

EXPLORING THE MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

English, without doubt, has attained the most important place in the communication across the globe. It is now inevitable to have knowledge of English, rather we need to be fluent in English to get connected with the world. It is an era in which every nation has realized the importance of English. The policy debate also addresses various issues linked with learning English as a Second Language. Due to increased focus on English as a Second Language, it is a topic of interest and discussion among researchers to identify potential factors that motivate or can motivate students to learn English as a second language. Present study was conducted to understand what factors participants perceive are responsible for learning English as a second language. The study took a qualitative way of analyzing students' and teachers' perceptions on the factors motivating for ESL learning. Semi-structure interviews were conducted with twelve participants. These twelve participants included six students of BS English programs and six teachers associated with teaching of BS English programs. The findings surfaced interesting evidence highlighting intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors that participants believe were responsible for English as a second language.

Key Words: *ESL learning, Qualitative Analysis, Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, Intrinsic Motivation*

Introduction:

Learning a second language has become inevitable in today's competent life. Learning of English is not only meant for improved communication, it also helps individuals to understand others, their cultures and multifaceted aspects in a globalized world (Mehmood et al., 2023; Sharifian, 2013; Zang, 2024). The process of L2 learning not only develops linguistic skills, it is also essential in cultural understanding and intellectual abilities of nations. Learning a second language is a complex long and challenging but rewarding experience. Along with many other factors, motivation for L2 learning is an important factor in second language acquisition which directly affects learners' success and their learning outcomes. Numerous studies confirm that motivation has a crucial role to play in language learning, particularly in the opinion of Gardner and Lambert's (1972 cited in Gardner, 2010) who assert that motivation may be seen as a key element in the process of language learning. When some individual tries to learn another language, it is important to be motivated in their efforts. This motivation not only helps in achieving the goal of language learning but also makes the learning process enjoyable.

Present study was designed to explore factors that motivate English learners for learning English. The data was collected from twelve L2 learners and L2 teachers who were engaged in BS English classes of various universities of Punjab province. For data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted and their responses were recorded for qualitative analysis i.e. thematic analysis.

Literature Review:

Motivation is the topic of grave interest for many researchers and writers. Gardner (2010), a renowned researcher in motivational research opines that motivation may be seen as an urge combined with efforts, desires and positive attitudes towards achieving any goal. Similarly, Brown (2014) opines that internal/intrinsic or external/extrinsic urge is the basic element of success in ESL.

In general, learning undergoes through a complex mental process, involving various factors such as defining objectives and doing initial planning to achieve those objectives, implementation of a well-thought methodology, and reaching conclusions etc. (Brown, 2014; Brown & Lee, 2025). While attaining sustained and complex tasks, such as learning a second language, the progression may be expected to be even more laborious. Learners would need a conducive environment in family and classroom to succeed in acquiring a second language (Gardner, 2010). Gardner (2010) further points out that for learning a second language, students' commitment and determination is influenced by their efforts, desire to learn, and positive attitudes towards the achievement in learning. It is also important that these components are evident in students' actions. It is also reflected in a learner's orientation how he takes the challenge. Students who set higher goals with deep motivation tend to exhibit that they belong to a consolidated orientation. It means to clearly assess how much they are wanting to learn about language, and how well they become closer to interact with the second-language community (Tam, 2009).

Motivation in ESL is seen as one of the crucial elements responsible for success in second language learning (Dörnyei, 2010; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Since decades, linguistic and psychology researchers have tried to explore students' motivation for language learning. From their extensive research studies, it looks more likely that that without enough motivation, learners may fail in achieving their goals in language learning than the learners who are more motivated (Tam, 2009). Dörnyei is another renowned researcher in the field related to motivation in second language acquisition. He made a substantial reform introducing the L2 Motivational Self System that puts L2 motivation into a new theory of self and identity. Unlike the previous motivational theorists, he was able to unify psychological theories of the self-system (Gardner, 2010).

