why English department? an investigation of efl students' motivations

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Abstract

Motivation has been widely accepted by both teachersand researchers as one of the key factors that influencethe rate and success of second/foreign languagelearning. Motivation provides the primary impetusto initiate learning the foreign languageand later the drivingforce to sustain the long and often tedious learning process(Dornyei, 2001: 117). The Factors that affect the learners motivation towards English language are investigated in the present study. The results obtained throughout the questionnaire and the statistical analysis show that learners are motivated mostly by learning a foreign language to be used and especially the English language.
Key words: Motivation , Foreign/Second language, English language, Learning.

الملخص

يقدم البحث اجابة على تساؤل مهم و هو لماذا يختار الطلبة الذي يقبلون في الكليات الانسانية مثل التربية و الآداب قسم اللغة الانكليزية كمجال للدراسة و التخصص. اذ تم استعراض اغلب النظريات التي تؤثر على اختيار الطلبة لتعلم اللغات الاجنبية و منها او اهمها اللغة الانكليزية. كما و استندت نتائج البحث على عمل استبيان و اختيار عينة من طلبة قسم اللغة الانكليزية و تحليل نتائج الاستبيان على اساس صيغة احصائية معتمدة و التي بينت ان الحافز الاكبر لاختيار قسم اللغة الانكليزية هو الشعور بالحاجة الى تعلم لغات اجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية:الدافع واللغة الأجنبية ، ثانية، واللغة الإنجليزية، تعلم.

Section One/Introduction

1.1.The Problem

Motivation is described as goal-directed; the learners' immediate goal is to learn the language. Gardner(1985: 50) proposed that in order to understand why learners were motivated, it is necessary to understand the learners' ultimate goal or purpose for learning the language.

In the light of what is proposed earlier the problem of the present study can be summarized by answering the following questions:
1. What are the motivations that make first EFL students join English department?
2. Which sort of motivation most affect their choice?

1.2.The Aims:

The present study aims at:
1.Finding out the motivations behind making EFL students choose to learn English as a foreign language.
2.Finding out the kind of motivation that most affect their choice.

1.3.The Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that:
1.The students choice of studying foreign language is affected by their wish to speak another language.
2.Students' motivation is weak concerning social contact and engagement with foreign people.

3.Fundamental needs are the most influential type of motivations.

1.4.The Procedures: The present study will adopt the following procedures:
1.Surveying definitions, types and theories underlying the concept of motivation.
2.Establishing a workable model for the analysis.
3.Conducting a test consisting of a set of questions to collect data about the learners' motivations in learning English as a foreign language.
4.Adopting a statistical method to analyse the tests' results.
1.5.The Limits
The study is limited to the investigation of EFL students' motivations in English as a foreign language. The sample of the study is limited to university first year students at the Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon.
1.6.The value
The present study is hoped to be of some value both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it tries to give a general frameworkof motivation in foreign language learning. The practical part may be of importance for teachers and syllabus designers to know students fundamental needs and motivation that may affect students' performance in foreign language learning.
Section Two/Motivation in Foreign Language Learning
2.1 The Concept of Motivation
Gardner (1985: 11)defined motivation as a combination of effort plus desire to achieve a goal plus favorable attitudes towards the goal to be accomplished.

Williams and Burden (1997: 120) define motivation as "a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, a state which leads to a conscious decision to act and give rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort". This means that intellect and affect are combined with volition and perseverance to result in what is known as motivated behavior.

The concepts of motivation have been associated with individual differences in second language learning. Motivation explains why people select a particular activity, how long they are willing to persist in it and what effort they invest in it (Dörnyei, 2001: 56).

Motivation plays a great role in the learner's achievement. It is often attributed with the capacity to override other factors, such as language aptitude and to affect achievement in both negative and positive ways.
2.2 Theories of Motivation
2.2.1 Expectancy-value Theories
In motivational psychology the most influential conceptualisations have tended to adopt an expectancy-value framework. According to the main principles of expectancy-value theories, motivation to perform various tasks is the product of two key factors: the individual's expectancy of success in a given task and the value the individual attaches to success in that task.
2.2.1.1 Expectancy of Success
From an educational point of view, the individual's cognitive processes can be described in terms of:
a. Attributional Processes
They are part of the most important theories that influence the formation of students' expectancies. Theguiding principle in attribution theory is theassumption that the way humans explain their ownpast successes and failures will significantly affecttheir future achievement behaviour(Weiner, 1979: 98).

b. Self-efficacy Theory

This theoryrefers to peoples' judgment of their capabilities to carry out certain specific tasks, and, accordingly, their sense of efficacy will determine their choice of the activities attempted, as well as the level of their aspirations, the amount of effort exerted, and the persistence displayed (ibid).

