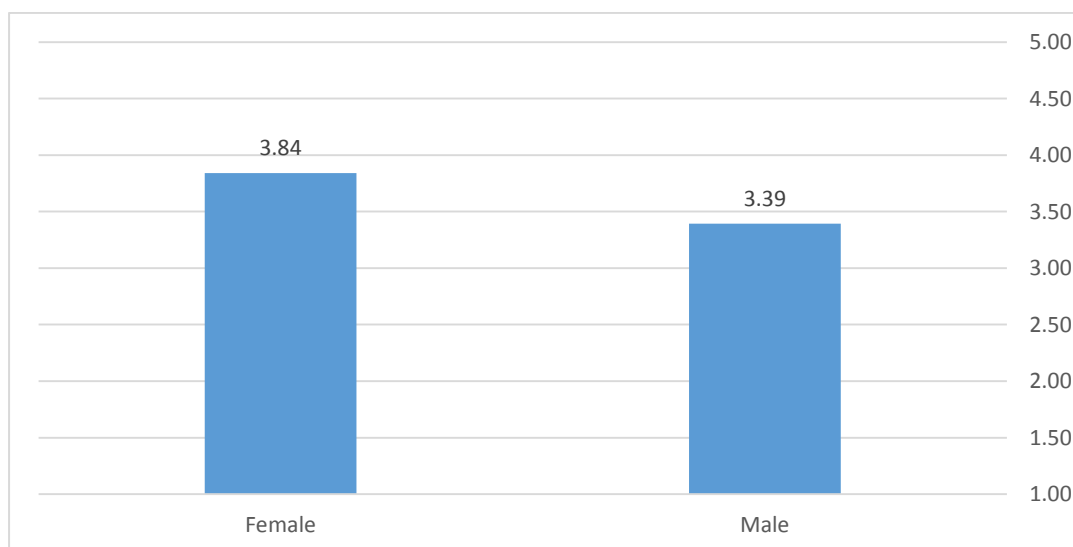
Overall, respondents' mean was 3.62 with a standard deviation of 1.01. This indicates that most respondents moved to change their EFL learning behavior after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030. Table 13 also shows the order in which our study participants focused on particular aspects of English – they prioritized vocabulary memorization skills (mean = 3.78, SD = 1.12), then their spoken and listening English skills (3.67, 1.06), reading skills (3.59, 1.08), written English skills (3.54, 1.13), and understanding of English grammar (3.49, 1.10).

Figure 10 breaks down how respondents' focus on particular language skills differed by gender. Overall, the figure shows that women reported a more intense focus on each skill than men. Both men and women prioritized improving their memorization vocabulary (women's mean = 3.81, men's = 3.56), followed by their spoken and listening English skills (3.95 and 3.40, respectively). These were followed by reading (3.81), grammatical understanding (3.76), and writing (3.68) for women and writing (3.40), reading (3.37), and grammatical understanding (3.23) for men. Figure 11 shows the

overall difference in women's reported focus on developing their English language skills following the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030 (3.84) compared to men (3.39).



**Figure 10.** Comparing EFL learners' focus on particular English language skills after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, by gender.



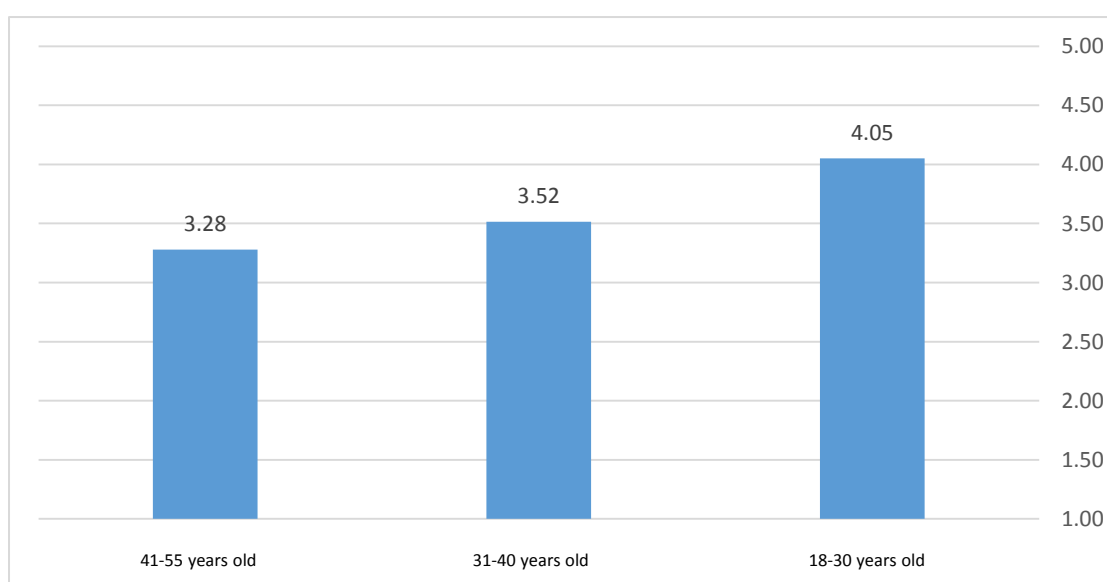
**Figure 11.** Comparing men's and women's focus on developing their general English language skills after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030.