Dörnyei & Ushioda (2021) believed that the idea of motivation is in itself a complex one. The complexity of this process lies in its attempt to intricate person's activities which is not possible to explore using one way. Dörnyei & Ushioda (2021) stated that the complexity is not due to the lack of theories that explain motivation, rather, it is because of the number of theories and models that are available in abundance. This very abundance makes it difficult for researcher and learner to suggest a comprehensive approach to learning a second language. However, despite plethora of literature on motivational factors for learning a second language, internal motivation is crucial and essential to step in the L2 learning process (Mochklas et al., 2023). In this regard, Pourhosein et al. (2017) argue that the success of any human action depends on the desire and actions to achieve learning goals. Generally speaking, while defining motivation, people refer to the impulse that force them to generate the action. It is a pushing force that stimulates actions no matter what you want to do. As described by researchers (Gass & Selinker, 2008; Silalahi et al., 2022), motivation is a complex phenomenon that develops over certain period of time and essentially an important reason in specifying the willingness of learners to communicate for learning. It refers to the combination of attempt plus, a strong desire to achieve the objectives of learning, plus desirable attitudes towards learning. As Huitt (2001) stated that pragmatically, realizing the importance of language would help learners to improve their motivation to learn even if the intrinsic motivational factors are missing. Therefore, teachers should be aware of the significance of motivation in learners' language

learning. While in classrooms, teachers would be able to support their students after making necessary changes to increase the motivation of students.

As a second language teacher, one must ask him/herself this question: How can I motivate my students for their better experience of L2 learning? Because one of the most difficult aspects of teaching is how to motivate a language student. Therefore, the secret would be to identify the students' level of motivation then make the lesson relevant and enjoyable for them. Motivation is a complex human construct that has long posed difficulties for those who attempt to understand and explain it. Most students learn English because they believe it will benefit them in one way. They want to earn more money to fulfil certain education requirements, to travel abroad or to meet more people with the aid of English. Without strong motivation, students will fail in their attempt and their hopes of learning (Alizadeh, 2016).

This study is timely and useful for various reasons. Parents and students of various ages see English as a necessity to progress in higher education, IT-related earning and so on.

However, in a country such as Pakistan where they have limited chances of exposure to second language, it is crucial that they must be informed on how to gain success in learning a second language. For this purpose, this study adopts a qualitative style of investigation which will be very useful for them to understand how motivation can play a supportive role in second language learning. Moreover, the study will be useful for teachers to adopt such teaching styles effective for their students' learning with higher level of motivation.

Statement of the problem:

In today's globalized world, learning a second language is important, but each learner has different motivations that affect their learning outcomes. Many learners struggle with learning a second language, which affects their proficiency and confidence. Because of this, it is important to understand what motivates or discourages learners. Although some studies have explored motivational factors, they have not been comprehensive in terms of specific contexts such as cultural background and learning environment. The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the motivational factors of second language learners so that educators and policy makers can understand these factors and develop effective language learning strategies.

Objectives of the study:

1. To review recent literature on motivational factors in second language learning
2. To identify extrinsic and intrinsic factors that motivate students for learning second language.

Research Questions:

1. What are various factors that motivate students for learning second language?
2. How do intrinsic and extrinsic motivation influence second language acquisition?
3. Why do students want to excel in English as a second language?

Methodology

This research used a qualitative research design to understand the motivational factors of second language learners. Participants were selected from people who are actually engaged in language learning such as students and professionals. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data. Participants were asked questions about their personal experiences and motivations for learning second language i.e. English.

Population and sampling

The population of this study consisted of L2 learners who were study English as a second language for various reasons. They were from diverse contexts, such as formal education (e.g., schools, universities), informal learning (e.g., self-study, community programs), or professional environments (e.g., workplace language training). All the people mentioned above could tell us why they were studying English. However, due to main focus

of the study only students of BS English program were selected purposively to take part in the data collection process.

Semi-Interviews as a research tool:

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used as a research tool for data collection. Semi structured interview due to their flexible nature is an important research tool. It keeps the conversation focused even if the interviewee has to give many irrelevant statement. The investigator can keep a check on the relevance of responses in natural conversation (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). In present study, the interview responses were audio-recorded and later analyzed through thematic analysis technique to identify patterns of participants' opinions. Ultimately, on the basis of the emerging patterns, various themes were generated. Ethical considerations were minded seriously to make this work as genuine as possible. For this purpose, the participants were contacted and their consent was sought after brief meetings. Their privacy was kept intact by replacing their names with letters (Steffen et al., 2016).

