EFL Learning Motivation of Iraqi Non-Departmental Undergraduates

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صدق الله العظيم

Dedication

*….To everyone whose
Knowledge is his own
Way…*

Abstract

As motivation expresses the student's desires, willingness, and needs to participate in the learning process, it is principally considered as the key learner variable because without it nothing much happens.

More specifically, motivation of learning a foreign language is unlike motivation to learn any other subjects as it is not merely a communication code , but it is a representative of a foreign culture as well. It follows that foreign language learners have and then develop, whether positively or negatively, desires, needs and attitudes towards that learnt language .It is , therefore; called the intrinsic motivation which is due to the learner's curiosity and self-confidence and through which the learner makes higher achievements.

In addition, motivation of those learners can be promoted by implementing certain techniques aiming to change their motivation into positive direction like: novelty, attractiveness, making teaching materials relevant to the learner, and increasing the learner's self – confidence, so it is named the extrinsic motivation.

Practically, Iraqi non-departmental undergraduates are EFL learners as they are taught English as a general course within their academic program. Accordingly, their EFL learning motivation is subject to question.

Thus , the study aims at describing the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of Iraqi non-departmental undergraduates to EFL learning. The study is limited to those undergraduates at college of education –University of Babil during the academic year(2005-2006).50 second class students from History department were randomly chosen as the sample of the study and a questionnaire form was distributed to the sample as the research instrument. Some of the research analysis results indicate: 1-A high percentage of responses was recorded as regarding learning English is for passing the exam in it.
2- A high recentage of the responses was recorded regarding the poor learning level of English in the pre-college program.
3- A high percentage of the responses was recorded regarding the respondents' view of English learning as difficult.

The study reached the following conclusions: 1-EFL learning motivation is mostly extrinsic for Iraqi non-departmental undergraduates.

2-Low or lack of willingness in EFL learning is due to the ambiguity of the objectives behind teaching English for non-departmental undergraduates and the incapability of these objectives to match their needs.

3-Some stereotyped techniques have their role to decrease the intrinsic EFL learning motivation, unlike the interactive techniques which create opportunities to promote it.

 The study recommends the following:

1-It recommends for syllabus designers who are responsible for EFL learning of non-departmental undergraduate program to state the objectives that define the students' needs and interests.

2-It recommends using the interactive techniques as they highly increase EFL learning motivation.

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Chapter One

1.1 The statement of the problem:

Learning motivation is considered as the key learner variable and without it nothing much happens. It is so, because it expresses the learner's desires and needs to participate in the learning process .Since motivation is basically "a goal-directed behavior"; a learner behaves in a way that achieves certain goals with regard to his/her needs and interests. Such type of behavior is called "intrinsic motivation". Reeve viewed it as 'the innate propensity to engage one's interests and exercise one's capacities to seek out and master optimal challenge" (Reeve, 1997,:5), meaning that it is the internal state of a learner that activates him/her to do an activity without a compelling reason. It is, therefore, manifested in accordance with some factors such as curiosity which means that there is something in the learner's environment that attracts his/her attention and his/her goal is to discover what it is, or there is a gap between present knowledge or skills that the learner has and the new ones and that makes learners do some activities to overcome difficulty. Competition is also a factor that makes learners feel satisfaction by comparing their performance favorably to that of others. Thus, intrinsic motivation occurs when the learning process and the learning environment elicit motivation in the learner. That can be achieved by stating learning objectives which are meaningful to learners, i.e., through which the learners' needs are achieved.

Opposing to intrinsic motivation, there is a type of motivation that comes from external source through rewards or punishment; therefore it is called extrinsic motivation. The teacher, and not the learner, has the power to control this type of motivation .However, it does not mean that the learner will not get any interest through participation in the learning process. It just means that the interest he/she gets from the external reward will continue to be a motivator even when such participation holds little or no interest. In other words, an extrinsically motivated learner may dislike the given assignment or find the subject boring, but the possibility of a good grade will be enough to keep him/her motivated so that he /she will exert an effort to do well on a task.

