

The Effect of Studying Literature on Shaping Students' Motivation to Learn English at College Level

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ABSTRACT

Building on the belief that literature is the mirror that reflects a people's culture, the present research seeks to investigate the effect of studying English literature, British or American, on shaping students' motivation to learn English for either instrumental or integrative purposes. It sets out of two hypotheses, namely(1): 1st year students are more instrumentally motivated to study literature as a means for achieving certain goals, and(2) 4th year students are more integratively motivated when compared to first year students. To verify such hypotheses, an(8-item) questionnaire on both types of motivation, integrative and instrumental, has been administered to a random sample of 1st and 4th year students at the Dept. of English, College of Arts, University of Mosul at the end of the second term of the academic year 2004-2005. The results show that 1st year students have a higher level of instrumental motivation compared to 4th year students; yet the latter, i.e. 4th year students are more integratively motivated than 1st year students in their viewing of the study of English literature as means for achieving pure instrumental benefits or identifying with English society and its culture. Such results may be ascribed to the fact that 4th year students have been studying different subjects of English literature during their 4-year stay at the college; a point that has helped in developing more motivation to integrate with the foreign society, its way of life, culture and behaviour.

A. Introduction:

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Learners usually approach learning a language other than their own with varying levels of motivation and interest as the new language is often viewed differently in terms of the varied objectives it is expected to confer. This is much evidenced by the ways that learners appear to embark on the new tasks, especially those of much relevance to the foreign language(Henceforth FL) learning process.

To be more precise, some learners find in the new language a means to fulfil some short-term objectives. They might, for instance, endeavour to get a good job, enter university, and have a good social position. Such learners are said to be instrumentally motivated or oriented(Gardner and Lambert; 1972). Contrariwise, other learners might find in the new language a means to understand the foreign society at large and its culture in particular so they can some sort of integration with such culture in the future. They are said to be integratively motivated or oriented. Whether a learner is instrumentally or integratively motivated, focus should be on the factors that gear his/her motivation in a certain direction. A prime factor that has been pinpointed as quite salient and deserves close accounting of in this respect is the foreign culture in general and a learner's familiarity with such culture in particular.

B. The Problem:

Many students, for various educational and personal reasons, do not realize the real objectives behind studying English literature, British or American, at college level. Likewise, many graduates of the Dept. of English, in spite of their studying of different subjects of literature, namely drama, novel, poetry, and literary criticism, do not view literature as a good means that should affect their view of the world around them. Their tackling of literature subjects during stay at the college does not go beyond mere or short-term assimilation of the ideas so as to give answers to the questions in the exam and duly succeed. In other words, students focus on some mere instrumental benefits. They do not heed the cultural elements, that are presented explicitly or implicitly, to the level required

and duly do not develop the type of motivation required for identification with the foreign society and culture.

C. Aim of the research:

The present research aims at identifying the effect of studying English literature, represented by the different subjects already referred to, on shaping both type and level of motivation of a selected sample of 1st and 4th year students at the Dept. of English, College of Arts, University of Mosul at the end of the second term of the academic year 2004-2005. In other words, it aims at pinpointing the type and level of motivation that students have developed in the light of their dealing with the cultural elements presented in the literature *subjects*.

D. Hypotheses:

In the present paper, it is hypothesized that:

1. 1st year students are more instrumentally motivated, when compared to 4th year students, in their dealing with English literature as a subject they are studying for just one year.
2. 4th year students are more integratively motivated, when compared to 1st year students, in terms of the benefits they have derived from studying literature subjects for four years.

E. Procedure and Data Collection:

A group of (110) students, (55) 1st year students, and other (55) 4th year students at the Dept. of English, College of arts, University of Mosul had been randomly selected to work as the sample of the study.

The subjects were presented with a list of (8-item) questionnaire that implied varied objectives behind studying English at large, and English literature in particular. The objectives highlighted varied instrumental and integrative motivational purposes. A five-point scale, namely (**Applies to me to: a very large degree, a large degree, a moderate degree, a little degree, a very little degree**) had been set opposite to each item and students were asked to tick the proper space in the light of the applicability of each item to them (See Appendix I).

In the light of subjects' responses to items of the questionnaire, the Weighted Arithmetic Mean(henceforth WAM) of each item was computed and items were ranked in terms of their strength for the later stage of analysis.

F. Limits of the Study:

The current research is limited to a sample of 1st and 4th year students. The choice of the sample from among the students in these two years in particular is due to the fact that 1st year students are viewed as beginners in terms of their dealing with English literature. During the whole first year, i.e. 1st and 2nd terms, they are exposed to a single course of "General Literature". As for 4th year students, their choice is done in the light of their long familiarity with English literature through its varied subjects for a reasonable period of time, i.e. 4 years.