Findings of the study:

This qualitative study bore various important and interesting findings. The interview data was organised in the qualitative data analysis software known as NVivo 10. The researcher arranged interview responses in the software and read it for getting familiarity with the data. Various codes were identified in the data which appeared in certain patterns. On the basis of patterns, various themes emerged that were developed and analysed using thematic analysis technique. In this study, the researchers conducted interviews with six students and six teachers to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by learners of ESL. In this way the researcher was able to find out various factors that motivate students for learning of ESL as perceived by participants of the study. It was also found what kind of difficulties students and teachers face during their second language learning and how teachers tackle these challenges. The analysis not only highlights teachers' perceptions, but also shows how these experiences can improve second language learning and how these insights have practical applications in the field of education. The findings of the study are presented below in the form of themes of the study.

Emerging Themes from interview data:

The interview responses presented rich data on participants' opinions about factors that motivate L2 learners for second language learning. Participants' responses were interesting as they offered a vivid picture of why people learn another language. These factors included variety of aspects that contribute in creating and maintaining a high level of motivation among L2 learners. The following section elaborates what responses were received from the respondents of this study.

Factors of intrinsic motivation for second language learning

Participants of the study highlighted some factors which may be called intrinsic in nature. The intrinsic factors of motivation urge the learners to learn second language for reasons attached to no materialistic gains. For example, from the responses, it is evident that some learners were believed to learn second language because they wanted to. They were not doing this for seeking jobs or getting higher education. Rather, they had personal liking for learning languages other than their mother tongue. However, when they were asked why they chose English, they replied that English is the most understood language across the globe which makes it the first choice while choosing among many languages.

Theme: Intrinsically motivating factors for learning a second language

Intrinsic motivation comes from within the learners. When they feel interested in learning a language, their learning speed increased and interest improves and they try to learn more. Participants also mentioned the same that their motivation increases when they have the opportunity to understand a second language on their own. Some students said that when they

have their own interest in learning a language, they work harder. Language learning seems to be an art and a challenging activity for them, so they practice regularly.

As far as teachers of second language are concerned, motivation is very crucial for them too. Intrinsic motivation motivates them because they have a passion for learning another language. They definitely want to prepare their students well. Therefore, motivated teachers are always busy trying to make their lessons more interesting and interactive for their students. In this study, some teachers view intrinsic motivation as an essential factor for both students and teachers because they care about their students' learning and growth. When teachers are passionate about a language, they naturally inspire students.

The participants highlighted some factors that may not be linked with intent of material gains. Rather, it may be said that these factors belonged to aspects which people take care of for their inner satisfaction. The intrinsic factors are detailed below;

Personal Interest and Enjoyment:

Majority of the participants commented that many learners have an inherent interest in the language learning. As we all have our hobbies of various types, some people have this inner urge to learn a language to get familiar to the context or culture it represents, or they do learn a second language due to the satisfaction derived from mastering a new skill. As Participant 1 commented,

"In my opinion, the spirit of self-improvement compels me to learn a language other than anything else... I have also learned Persian. Yes, learning a second language is itself a motivation, it also increases my internal motivation. I understand that learning a second language enhances my skills, which motivates me more. Learning a second language also helps me a lot in my personal growth. Therefore, I am learning English as I did to learn Persian and Arabic in past due to my personal interest of learning other languages. When I understand something in other languages, it gives me a feeling of satisfaction. A sense of achievement and progress also boosts my motivation (Students Participant-1).

Similarly, another participant, having an interest in culture and their languages feel satisfied when he communicates with people of other cultural backgrounds and interact in their languages. However, he considers that learning English as a second language do a lot for him. He does not have to learn every language because people from various cultures can interact in using English language. He commented,

"I am a culture explorer and as a culture explorer, second language is both a necessity and a hobby. Every language has its own culture. For example, when we learn the culture of a language, we also understand the identity of that culture. But if we are learning Arabic, it is important for us to understand the traditions, festivals, and values of the Arabic culture and understand the context. Movies, music and books etc. are also an important part of cultural exposure. Because I have a lot of interest in learning English, I read English newspapers along with movies or listen to English music, etc., which improve my language. I get the chance to understand the nonsense and the essence. It also makes me connect emotionally with the language, so it makes the English language learning process more interesting. Every culture have their own unique practices such as food festivals and rituals etc. I have found an interesting fact about learning of English as a second language. English is spoken almost across the globe. People from any culture or nationality can communicate in English, that's why, rather than learning many languages, I put all effort to learn English (Students Participant 2).

Participants who were teachers of ESL also commented and pointed out that many people have their intrinsic motivation for learning of ESL. Sometime, they are language learning lovers while other are doing it for their interests and self-satisfaction.