More specifically, motivation to learn a foreign language, whether intrinsically or extrinsically, is a crucial matter on

the part of learners. Their intrinsic motivation may be low because that learnt foreign language may not seem relevant to them or it is not part of their daily lives. Moreover, they may be required to study it because it is a compulsory part of the curriculum.

Some discouraging teaching circumstances also decrease learners' intrinsic motivation like large classes and limited contact hours with that language as it is taught jointly with other subjects, all of which makes that kind of learning is insurmountable challenge because such a course does not offer enough exposure to that language. In addition, foreign language learners may not care if they learn it without having practical significance in their life.

Because such learners are less to be motivated intrinsically, it is required for teachers of that language to use techniques which assist to increase intrinsic motivation. These include helping learners to see the uses of that foreign language in their lives, presenting them reasonable challenges, giving feedback that requires them to act effectively and approaching or matching their interests. By turning into what learners are interested in, teachers stimulate them to respond favorably to activities and help them to direct their learning.

Ideally, all learners exhibit an inborn curiosity to explore the world,so they find the learning experience intrinsically pleasent by itself.In reality, however, this "curiosity" is decreased by compulsory attendance, curriculum content, and grades. Unless teachers, and more specifically foreign language teachers,increase their learners' "goal-orientedness", make curriculum relevant for them, and create realistic learner beliefs, they will come up against a classroom environment fraught with lack of cohesiveness and rebellion.Many learners engage in all sorts of learning activities, even when a subject is not very interesting. Obviously, these learners share the belief of the curriculum makers that what they are being taught will come in handy. In order to inspire learners to concern themselves with most learning activities, foreign language teachers should find out their goals and the topics they want to learn, and try to incorporate them into the curriculum. It is widely understood that learners' beliefs about how much progress to expect, and at what pace, can, and do, lead to disappointment. Therefore, it is important to help learners get rid of their preconceived notions that hinder their achievement. To this end, learners need to develop an understanding of the nature of a foreign language learning, and should perceive the fact that the mastery of that language can be achieved in different ways, using a

diversity of strategies, and a key factor for learners is to discover for themselves the optimal methods and techniques. In a foreign language classroom , it is important to find out how to maintain and increase the learners' self-confidence.Teachers can support the belief that competence is a changeable aspect of development.Favourable self-conceptions of foreign language competence can be promoted by providing regular experiences of success. Teachers can reduce classroom anxiety by making the learning context less stressful.The way learners feel about their accomplishments and the amount of satisfaction they experience after task completion will determine how teachers approach and tackle subsequent learning tasks. By employing appropriate strategies,a foreign language teacher can help learners to evaluate themselves in a positive light, encouraging them to take credit for their advances.Such strategies are : promoting attributions to effort rather than to ability, providing motivational feedback such as praises for learners responses, and increasing learner satisfaction and the question of rewards and grades.Above all,one of the successful techniques that helps to increase the intrinsic motivation of a foreign language learner which makes him/her participate effectively on a complex task is by breaking that task into easier sub-steps so that he will be willing to engage in such learning activity.

On the other hand, foreign language learners who lack intrinsic motivation may have high extrinsic motivation if their education system emphasizes the extrnisic reward of high test scores. This type of motivation can still inspire those learners to engage in the learning activities though it is not as good as intrinsic motivation.

As the embodiment of those learners and for this study as well,Iraqi non-departmental undergraduates are considered since they are taught English as a foreign language within their academic program and it is taken as a general course jointly with their other subject feilds.So, their learning motivation towards English is subject to question.

Thus, the study tries to describe the two above mentioned types of those learners' motivation towards English.

1.2 The aim of the study: The study aims at describing the intrinsic and the exrinsic motivation of Iraqi non-departmental undergrauates to learn English as a foreign language.

