

Motivating Pupils to Learn Foreign Languages: A Field Study

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I. Introduction:

Motivation, as a psychological concept, is defined as an internal force that pushes the individual in a given direction and prompts him to seek goals (Bernard, 1973). Educationally speaking, motivation is viewed as an influential forceful factor and an integral part of the learning process (De Roche, 1971: p.52). Hence, motivation and some other factors relevant to education have occupied a central role to the extent that "when a failure occurs in any educational system, motivation is often blamed (Ball, 1977: pp.1-2), and teachers are accused of not creating the required interest and excitement that the learning task demands.

II. Aims of the Research:

The current research aims at shedding light on the various educational, social, and personal factors that negatively affect pupils' motivation to learn a foreign language (henceforth FL), and the techniques adopted by teachers of FLs to overcome such negative factors and motivate the learners.

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III. Motivation and Foreign Language Learning:

Motivation forms a solid basis of the successful process of FL learning. Yet it, i.e. motivation, varies from one group of learners to another. While some learners can easily manage learning an FL, others display inability and duly experience failure. This is due, in the main, to the type of motivation, namely instrumental or integrative that learners have while studying an FL.

IV. Types of Motivation in Foreign Language Learning:

- a. Instrumental Motivation:*** This type of motivation emphasizes the utilitarian aspects of learning an FL. Within Iraqi context, it includes the fulfillment of certain professional and educational short-term goals, such as getting into university, travelling or studying abroad, and seeking a good job or increasing the chances to get it (Ministry of education, 1987).
- b. Integrative Motivation:*** Integrative motivation usually stresses more identification with the foreign group and its culture and the adoption of different behavioural features which characterize that linguistic and cultural group. Gardner et al. (1979) argue that FL learners who are integratively motivated usually seek the development of personal ties, interaction, and communication with the members of the foreign group.

V. Factors Affecting Motivation To Learn An FL:

Our major task in this section is to specify the demotivational

factors that work from within the pupils represented by their individual characteristics and differences, followed by some coverage of the social factors, represented by familial and societal ones, and educational factors represented by the school setting and the classroom.

a. Personal Factors:

These represent pupils intellectual capacity, interest and preparedness to be engaged in the task of learning the language. They are usually coupled with pupils' sensitivity towards others' ridicule, and their favour or disfavour of learning the FL as determined by their age and level of maturation.

b. Social Factors:

The family environment, represented by parents low educational attainment, disinterest in school, difficult level conditions, feelings of 'anomie' and 'ethnocentrism' towards the FL and its culture, the prestige of the FL can all minimize pupils achievement and ultimately withdrawal from the FL study (Jakobovitz, 1971:p.76).

c. Educational Factors:

The school setting at large, and the classroom in particular, can either enhance or deteriorate the motivation to learn an FL. Peters (1981: p. 141) states that "in interaction with teachers and pupils.... the pupils willingness and ability to be educated may be

formed, maintained, modified, and sometimes even transformed". Within the classroom, learning atmosphere, teachers of the FL, teaching methods and materials, the varied objectives and a pupil's classmates should be very much heeded. Likewise, teachers' experience and ways of behaviour can bring about a lot of change in their pupils' learning outcome.

VI. Techniques to Motivate Learners in FL Lessons:

The disparity in learners' educational backgrounds and motives requires the use of varied and more embracing motivational techniques, at a time when "teachers may not be able to reach all students, but they certainly ought to be able to motivate a far greater percentage"(Walter and Gaa, 1975: p.1250).

At the inception, teachers' personal traits, ways of behaviour, interest, enthusiasm, and seriousness in teaching can work as good motivators for pupils. Likewise, the motivation process becomes quite workable when a teacher is able to maintain his pupils' already existing interest since "a basic aspect of effective teaching involves identifying individual students' interests and using them to achieve a high degree of motivation" (Callahan, 1971: p.252).

Learners are also motivated by (1) effective methods of teaching used by experienced teachers, (2) teachers' development of positive attitudes towards the foreign people and culture, (3) supportive, purposeful, relaxed school settings that are

characterized by positive teacher-pupil relationship, (4) well-identified educational objectives and the procedures to achieve them side by side with teachers' creation of confidence in the pupils about the feasibility to achieve such goals, and (5) interesting and meaningful teaching materials that are well considered in terms of selection, the amount taught, time available to cover them, and the relation to learners' real lives and needs.

It is noteworthy that the efficient use of any technique in FL lessons can be enhanced by teachers efficiency in:

- Having better knowledge of pupils' social and educational backgrounds
- Establishing good relationship with pupils.
- Creating enthusiasm for learning the FL.
- Setting good instructional goals.
- Handling the teaching materials efficiently.
- Diversifying the methods of presenting such materials.
- Widening pupils' involvement in the ongoing activities in the FL lessons.

VII. The Current research and the Teaching of English in Iraq:

In an attempt to know the extent of the applicability of the preceding theoretical literature to the Iraqi context, a group of (15) teachers of English at the secondary level were first asked to give written answers to the following questions:

Q1. What in your opinion, are the factors that are negatively affecting pupils learning of English?