2.2.2Goal Theories

Maslow (1970: 55) distinguishes five classes of needs: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and selfactualisation. The concept of a 'need' has been replaced by the more specific construct of a 'goal', which is seen as the 'engine' to fire the action and provide the direction in which to act. In goal theories the cognitive perceptions of goal properties are seen as the basis of motivational processes.Two goal-theories have become particularly influential, *goal-setting theory*and*orientation theory*.

a. Goal-setting Theory

Locke and Latham's goal-setting theory (Locke and Latham, 1994: 59) assert that human action is caused by purpose, and for action to take place, goals have to be set and pursued by choice.

b. Goal Orientation Theory

It was specifically developed to explain children's learning and performance in school settings.It deals with motivation in classrooms. This means students focus on learning the content or they can follow a performance orientationin pursuit of performance goals with the focus on demonstrating ability, getting good grades, or outdoing other student. Masteryand performance goals represent different success criteria and different reasons for engaging in achievement activity (ibid).

2.2.3 Robert Gardner's Social Psychological Approach

Gardner (1985: 10) defines L2 motivation as 'the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity'; more specifically, motivation is conceptualized to subsume three components motivational intensity, desire to learn the language, and an attitude towards the act of learning the language.Thus, according to Gardner's theory, 'motivation' refers to a kind of central mental'engine' or 'energy-center' that subsumes effort, want/will (cognition), and task-enjoyment (affect).

2.3 Types of Motivation

**2.3.1 Extrinsic/ Instrumental.**

As the terms themselves indicate, motivation is caused by a combination of external factors and used as a means or instrument to obtain something like preference for easy work,pleasing a teacher/getting grades etc.(Spolsky, 1989:124).Instrumental motivation refers to more functional reasons for learning the language such as getting a better job, a higher salary or passing an examination (Gardner, 1985: 80).

2.3.2 Intrinsic or Integrative

This type of motivation is designed to achieve the purpose of enabling one to communicate with the members of a specific language community (ibid). **Integrative** orientation refers to a learner's desire to learn more about the cultural community of the target language or to assimilate to some degree in the target community. Integrative orientation refers to a desire to increase the affiliation with the target community.

2.4 Noels' Model of Motivation in Second Language Acquisition

Noels (2000: 61) proposes a model of second language acquisition based on Deci and Ryan's (1985: 184) self-determination model. It considers both intergroup and individual motivational processes and links them to six classes of variables.

These are immediate social contact, fundamental needs, orientations, intention and engagement, L2 use, and linguistic and nonlinguistic outcomes. In this model, proficiency in the other language is seen as a linguistic outcome resulting from the interplay of contact with the language with four fundamental needs: social identity, relatedness, autonomy, and competence leading to three orientations: integrative, intrinsic, and extrinsic. These in turn can influence the willingness tocommunicate and the effort and persistence demonstrated in learning the language, which in turn leads to language use and ultimately proficiency and some possible changes in identity (ibid).