1.3 Limitation of the study: The study is limited to Iraqi non-departmental undergraduates who are taught English within their academic progam at the University of Babil-College of Education during the academic year(2005-2006).

1.4 Definition of basic terms

1.4.1 Extrinsic motivation: "A type of motivation that comes from outside a learner which takes the shapes of reward or punishment"(Bainbridge, 1999:40)

1.4.2 Intrinsic motivation: "The innate propensity to engage one's interest and exercise one's capacities to seek out and master optimal challenge"(Reeve, 1997,:5)

1.4.3 Learning Motivation: it is defined as" the learner's willingness, need, desire and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in, the learning process"(Bomia , 1997:1)

1.4.4 Motivation:" A goal oriented behavior "(Ibid)

1.4.5 Non-departmental undergraduates: They are college students whose department is other than English or those that English is not their field of study.(procedural definition)

Chapter Two
Review of the Related Literature
<u>2.1 The related literature:</u>

The issue of learning motivation places an equal importance for both learning psychology studies and language learning studies.

Learning Psychology studies consider Motivation to learn is paramount to student success. According to these studies, Motivation can be defined as the internal drive directing behavior towards some end. Accordingly, Driscoll identifies some of those internal drive components .They are: *curiosity* as people are naturally curious. They seek new experiences; they enjoy learning new things; they find satisfaction in solving puzzles, perfecting skills and developing competence. A major task in teaching is to nurture student curiosity and to use curiosity as a motive for learning. Providing students with stimuli that are new but not too different from what they already know stimulates curiosity. Presenting stimuli that are completely foreign may create anxiety rather than curiosity. There must be a balance between complexity and clarity. *Need* is another component since the needs of individual students can vary greatly. There are five levels of need in this hierarchy: (1) Physiological (lower-level) (2) Safety (lower-level) (3) Love and belongings (higher needs) (4) Esteem (higher need) (5) Self-Actualization (higher need). The importance of this to motivation is the lower-level needs must be satisfied at one level before the next higher order of needs become predominant in influencing behavior. Education fits into the realm of achieving higher level needs. Students will not be ready to learn if they have not had their lower level needs met. (Driscoll, 1994:43-5)

On the other hand, Spitzar sees the external motivation of learners as follows:

Active participation provides a stimulating environment and combats boredom. .Learning strategies should be flexible, creative and constantly applied. Stimulating learning environments provide variety in of presentation style, methods of instruction and learning materials Students will learn in boring situation provided with motivators such as fear, pressure and extrinsic goals (grades, job status, and so on). The learning environment under those motivators is often tense and stressful. Grades have value as an external motivator in learning if the process of evaluation is well

planned. Reinforcement is another form of an external motivator. The value of reinforcement as a motivator is questioned from those who suggest that once the reinforcement is removed the behavior stops. Critics suggest students must have intrinsic motivation to accomplish certain activities. In intrinsic motivation the "doing" is the main reason for finishing an activity. With extrinsic motivation the value is placed on the ends of the action.

The value of reinforcement is on the road to intrinsic motivation. Students need confidence building reinforcement such as praise and encouragement to guide them. Students can also provide their own self rewards for accomplishing goals they have set.

External motivators must be accepted, valued and endorsed by students. They must feel that their perspectives are valued, and they have opportunities to share their thoughts and feelings. (Spitzer, 1996:67-73)

Likewise, Davis suggests some teaching techniques which encourage learners to be self-motivated. They are: Giving frequent, early, positive feedback that supports students' beliefs that they can do well, ensuring opportunities for students' success by assigning tasks that are neither too easy nor too difficult, helping students find personal meaning and value in the material, and Creating an atmosphere that is open and positive.(Davis ,1997:25-30)