The study further concentrates on only two main types of motivation, namely integrative and instrumental motivation, and puts aside other types such as achievement, academic, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. This is so because integrative and instrumental motivation have always been pinpointed as the main focus, among other types of motivation, when dealing with FL learning.

G. Culture and Language Learning:

Difficulties usually arise when dealing with the term culture due to the several different meanings that the term implies. In its broadest sense, culture is defined as all aspects of life of a particular society. It is, in more specific terms, and as Kelly(1986: 39) states, what is regarded as being best in the art and literature of any particular people.

As for the relation of culture to language, it should be crystal clear that language can never develop in a vacuum. Language and culture are inseparable and are fully interrelated as the former, i.e. language, is used to reflect the interests, ideas, attitudes and other cultural aspects of a people. It is further looked upon as a basic part of culture and a central network through which other components are expressed. Language is dependent on culture since what is essential to

language is finally essential to culture (Lado, 1964: 23). This is on one hand. On the other hand, culture is usually viewed as the native soil to which language belongs. In this respect, Gauntlett(1957: 8-9) maintains that if one studies manners and customs, the reasonable thing is to relate the kind of language being learned to the manners and customs of the people of that language.

Since learning an FL represents, in the main, the ability to use it, understand its meaning and connotations in terms of the language and its culture, and the ability to understand the speech and writing of the natives of the foreign culture, culture should be included as an integral part of the language aims. Yet, such a content is usually influenced by the differences in the purposes for which the language is taught; and as a consequence, culture has been viewed differently by the different methods of teaching. The Grammar-Translation Method, for instance, views culture as consisting of the literature and the fine arts. The Direct Method sees culture as consisting of the history of the people who speak the foreign language; it subsumes information about their daily lives, while for the Audio-lingual Method, culture consists of the everyday behaviour and life style of the foreign language speakers(Larsen-Freeman, 1986: 25, 44).

Added to that, the language teacher, on his part, is supposed to impart knowledge about the cultural content that is quite essential if a learner is to be knowledgeable and able to use the language. Lado(1964: 149) states that a language cannot be taught well if it is stripped off its culture and unless we come to grips with its culture. To put it differently, there can be no real learning of a language unless the patterns and values of which it is a part are understood and when the student realizes the necessity of the absorption of the full cultural meaning of the foreign language especially when it significantly differs from his/her native culture.

Fries(1955: 14) states that dealing with the culture and life of a people is not just an adjunct of a practical language course. It is rather an essential feature of every stage of

language learning. Likewise, Rivers(p.128) maintains that FLs usually give learners illuminating insights into how language operates and into other ways of thinking and other sets of cultural values. As such, to understand another culture thoroughly, learners needs to live to some extent, in that culture, to experience it as one is brought up in the culture experiences, and to assimilate this new experience so that it enriches their thinking and their expression of self. Finally, Robins, G. L.(1980) cited in Rivers(:) states that understanding another culture involves both emotional and conceptual processes. Emotional understanding implies identification, i.e. learning to merge one's own experience with those of the foreign culture. Added to that, successful identification reflects a synthesis of the students past experiences with new cultural and linguistic experiences.

A crucial point to be attended to is that devotion of the time to the teaching of the culture of a people who language one is learning does not necessarily result in greater knowledge of their cultural background than in the case of those not taking such a course. In this respect, Gauntlett(1957: 8) claims that by laying wrong emphasis on the teaching of culture, not only is time spent on the teaching of language is sacrificed, but the benefits of such a course are highly doubtful. This makes it necessary to look into the nature of the cultural content as the possible dangers of a cultural bias in a language course.

H. Motivation and Foreign Language Learning:

Learners' interest, and in turn their motivation to learn an FL have been accounted for by almost every foreign language specialist since motivation is assumed to form the basis of the success process of foreign language learning and since it stems from the learner's endeavour to achieve certain desirable objectives. Hence, reference will be made to two types of motivation, namely instrumental and integrative motivation, since they are almost the focus of any study that deals with the learning of an FL:

One. Instrumental Motivation:

This type of motivation, according to Gardner(1982), emphasizes the “utilitarian aspects” of learning the FL. It implies the fulfilment of educational and professional benefits inherent in learning the language so as to satisfy one’s personal needs. Littlewood(1984) perceives learning an FL for instrumental purposes as a useful means to get at other goals of which “good qualification” and “better employment prospects” form the most dominant. To put it differently, learners of an FL who are instrumentally motivated usually regard the foreign “cultural group and their language as an instrument of personal satisfaction, with few signs of interest in the other people”(Gardner and Lambert, 1972: 15). They usually add to their low interest in the members of the other cultural group a desire to use them and their language as a tool to achieve more social recognition or economic advantage.