(Noels' Model)
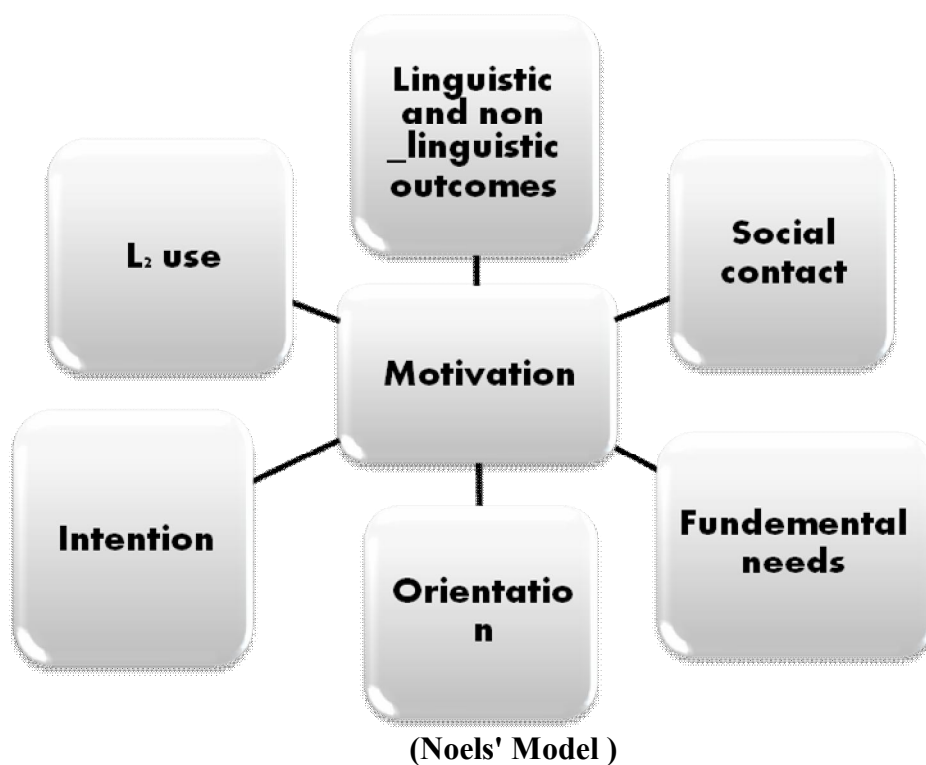
2.5 Factors Influencing Motivation
2.5.1 Motivation and Personality Variables

They refer to the association between personality attributes and the successful acquisition of a second language. While successful student may display different types of characteristics (they may be extrovert, self-confident, active, passive, independent as well as introvert or shy), unsuccessful students are more described as demonstrating a lack of self-confidence and being shy, afraid to express their opinions and nervous. Rivers (1964: 76) observed that personal motifs such as fear or anxiety may combine with learned social motifs such as a desire for status in a group and for social approval, creating a series of reactions that may inhibit or work towards progress in a foreign language.

2.5.2 Attitudes and Motivation

Attitudes and motivation are closely related to success in language learning. This explains how in the same classroom setting, some students progress rapidly, while others just struggle along and never achieve command of a second language.

Gardner(1985: 87) made a distinction between different types of attitudes according to factors in the environment or subject characteristics such as age or sex. Attitudes revolving around the educational aspects of second language acquisition (educational attitudes) and of social attitudes, focusing on cultural implications of second language acquisition.

2.5.3 Motivation and Learning Styles

Learners are given some freedom to choose one way of learning or another, they might do better than those who find themselves forced to learn in environments where a learning style does not suit them, is imposed as the only way to learn. Teachers should be allowed to adapt their programs with due attention to the objectives of their students and the needs of the area where they are teaching. A concern for the students' learning styles might be of great help in motivating them to learn(Gardner,1985: 87).

Section Three/Questionnaire and Data Analysis

3.1.Introduction

Questionnaire can be defined as a set of printed or written questions with a choice of answers, devised for the purposes of a survey or statistical study.
A random sample of students from the first stage in the Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon. The sample of the study consists of twenty students (males and females).

The items of the test have been collected from different sources mentioned in the bibliography. Also open question has been given to the students asking about their motivation to EFL. A number of items have been collected from the students' answers about the open ended question.

The test consists of eighteenitems that are based on six variables of motivation(each variable three items)**.** The students are presented(in the test) with three columns entitled (much, somehow and no) and they are asked to tick the choice that best suits their type of motivation.

3.2.Results and discussions

In order to verify the aims of the study, a statistical analysis has been adopted by usingT-test in order to specify students' motivations in EFL.

3.2.1. Standard Deviation

This is measured by applying the formula:

$$\frac{\sqrt{n \times \Sigma d^2 - \Sigma(d)^2}}{n^2}$$

n= number of the sample

$\sum$ = summation

D= item score

After doing the calculation the result is :

S.D. = 3, 73

Standard deviation has been collected since it is needed in applying T-test formula.

3.2.2. Analysis of the Test

In order to verify the aims of the test and to assess the hypothesis, T-test formula has been conducted in order to analyse the test items. The T-test formula is as follows:

$$T = \frac{\bar{X} - \mu°}{\sigma / \sqrt{N}}$$

$\bar{X}$ = Moderate calculation

$\mu°$ = Moderate assumption

σ = Standard deviation

N = The number of the sample students

By applying this formula for the sixth variables of motivation and their underlying items the following results have been collected:

1.Social Contact

$$T = \frac{\frac{6 - 7,05}{1,53}}{\sqrt{20}} = \frac{\frac{1,05}{1,53}}{4.47} = \frac{1,05}{0.34} = 3,08$$

The learners' motivation in this variable is of about (3, 08). By comparing this score with T- test table score which is (1,729), it is found that T-test score(3, 08) is higher than T-test table score(1,729). So, it can be concluded that the sample has a good degree of motivation in this variable.