Pantiz also sees that the best way to encourage learners' intrinsic motivation is by giving students some control and choice. Let them select among different assignments that meet the same learning objectives. Offer them input in to the final version of the syllabus or drafts of assignments or exam questions. Discuss and negotiate appropriate grading criteria. Incorporate components of individual learning contracts in your courses. Help foster the belief that students are responsible (though you will meet them halfway) for their learning. (Pantiz, 1993:2-3)

Equally, motivation receives the same degree of significance on the part of linguistic studies with specific reference to the uniqueness of foreign language learning. Accordingly, Krashen distinguishes two types of motivation for a language learner, namely,

integrative and *instrumental*. Integrative motivation is defined as the

desire to be like valued members of the community that speak that language and the presence of that type of motivation encourage the learner to interact with speakers of that learnt language for the sake sheer interest. While instrumental motivation is defined as the desire to achieve proficiency in a language for a practical reason such as getting a better job or getting a high salary.(Krashen,1988:22)

On the other hand, Cohen identifies the social nature of a foreign language learning motivation. He consider it as particular to that type learning rather than other subjects learning because a foreign language is not only a communication code, but also a representative of a foreign culture where it is spoken. In other words, the learning a foreign language involves far more than learning its skills. It involves changes in self image and the adoption of new social and cultural behavior which has an important influence on the social nature of the learner. Thus, learners may be more or less motivated in accordance with their attitudes towards a language community.(Cohen,1990:56-60)

Dornyei defines four aspects of motivational teaching techniques. They are: 1-Creating the basic motivational conditions through establishing rapport with the students and creating a pleasant classroom atmosphere.2- Generating initial student's motivation by supporting his related values and attitudes and increasing his expectancy of success.3-Maintaining and protecting motivation by   keeping the learner's self esteem and increasing his self confidence.4-Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation by providing motivational feedback and offering rewards and grades in a motivational manner.(Dornyei,2001:127-32)

With regard to increasing the intrinsic motivation of a language learner, Chambers thinks that can be achieved increasing his goal-orientedness and by making curriculum relevant for him (Chambers, 1999:47-8)

Likewise, Alison sees encouraging self-evaluation of learners tends them to be more intrinsically motivated as they feel about their accomplishment and see how much progress in language they achieve(Alison, 1993:19-20)

In addition, Young focuses on increasing the learner's self-confidence and to get more motivated by ensuring for the learner that a language competence can be developed by regular attempts of trails so that he will not get frustrated from some failure attempts.(Young, 2000:36-7)

MacIntyre also considers releasing the learner from anxiety of learning a foreign language is the best way to increase his motivation. That is by ensuring for him that this kind of learning is possible with successive trails.(MacIntyre, 1999:88-90)

Benson believes that creating a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere is the key to get a language learner strongly motivated. A learner motivation will reach its peak in a safe classroom climate in which students can express their opinions and feel that they do not run the risk of being ridiculed.(Benson, 2000:45)

2.2 Previous studies:

They are arranged chronologically as follows:

2.2.1 Semmar(1999)

The study is entitled "Exploratory study of motivational variables in a foreign language context". It aimed at investigating the motivational variables of (64) college students learning English as a foreign language at the United Arab of Emirates University .The study finally identified two motivational dimensions for those learners: *intrinsic* which was related to their attitudes of learning a foreign culture and *extrinsic* which is in relation to have a higher social status and show ability to family members and friends.

2.2.2 Mallah (2002):

The study is entitled "English in an Arabic environment: current attitudes among Kuwait University students". The study was conducted on Kuwait University undergraduates enrolled English courses within their academic program. The study focuses on the inter-relationship between attitudes, motivation, anxiety and achievement in the English language. The study found that the more a student is exposed to English language and the more

a student needs it either in present studies or future career , the more positive his/her motivation appear towards that language .

2.2.3Esquivel (2004);

The study is entitled "Learning through positive discipline and intrinsic motivation of learners". The study aimed at discovering the role of college- teachers in providing a positive classroom atmosphere for the sake of increasing American undergraduate learners' intrinsic motivation. The study reached a conclusion that when learners have a positive environment where they feel comfortable, they become intrinsically motivated and grows academically.