Two. Integrative Motivation:

Integrative motivation does not emphasize the utilitarian benefits behind learning an FL(Littlewood, 1984). It usually stresses more identification with the foreign group and its culture, and the adoption of different features of behaviour which characterize that linguistic and cultural group.

Gardner et al.(1979) state that FL learners who are integratively motivated usually seek the development of “personal ties”, interaction and satisfactory communication with the members of the foreign group.

Yet, it is worthy to note that it is rarely possible to come across learners with exclusively instrumental or integrative motivation. Both types of motivation can be found simultaneously and in a way that makes it difficult to exclude either type; a point that the current research will hopefully outline in its findings.

I. Culture and the Study of Literature:

Culture is defined as the way of life of a certain people. This is on one hand. On the other hand, a nation’s literature is viewed as the mirror that reflects such culture(Krusl,1986;9). This means that literature is expressed through language, and one cannot understand it unless he/she understands the meanings of the culture expressed by the words of the language and unless the values and cultural experience against which the literature is written are also understood. In this respect, Lado(1964: 151) maintains that one

cannot jump from the structure of a language to its literature without passing through the basic cultural content of the language. This becomes more prominent especially when we know that literature of the foreign culture forms one of the streams of influence that affect the cultural content involved in language learning(Lado, 1964: 25). It enriches a learner's comprehension and appreciation of the language in addition to whatever enjoyment and profit he derives from the literature per se.(Krusl,1986;9). Added to that, literature studying should develop in learners new conceptions and perceptions about language and its culture since studying a language is looked at as a facilitator to understand the native society and many aspects related to the way of living of this society.

Lado(1964: 155) states that the objective behind studying a foreign literature is the appreciation of a foreign literature, i.e. capacity to experience it fully. A second objective is to experience artistically something of the foreign culture. Mere knowledge of facts is less imaginative realization of the culture as a way of life. This will give perspective and further appreciation of one's own culture. The experience of a literary work on the part of the learner requires understanding the language in which it is expressed, the cultural meaning which it contains, and the circumstances surrounding it.

In spite of the fact that studying literature in the context of FL learning must include novel, drama, and poetry(Forum, p.9), the studying of a foreign language has changed from the narrow one of coming in contact with great literature only, to the broader one of coming in contact with the members of other cultures as well as with literature, art, science, technology and language(Lado, 1964: 27).

Data Analysis and Discussion of Results:

To put the aims of the present research into effect, students' responses to the items of the questionnaire have been dealt with according to a certain computational equation so as to find out their Weighted Arithmetic Means(WAMs). Table(1) presents 1st-year students' responses to the items of the questionnaire ranked according to their WAMs:

Table(1): Items of the Type of 1st-Year Students' Motivation Ranked according to their Strength or Weighted Arithmetic Means

SN	ITEMS	WA Ms
- Studying English Literature helps in		
1	Travelling abroad.	4.509
2	Having a good social position.	4.272
3	Completing my studies abroad	3.645
4	Getting a good job	3.309
5	Behaving like English native speakers.	3.236
6	Communicating with English native speakers.	2.581
7	Understanding English native speakers' way of life.	2.290
8	Understanding English native speakers' culture.	2.036

It is quite evident, as table(1) shows, that 1st year students have put much emphasis on the utilitarian benefits behind studying English literature as a means of learning English. In other words, they have focused on all the four items that represent the short-term objectives, i.e. instrumental motivation, namely 'travelling abroad', 'having a good social position', 'completing my studies abroad', and 'getting a good job' to which they have given the WAMs 4.509, 4.272, 3.654, and 3.309 respectively. This means that their studying of 'English Literature' for one whole year has not developed in them enough identification with English cultural elements that such a course is supposed to confer. This is on one hand. On the other hand, the same group of students have evidenced the existence of integrative benefits, yet the latter have occupied the last four positions and in such a way that highlights their weakness as motivating factors. In the light of such responses, the first hypothesis which states that "1st-year students are more instrumentally motivated in terms of their dealing with English literature as a means to learn English" is accepted.