Table 14 displays the results of another t-test. The results show that there are statistically significant differences between our male and female participants' focus on developing their English language skills: the T-value reached 2.760 with a significance level of 0.007.

**Table 14.** Results of the t-test for differences between female and male study participants’ focus on developing their English after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030.

	Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	2.129	0.147	-2.76	148	0.007	-0.448	0.162	-0.769	-0.127
Equal variances not assumed			-2.76	144.308	0.007	-0.448	0.162	-0.769	-0.127

Figure 13 displays differences in respondents’ desire to develop their English skills broken down by age. It indicates that the younger our study participants were, the more they desired to improve and develop their general English language skills.



**Figure 13.** Comparing study participants’ desire to develop their general English language skills after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, by age.

Table 15 shows the results of another ANOVA test. This test showed that there are statistically significant differences in our respondents’ reported desire to develop their general English language skills, in favor of the younger age groups: the F value was 8.326, with a significance level of 0.000.

**Table 15.** Results of the ANOVA test for differences in our study participants’ desire to improve their general English skills after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, by age.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	15.65	2	7.825	8.326	0
Within Groups	138.15	147	0.94		
Total	153.8	149			

#### 4. Discussion

Here, we discuss our results by answering our research questions. The first research question asked whether Saudis' motives to learn English have changed since the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030. Our results indicate that their motivations toward learning English did indeed change, because their answers in our survey trended toward agreeing with the assertion that their motivations changed. Their feelings and emotions that aroused the motives toward learning/developing their English language ranked highest, where most participants agreed on it. It can be said that the announcement of the Saudi 2030 Vision was an arousal that assisted the motivation of Saudis toward foreign language learning, in this case English language. This adds to the literature that a country's political decision does effect the motives of its citizens towards foreign language learning.

Our second research question investigated whether these changes in EFL learning motives were only felt by individuals or shared/spread by and within family groups. Our findings indicate that most people spread this sense of responsibility and desire to improve their English language abilities within their family groups (usually to their children or relatives). This finding is corroborated by the findings of Daniel et al. (2018), who found that "parental encouragement" plays "the most significant role during the development of motivational intensity, desire to learn English, and attitude toward learning English" (p. 1).

Our third research question asked whether Saudis' EFL learning motivations after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030 were intrinsic or extrinsic. Our findings indicate that their motivations were more intrinsic than extrinsic. From a language learning perspective, this is considered positive, as Dr nyei and shioda (2011) point out that extrinsic motivation may affect second language skill development.

Our fourth research question asked whether there were gendered differences in our study participants' EFL learning motives. Our findings indicate that Saudi women were significantly more motivated to improve and develop their English language skills than men in the post-Saudi Vision 2030 context. This confirms the findings of Sengkey (2018) and Akram and Ghani (2013), who emphasized that women are more motivated to learn English than men.

Our fifth research question asked whether there were differences in our study participants' EFL learning motives by age. Our results show that although there were minor differences (which showed that younger participants were more motivated), these differences were not statistically significant. This aligns with Uribe et al. (2008), who suggested that age has a direct effect on EFL learning motives, and that younger EFL learners tend to be slightly more motivated to learn a second language than their older counterparts. Furthermore, Liu (2007) noted that Chinese university students' EFL learning motivation was tied to "the fact that the rapid development of economy in China in recent years has yielded an increasingly high demand for university graduates with high English competency in various fields such as education, market, business and science and technology" (p. 139), implying that younger people have more conscious of the economic value of English in a globalized world.

Our sixth and final research question asked which English language skills our study participants focused on in the post-Saudi Vision 2030 context, and whether these foci differed by age or gender. We found that they prioritized increasing their English vocabulary above all. This confirms Sadeghi's (2013) finding that highly motivated learners tend to have more vocabulary knowledge than less motivated learners. This suggests that motivated learners seek to develop their vocabulary to stimulate further learning. We also found that our study participants focused on their spoken communication skills second, and that their foci changed by gender from third-highest priority of focus on down. We also noted that women were more motivated to develop specific English language skills than men and

that younger study participants were more motivated to develop their English language skills than their older counterparts.