2.Fundamental Needs

Through applying the same procedure T-test score to the second variable is:

T= 3, 22

The learners' motivation in this variable is of about (3, 22). By comparing this score with T- test table score which is (1,729), it is found that T-test score(3, 22) is higher than T-test table score(1,729). So, it can be concluded that the sample has a good degree of motivation in this variable and it is a little bit higher than that of social contact.

3.Orientation

T-test score for this item is:

T= 4,8

By comparing this score with T- test table score which is (1,729), it is found that T-test score(4, 8) is higher than T-test table score(1,729). So, it can be concluded that the sample has a very good degree of motivation in this variable and students in this variable have a degree of motivation which is higher than the first two.

4.Intention and Engagement

The T-test score for this variable is:

T= 0, 69

By comparing this score with T- test table score which is (1,729), it is found that T-test score(0, 69) is less than T-test table score(1,729). So, it can be concluded that the sample does not have motivation in this variable and it is the weakest kind of motivation.

5.L2 Use

The T-test score for this variable is:

T= 8, 12

The learners' motivation in this variable is of about (8, 12). By comparing this score with T- test table score which is (1,729), it is found that T-test score(8, 12) is higher than T-test table score(1,729). So, it can be concluded that the sample has an excellent degree of motivation in this variable. This is the highest variable that influenced the students motivation.

6.Linguistic and Nonlinguistic Outcomes

The T-test score for this variable is:

T= 5, 96

The learners' motivation in this variable is of about (5, 96). By comparing this score with T- test table score which is (1,729), it is found that T-test score(5, 96) is higher than T-test table score(1,729). So, it can be concluded that the sample has a very good degree of motivation in this variable.

After calculating the tests' scores for each variable (introduced by Noel's model) by using T- test formula,it can be concluded that students are motivated highly by their need for language use. And the other variables are ordered according to their scores as in the table:

Table (1) Students' grades according to Noels' sixvariables of motivation.

Grades	Types of motivation
8, 12	1. Language use
5, 96	2. Linguistic and nonlinguistic outcomes
4, 8	3. Orientation
3, 22	4. Fundamental needs
3, 08	5. Social contact
1.69	6.Intention and engagement

Conclusions

The study has reached to the following conclusions

1. The EFL students are motivated highly by foreign language use in their choice of the English department. The first hypothesis has been verified.

2. The test results concerning social contacts and intention and engagement are proved to be very weak, so that, the second hypothesis has been verified.

3. Fundamental needs are not the strongest motive behind the learners' choice of EFL. Hence, the third hypothesis has not been verified.

4. Students' motivations tend to be extrinsic rather than intrinsic.

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Appendix (A)
A Letter to the Jury

The present study entitled **Why English Department? An Investigation of EFLStudents' Motivations.** In order to verify what the research aims at, a scale for measuring   motivation has been made. Because of your wide knowledge and experience, It is hoped that you assess the items of the questionnaire by putting (√) in front of the correct item and supplying modifications where necessary, the options of the scale are (much, somehow and no)

****With Thanks and Gratitude*****

The Researcher
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Appendix (B)

Nu.	Items	Much	Somehow	No
1	It is a matter of interest.			
2	Preference of getting a better job.			
3	Learning a second language.			
4	It is socially highly respectable.			
5	It is your parent's encouragement.			
6	Because of your average			
7	You feel it is important in our life.			
8	you want to be like the English teacher you liked in your previous study (primary, intermediate or secondary).			
9	You want to be a good English teacher.			
10	To please other's wishes for you as an English teacher (like relatives, neighbours or friends).			
11	It wasn't the department which you dreamt of.			
12	Your family obliged you.			
13	It is your decision in spite of your parents refusal of it.			
14	It is the department which you dreamt of attending.			
15	Enriching your knowledge about English speech community.			

16	It fulfills your major needs personally(like prestige) and educationally.			
17	You want to be proficient in a language which was used by highly educated people only.			
18	It increases your linguistic outcomes.			