As for 4th-year the students responses, table(2) presents the responses to the items of the questionnaire ranked according to their strength:

Table(2): Items of the Type of 4th -Year Students' Motivation Ranked according to their Strength or Weighted Arithmetic Means

SN	ITEMS	WAMs
- Studying English Literature helps in		
1	Understanding English native speakers' way of life.	4.318
2	Communicating with English native speakers.	4.258
3	Behaving like English native speakers.	4.045
4	Understanding English native speakers' culture.	3.891
5	Having a good social position.	3.272
6	Completing my studies abroad	3.200
7	Travelling abroad.	2.845
8	Getting a good job	2.527

Quite contrary to what table(1) has already shown, table(2) shows that 4th-year students' studying of English literature for four successive years has developed in them better awareness of the cultural insights that such a course subsumes, and duly better and more identification with the English society and its culture when compared to 1st-year students. They have put much emphasis on all four items that highlight integrative motivation, namely 'understanding English native speakers' way of life', 'communicating with English native speaking', 'behaving like English native speakers', and 'understanding English native speakers' culture' through the WAMs 4.318, 4.258, 4.045, and 3.981 that stand respectively for the preceding items. Hence, the hypothesis that "4th-year students have developed more integrative orientations behind studying English literature when compared to 1st-year students" is also accepted.

What is worth noting in this respect, and as the theoretical statement of the relevant literature in a previous section has outlined, no learners of an FL can be said to be of purely instrumental or integrative orientation when dealing with the courses that present the FL in one way or another. This is evident from the way that the sample of 1st-year students has heeded the integrative benefits, and that of 4th-year students has attended to the instrumental benefits behind studying English literature at College level, though to a lesser degree.

J. Conclusion:

The setting and the presentation of two types of items that stand for either instrumental and integrative motivation have been the central point of discussion throughout the present research. The procedure of administering them, i.e. two sets of items, has been of much assistance in studying the type of motivation or orientation by a selected sample of students who are studying English literature at university level. In addition to the theoretical statement of the points of much relevance to the present topic of research, the empirical part has shed light on the types of motivation prevalent in FL learning, and on a single way in particular, namely studying English literature as means for developing a certain type of motivation on the part of students in their dealing with such a course. It has been evident that the period of time a student spends on studying literature can play a pivotal role in identifying the cultural elements that such a course implies and duly develop orientations or motivations to approach the task of FL learning for either instrumental and integrative purposes.

References

APPENDIX(I)

Questionnaire

Dear Student:

The present questionnaire intends to investigate “The Effects of Studying English Literature on Shaping Student’s Motivation to Learn English at College Level”. Would you please state your frank and sincere answers in terms of the applicability of the items to you. There is no need to mention your name. Thank you...

The Researcher

- Studying English Literature helps in:

	Items	Applies to me to....				
		A Very Large Degree	A large Degree	A Moderate Degree	A Little Degree	A Very Little Degree
1	Having a good social position.					
2	Behaving like English native speakers.					
3	Communicating with English native speakers.					
4	Completing my studies abroad.					

5	Understanding English native speakers' way of life.					
6	Travelling abroad.					
7	Getting a good job.					
8	Understanding English native speakers' culture.					

تأثير دراسة مادة الأدب على تشكيل دافعية الطلبة لتعلم الإنكليزية في المرحلة الجامعية

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خلاصة البحث

انطلاقاً من الاعتقاد السائد بأن الأدب يمثل المرأة التي تعكس حضارة شعب ما، يهدف البحث الحالي إلى استقصاء تأثير دراسة مادة الأدب الإنكليزي، البريطاني أو الأمريكي منه، على تشكيل دافعية الطلبة لتعلم اللغة الإنكليزية لأغراض نفعية أو تكاملية. وينطلق البحث من فرضيتين رئيسيتين: (1) يمتلك طلبة الصف الأول دافعية نفعية أكثر لدراسة مادة الأدب كوسيلة لتحقيق أهداف معينة، (2) يمتلك طلبة الصف الرابع دافعية تكاملية أكثر عند مقارنتهم بأقرانهم في الصف الأول. وللتحقق من كلتا الفرضيتين، فقد تم توزيع أستاذة من 8 فقرات حول كلا النوعين من الدافعية، النفعية والتكاملية، على عينة عشوائية من طلبة الصفين الأول والرابع في قسم اللغة الإنكليزية، كلية الآداب، جامعة الموصل في نهاية الفصل الثاني من العام الدراسي 2004-2005. تظهر النتائج بأن طلبة الصف الأول يمتلكون دافعية نفعية أكثر بالمقارنة مع طلبة الصف الرابع الذين أبدوا من جانبهم دافعية تكاملية أكثر فيما يتعلق بدراسة مادة الأدب الإنكليزي كوسيلة لتحقيق أهداف تكاملية أو التعرف أكثر على المجتمع الإنكليزي وحضارته. تعزى هذه النتائج إلى حقيقة أن طلبة الصف الرابع قاموا بدراسة مواد أدبية مختلفة خلال سنوات الدراسة الأربع في الكلية؛ الأمر الذي ساعدهم كثيراً على تطوير دافعية أكثر للتكامل مع المجتمع الأجنبي و طريقة حياته و حضارته وسلوكياته.

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