## 5. Conclusions

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

This study has a few limitations. It had relatively few participants. Future studies could use a larger sample size, examine people's motivation for learning other foreign languages such as French and Chinese, examine EFL or general foreign language learning in other contexts, and examine which languages Saudis are most interested and motivated to learn in more detail. We hope that this study will open doors to linguists, researchers, language teachers, and learners and facilitate a deeper understanding of the effect that political decisions have on our motives and strategies for learning languages.

## Acknowledgment

This research was funded by the Deanship of Scientific Research at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University through the Fast-track Research Funding Program.

## References

- Akram, M. and M. Ghani. (2013). Gender and language learning motivation. *Academic Research International*, 4(2), 536-540.
- Al Mukhallafi, T.R. (2019). Attitudes and usage of MALL among Saudi University EFL students. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 9(1), 407-420.
- Alrabai, F. (2016). Factors underlying low achievement of Saudi EFL learners. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 6(3), 21-37. DOI:10.5539/ijel.v6n3p21
- Alrashidi, O. and H. Phan. (2015). Education context and English teaching and learning in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: An overview. *English Language Teaching*, 8(5), 33-44.
- Alresheedi, H. (2014). *Motivation of female students learning English as a foreign language at Qassim University*. Doctoral dissertation, USA.
- Altwayjri, A.O. (1982). *The adequacy of students' preparation in English as a foreign language in the Saudi schools*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Oregon.
- Al-Zahrani, N. and H. Rajab. (2017). Attitudes and perceptions of Saudi EFL teachers in implementing Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. *International Journal of English Language Education*, 5, 83-99.
- Alzahrani, A. (2017). Markets and language policy in Saudi Arabia: How the English language can contribute to the success of Saudi Vision 2030. *International Journal of English Language and Linguistics Research*, 5, 1-12.

- Asmari, A.A., and C.Z. Javid. (2011). Motivational constructs: a cross-sectional study of EFL students at Taif University. *Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 19(2), 73-104.
- Brophy, J. (1987). *Synthesis of research on strategies for motivating students to learn educational leadership*. Retrieved on May 9, 2011 from <http://www.ppf.ktu.lt/senas/9kakiene.doc>.
- Brophy, J. (2004). *Motivating students to learn*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Bunaiyan, W. (2019). *Preparing the Saudi educational system to serve the 2030 vision: a comparative analysis study*. Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Retrieved on May 23, 2021 from <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/1648>
- Chen, J.F., Warden, C.A., and H.T. Chang. (2005). Motivators that do not motivate: The case of Chinese EFL learners and the influence of culture on motivation. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39, 609-633.
- Croasmun, J.T. and L. Ostrom. (2011). Using Likert-type scales in the social sciences. *Journal of Adult Education*, 40(1), 19-22.
- Daif-Allah, A.S. and F.H. Aljumah. (2020). Differences in motivation to learn English among Saudi university students. *English Language Teaching*, 13(2), 63-74.
- Daniel, C., Halimi, F. and I. Alshammari. (2018). The impact of motivation and parental encouragement on English language learning: an Arab student's perspective. *The Reading Matrix*, 8, 176-219.
- Deci, E., Olafsen, A. and R. Ryan. (2017). Self-determination theory in work organizations: The state of science. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 4, 19-43.
- D r nyei, Z. (1998a). Conceptualizing motivation in foreign language learning. *Language Learning*, 40, 46-78.
- D r nyei, Z. (1998). Motivation in second and foreign language learning. *Language Teaching*, 31(3), 117-135.
- D r nyei, Z. (2010). Researching motivation: From integrativeness to the ideal L2 self. In S. Hunston and D. Oakey (Eds.), *Introducing applied linguistics: concepts and skills* (pp. 74-83), Routledge.
- D r nyei, Z. and E. shioda. (2011). *Teaching and researching motivation*. Pearson.
- Elyas, T. and M. Picard. (2011). Teacher identity in Saudi Arabia: Towards a globalized notion of English teaching. *ASIA EFL Journal Conference at Cebu, Philippines*.
- Farooq, M.U., Riaz, K., and C.Z. Javid. (2017). Impact of emotional intelligence on the academic achievement of English language learners. *Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 25(2), 1-33.
- Gardner, R.C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: the role of attitudes and motivation*. Edward Arnold.
- Gardner, R.C. (2007). Motivation and second language acquisition. *Porta Linguarum*, 8, 9- 20.
- Gardner, R.C. and W.E. Lambert. (1959). Motivational variables in second-language acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, 13(4), 266-272.
- Gardner, R.C. and W.E. Lambert. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning*. Newbury House.
- Habbash, M. (2011). *Status change of English and its role in shaping public education language policy and practice in Saudi Arabia: A postmodernist critical perspective*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Exeter.