Q2. What, in your opinion, are the techniques available to Iraqi teachers of English to motivate their pupils to learn the language in question?

The answers have been closely studied and reformulated with some additions from the relevant literature, so that two refined lists of factors (19 in number) and techniques (17 in number) could be worked out.

The two lists were then presented to a second group of 60 teachers of English at the secondary level. The latter were asked to rank (1) the factors that were negatively affecting pupils learning of English in the light of their importance and influential power within the Iraqi context, and (2) the techniques in the light of their importance and the possibility of their application within the Iraqi context.

VIII. Analysis of Results:

In an attempt to find out the Weighted Arithmetic Mean (henceforth WAM) of each factor or technique so as to specify its strength, a certain computational equation has been applied. Tables (1) and (2) present the factors and techniques as they are ranked according to the WAMs:

Table (1): The Factors Ranked According to their Strength or Weighted Arithmetic Means

<i>Factors</i>	<i>W. Arith.</i>
Difficult textbooks.	16.43
Compulsory teaching of the foreign language.	15.75
Pupils' lack of interest.	15.70
Inappropriate methods of teaching.	15.16
Pupils' negative attitudes towards learning the foreign	14.60
The negative attitudes of the people within the school towards FL learners.	14.18
Underestimation of the foreign language by the society.	14.11
Uneducated familial background.	13.93
Pupils' ignorance of the objectives behind FL learning.	13.85
Fear of failure.	12.91
Lack of intellectual capacity.	12.51
Teachers' negative attitudes towards the profession of	11.58
Bad learning environments.	11.16
The use of punishment.	10.11
Teachers' lack of experience and linguistic competence.	10.03
Teachers' bad behaviour in FL lessons.	9.61
Lack of parental support and encouragement.	8.56
Parents' ignorance of the benefits of the FL.	8.05
The Nature of the educational system.	7.95

Table (1) shows the factors ranked according to their weighted arithmetic means. One of the common procedures to deal with tables of this type is to study this factors that form the first quarter of the list with the highest weighted arithmetic means, and also these factors which are right at the bottom with the lowest weighted means, i.e. the last quarter of the list. Accordingly, the discussion will be focused on the first four factors, namely ‘Difficult textbooks’, ‘Compulsory Teaching of English’, ‘Pupils'lack of interest’, and “inappropriate methods of teaching”.

Form teachers' viewpoint, the preceding factors are the most influential as far pupils motivation to learn English within the Iraqi context is concerned. Hence, weakness in pupils' performance can be ascribed to the difficulty of English textbooks, the compulsory nature of teaching English as pupils no option but to study the 'difficult subject'and teachers have no choice but to impart the 'difficult' material. Pupils' frequent absence from English language lessons, carelessness and ignorance of assignments, low performance in all types of tests, and avoidance of participation in the ongoing activities are all indicators of the lack of the required interest. Finally, the adoption of a single teaching method imposed by the senior authorities forms another factor of much impact as

teachers are not free enough to experiment, innovate, and bring in what they think of as beneficial to their pupils.

As for factors that are at the bottom of the list, namely 'teachers' bad behaviour in English language lessons', 'lack of parental support and encouragement', 'parents' ignorance of the benefits of English', and the nature of the educational system', their role in affecting pupils' motivation has been minimized in spite of the social and educational nature of these factors.

Concerning the techniques used by teachers of English to motivate their pupils, the same technique of tacking certain techniques in the light of their occupation of either the four highest positions and the last four lowest positions has been applied. See table (2):

Table (2): The Techniques Ranked According to their Strength or Weighted Arithmetic Means

<i>Factor</i>	<i>W. Arith Means</i>
The adoption oi simple and appropriate methods	13.68
The creation of interest on the part of the pupils.	12.86
Teachers' displaying of interest.	12.33
The creation of positive attitudes on the part of the	11.76
Making the teaching materials enjoyable,	10.43
Setting the objectives behind FL learning.	10.23
Taking pupils' differences into consideration.	9.90
The use of competitions.	9.70
The creation of environments conducive to FL	8.88
The creation of the feelings of success and	8.33
Telling pupils of the progress they are making.	7.80
The use of encouragement.	7.60
Specification of pupils' needs.	6.90
The use of group work.	6.23
The use of rewards.	6.13
The use of language games.	5.88
The use of tests and quizzes.	5.70

According to table (2), 'The adoption of simple and appropriate methods of teaching', 'The creation of interest on pupils' part', teachers displaying of interest', and 'Creation of positive attitudes by pupils, all indicate the crucial role played these techniques in making pupils take benefit from English language learning and engage in the learning activities. These factors also warrant pupils' better performance so as to be good learners due to the role played by their teachers in creating interest to learn and converting negative attitudes into more positive ones. Finally, our last point of departure is intended to cover those techniques that are believed by teachers not to be so effective in developing pupils motivation, namely, 'Use of group work', 'Use of rewards', 'Use of language games' and 'Use of tests and quizzes'. The main reasons behind the way that these techniques have been evaluated lie in teachers' assumption that 'textbooks' should be the corner stone in any teaching-learning process, and in teachers', in fact some teachers' ignorance of how to carry out such techniques, and that the 'long textbooks' do not give teachers the chance to devote the time of the lesson to other activities and procedures.