Chapter Three
Procedures

3.1 The population:
The study is limited to Iraqi non-departmental undergraduates who are taught English within their academic progam at the University of Babil-College of Education during the academic year (2005-2006).

3.2 The sample:
(50) second class students from History department was randomly chosen as the sample for the study as they were taught English as ageneral course jointy with their feild subjects during the academic year (2005-2006)

3.3 The research instrument:
A questionnaire form was constructed as the research instrument and then was distributed to the represntative sample.The items of the questionnaire measure the intrinsic and the extrinsic motivation of the sample to learn English.The items of the instrument were six questions supplied with two or three possible answers .It is required from each one of the sample to put ticks on their favorable anwers.

3.4 The statistical means:
A percentage equation formula was used to measure the percentage of each anwer of the questionnaire items.

Chapter Four
The Analysis of Results

The obtained results were analysed so as to measure how much the sample are intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to learn English.Accodingly,the following table shows the percentage of the instrument's items which did such measure:

Items	Percentage
1- What do you learn English for?	
a- To make use of it in your feild study.	%12
b- To accomplish a required task.	%14
c- To pass the exam in it	%74
2- How was your learning English before coming to college?	
a- poor	%78
b- manageable	%12
c- Good	%10
3- Are you progressing through your college English teaching program?	
a-yes	%56
b-no	%44
4- Do you feel that learning English is difficult?	
a-yes	%80
b-no	%20
5- How do your English lectures go on normally?	
a-boring	%46
b-interesting	%54
6-How do you feel about your English course content?	
a-satisfactory to your needs	%48
b-unsatisfactory to your needs	%52

The above table indicates the following:

1-With reference to the first question item, a high percentage of responses was recorded as regarding learning English is for passing the exam in it .This indicates the following:

a- The learning of the representative sample to English is not goal-oriented.

b-This result can also be justified because the respondents do not recognize the general objectives behind English course, meaning they are not clear to them.

2-A high recentage of the responses was recorded regarding the poor learning level of English in the pre-college program.This indicates that the majority of the representative sample have a preconceived notion of disappoinment, meaning there is a sense of anixiety and inconfidence.

3-With reference to the third question and in attempt to test the iinflence of the English learning college programme on the respondents'level, the representative sample was divided into two teams ; the former was influenced whereas the later was not.This indicates that the followed teaching techniques were still in need of innovations to tackle individul differences in learning .This result does not deny,however, that there were some respondents do not care of that kind of learning.

4-A high percentage of the responses was recorded regarding the respondents' view of English learning as difficult.This indicates that the view is eccumalative as it streches to the respondents' pre-college program.

5-The respondents were divided into two teams regarding their view of classroom atmosphare .The former seemed bored and the later was interested.The bored team was not intrisically motivated.On the contrary, the interested team seemed interensically motivated it was low and then increased due to the followed interactive teaching techniques.

6-The respondents were divided into two teams with regard to their view of the course content.The former did not seem to be trained to have a say about the course contents not only about English , but for feild sujects as well whereas the other team sees the the course content is incapable of matching their ,needs and interests.

Chapter Five
Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions:

The study reached the following conclusions:

1-EFL learning motivation is mostly extrinsic for Iraqi non-departmental undergraduates.

2-Low or lack of willingness in EFL learning is due to the ambiguity of the objectives behind teaching English for non-departmental undergraduates and the incapability of these objectives to match their needs.

3-Some typical techniques have their role to decrease the intrinsic EFL learning motivation, unlike the interactive techniques which create opportunities to promote it.

5.2 Recommendations:

The study recommends the following:

1-It recommends for syllabus designers who are responsible for EFL learning of non-departmental undergraduate program to state the objectives that define the students' needs and interests.

2-It recommends using the interactive techniques as they highly increase EFL learning motivation.

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