- Habbash, M. (2012). Corporate governance mechanisms and earnings management: Evidence from Saudi Arabia. *Accounting Research Journal*, 11(1), 49-84.
- Hamachek, D. (1989). *Psychology in teaching, learning, and growth*. Allyn and Bacon.
- Harmer, J. (1991). *The practice of English language teaching*. London: Longman.
- Hashimoto, Y. (2002). Motivation and willingness to communicate as predictors of reported L2 use: The Japanese ESL context. *Second Language Studies*, 20(2), 29-70.
- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Vision 2030. (2016, April 25). Retrieved from <http://vision2030.gov.sa/en>
- Kong, Y. (2009). A brief discussion on motivation and ways to motivate students in English language learning. *International Education Studies*, 2, 145-149.
- Lee, C.G. (2012). English language and economic growth: Cross-country empirical evidence. *Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, 2(1), 5-20.
- Levesque, C., Copeland, K.J., and R.A. Sutcliffe. (2008). Conscious and nonconscious processes: Implications for self-determination theory. *Canadian Psychology*, 49(3), 218-224.
- Lier, L.V. (1996). *Interaction in the language curriculum: Awareness, autonomy, and authenticity*. Longman.
- Liu, M. (2007). Chinese students' motivation to learn English at the tertiary level. *Asian EFL Journal*, 9(1), 126-146.
- Maherzi, S. (2011). Perceptions of classroom climate and motivation to study English in Saudi Arabia: developing a questionnaire to measure perceptions and motivation. *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology*, 9(2), 765-798.
- Mahmoodi, M.H., Kalantari, B., and R. Ghaslani. (2014). Self-regulated learning (SRL), motivation and language achievement of Iranian EFL learners. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 98, 1062-1068.
- Mehrpour, S. and M. Vojdani. (2012). Globalization and EFL learning motivation: A new perspective on integrative vs. instrumental motivation among Iranian learners of English. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 2(2), 43-50.
- Melitz, J. (2008). Language and foreign trade. *European Economic Review*, 52(4), 667-699.
- Mohammad, R. and A. Alshahrani. (2019). Corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of Saudi Vision 2030. *Arab World English Journal*, 10(2), 16-28.
- Moskovsky, C. & Alrabai, F. (2009). Intrinsic Motivation in Saudi Learners of English as a Foreign Language. *The Open Applied Linguistics Journal*, 2, 1-10.
- Moskovsky, C., Alrabai, F., Paolini, S., and S. Ratcheva. (2013). The effects of teachers' motivational strategies on learners' motivation: A controlled investigation of second language acquisition. *Language Learning*, 63(1), 34-62.
- Nunan, D. (2013). *Learner-centered English language education: The selected works of David Nunan*. Routledge.
- Pavan, A. (2017). Saudi Arabia approaching 2030: The shift from quantitative to qualitative ambitions in education, enhancing human development. *International Research in Higher Education*, 2(2), 8-14.

- Rahman, S. (2005). Orientations and motivation in English language learning: A study of Bangladeshi students at the undergraduate level. *Asian EFL Journal*, 7(1), 29-55.
- Ryan, R.M., and E.L. Deci. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25(1), 54-67. doi:10.1006/ceps.1999.1020
- Sadeghi, M. (2013). The impact of achievement motivation on vocabulary learning in intermediate EFL learners. *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research*, 3(10), 206-213.
- Sengkey, V. (2018). Student attitudes and motivation in learning English. *Human Behavior, Development and Society*, 17, 115-122.
- Sharma, V. (2018). Factors influencing students' motivation for communicative competence in English: A case study in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics*, 50, 37-47.
- Yusuf, N. and A. Huda. (2016). Beyond oil – the transformation to a market-based approach: Envision Saudi Arabia 2030. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 7(14), 20-24.
- Zulfikar, T., Dahliana, S., and R.A. Sari. (2019). An exploration of English students' attitude towards English learning. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal*, 2(1), 1-12.

#### **AUTHOR BIODATA**

**Dr. Rehan Almegren** is an Assistant Professor of Linguistics at the Department of Applied Linguistics in the College of Languages at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, Saudi Arabia.