IX. Conclusion:

'Factors that negatively affect pupils' learning of an FL' and 'Technique to motivate pupils in FL lessons' have been central point of discussion throughout the present research. The

presentation of both topics, side by side with that of the two types of motivation, namely instrumental and integrative, is expected to be of much assistance in the building up of a theoretical background on the role of the concept 'motivation' in FL learning.

Added to that, the current study represents but an attempt to build a link between the status of FL learning, with all emphasis being placed on English, by Iraqi pupils on the one hand, and the role of motivation on the other. This has been done through an empirical study with 60 teachers of English. They were asked to rank a number of factors according to their influential power and importance within the Iraqi context. The same procedure has been followed with respect to a number of techniques that can work as motivational devices in FL lessons.

In the light of the preceding theoretical review of literature and the analysis of the responses made by the sample of teachers, the following general conclusions have been drawn:

- Educationalists, almost unanimously agree that the success of any learning process is largely determined by the type of motivation that pupils display. They further suggest that learners' achievement is augmented when enough motivation is available. Consequently, in the field of FL learning, pupils' high motivation has always been coupled with their approach to the learning of the language, and

their high achievement in its varied activities.

- Since motivation is created and is liable to development, the factors of influence on the concept, when specified, should be directed towards the development of high motivation. This is why it is very important to equip teachers with the knowledge necessary to sustain and develop learners' motivation by creating environments conducive to the learning of the FL.
- In ranking factors according to the strength of their negative influence on pupils' motivation, teachers have not given any set of factors, namely social, personal, and educational, priority over each other. The factors have been ranked in such a way that requires a full consideration of all types together in any attempt to study them.
- Pupils, teachers and textbooks form basic elements upon which the success of any educational process relies and in great measure. The specification of the negative role played by any one or more of these elements has been a prime aim towards which a considerable part of the current research has been geared. As a result, teachers, from the present researcher's viewpoint, have been very successful in giving the first position to the current 'Difficult textbooks' as the most negative influential factor. Other factors do not have the same 'fatal' effects as textbooks do. This is so because textbooks are part and parcel of the everyday life of the process of teaching and

learning English. They form a source of assistance that neither teachers nor pupils can dispense with.

In attempt to find the least of the possible solutions and to have a step forward with respect to the putting of the teaching of English on its right track, the following implications for future work are suggested:

- Since a teacher plays a crucial role in developing his/her pupils' motivation to learn, solutions to the problems that impede teachers' work should not be limited to the claim that teachers do not have motivation and are not interested in teaching the FL. Looking for the appropriate solutions should be extended to include teaching conditions. In this respect, teachers' freedom to innovate, to prepare teaching materials, and to have a say in the matters related to their task is an essential source for the development of their motivation.
- Since 'how to teach a subject' is not less important than what to teach', the training courses for teachers of English and other FLs should not be limited to the presentation of the activities included in the textbooks and the analysis of these books. Emphasis should also be placed on the updated methods of teaching, the varied activities within the textbooks, and educational psychology. By so doing, teachers who are attending the training courses are expected to acquire the knowledge of how to deal with the everyday aspects of

the process of teaching. They should find at their disposal many techniques to deal with the teaching materials and to interest with pupils so as to enhance their motivation, and make FL lessons more appealing to them.

- The researcher suggests the revision or the replacement of the English textbooks currently in use. Teachers' impression of them as the most influential on pupils' motivation is a sign of disapproval with the current situation.
- Since a learner's knowledge of the objectives behind studying any subject has much bearing on his or her motivation to learn, there is no harm in setting right from the beginning within the introductory section of every textbooks, even if in Arabic, the objectives behind teaching the FL to a certain level.
- The close relationship and reciprocal respect between the administrative and teaching staff of schools on the one hand, and pupils parents on the other is important in designating the varied problems that might hinder pupils' further pursuing their studies and influence their interest in school, and their motivation to learn in general and to learn an FL in particular.

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ملخص

تحفيز الطلبة على تعلم اللغات الأجنبية: دراسة ميدانية

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يهدف البحث الحالي إلى تحديد العوامل التي تؤثر سلباً على تعلم الطلبة للغة الإنكليزية وكذلك الآليات التي يمكن من خلالها تحفيز الطلبة في دروس اللغة الإنكليزية. ولتحقيق هذه الأهداف، تم توزيع استبيانين على عينة من مدرسي اللغة الإنكليزية في المرحلة الثانوية. ساعدت إجابات المدرسين في تحديد العوامل المختلفة، وهي بالتحديد الاجتماعية و الشخصية و التربوية التي تأثر سلباً على دافعية الطلبة. كما ساعدت هذه الإجابات أيضاً على تحديد الآليات التي تساعد المدرسين في خلق الرغبة في اللغة الإنكليزية من جانب الطلبة. وأخيراً، تم تقديم بعض الإجراءات التي ترتبط عن قرب بالعوامل والآليات والتي من شأنها مساعدة المدرسين في تنفيذ مهامهم التدريسية.

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