I think, if you ask any ESL learner about their motivation for learning a second language, he/she will report different reason for learning ESL. Some would say that they want to learn any second language because it gives them a feeling of satisfaction, while other may say that they learn it to understand the cultures of other nations. It is not same for everyone. Some people may say that they learn ESL for specific purposes while other will have no specific purpose than their self-satisfaction and enjoyment (Teacher participant 3).

Self-Actualization:

The interview data revealed an important aspect of human motivation for learning of a second language i.e. self-actualization. Many participants confirmed that there are people who learn English as a second language to achieve personal growth and broaden their worldview. Participant 4, for example commented,

I am a reading lover. I study various book on social topics and in my native language I don't find much work to study. When I realized that an abundance of literature is available in English language only, I decided to increase my knowledge of English language. In the beginning I found it difficult to understand literature in English, however, with the passage of time, I found English more interesting as a language and expression. Of course, my intention to learn English was not meant to be of material gains, I felt it a necessary element for myself to satisfy my love for reading on various social and psychological understandings of various phenomena (Participant 4).

The above quoted extracts confirm that participants are convinced that intrinsic motivation is an important type of motivation that push many learners to learn English as a second language.

Theme: Extrinsically motivating factors for learning of ESL

In a world of human with flesh and blood, no one is would do something without certain gains. Not all the people are interested in self-actualization or enjoyment. Especially in case of laborious, time-taking and challenging task of learning a second language, one has to achieve something i.e. financial gain, a window of opportunity or further progress or intention to go for higher education. Extrinsic motivation is practically an important aspect for students. When students understand well that doing well will get them high grades or a certificate, they would definitely work harder. That is why, there are sometimes some targets ahead which push students to excel in learning of a second language. As the pattern in the data of presented study suggested, majority of students confirmed that they were learning English as a second language because their parents wanted them to. It implies that these students were learning English to live up to their family's expectations. Moreover, they also commented on why their parents wanted them to learn a second language. They reported that their parents believed that many jobs require the applicants to have fluency in a second language i.e. English. For parents, proficiency in English will give them better career opportunities and will make it easy to go abroad for higher education. Even the students themselves believe that learning a second language will give them a lot of recognition from friends and peers. Due to these reasons and many others, students get an external push that keeps them engaged in the learning process.

The interview data suggested that there are various extrinsically motivating factors that push students to pursue English learning courses. The emerging pattern has been discussed below;

Career Advancement:

A large majority of student participants were of the view that students learn English because they consider it supportive in their future for career advancement. Interviewees frequently cite job requirements, career growth, or better economic opportunities as key motivators. As student-participant 3 pointed out,

If you are doing a job already and you want to excel, the administration will surely see your performance and consider how much you have improved your professional and communication skills. If you show some improvement in your communication skills and you are able to convince your interviewer of this, you will, no doubt, have good chances of promotion. On the same note, if you want to switch your job to some higher position, you will need a convincing proposition in which your language skills are key parameters (Participant, 3).

In the same fashion, other participants argued that an improved knowledge of English can ensure career advancement. Therefore, a large number of wise people keep improving their knowledge of second language.

Educational Goals:

In today's world, higher grades in English proficiency test can do wonders for students. They may have doors of opportunities open for them to go for higher education. Educational institutions across the globe ensure that students taking admissions must possess a high level of English proficiency. Students of present era are well aware of this requirement that high scores in language test such as IELTS, TOFL, Doulingo and in many other types of language tests would increase the chances of their admissions to institutions of high repute. The interview data suggested that students and teacher participants believed in it that proficiency in English language ensures opportunities of higher education. Student-participant 2 like many others commented,

....Having low scores in English simply means that you would not be able to get admission in renowned institutions of the world. Therefore, rather than going for English language test at the time of admissions, a wise student would understand that we live in a non-native country where English is not learnt in schools. You have to keep a check on yourself and prepare well in time to exhibit a high level of understanding in English. If you do so, you will be able to succeed (Student-participant 2).

Similarly, Student-participant 5 opined,

Possibility of further education is mainly dependent on how proficient you are in all skills of second language i.e. English. If you are struggling in using English as a way of communication, you are bound to struggle more in getting admission in other countries.

Therefore, for students-participants, learning a second language is linked to academic requirements or aspirations for higher education abroad.

A Symbol of Social Status:

As French used to be a symbol of prestige in the upper class of British in previous century, English in Pakistan has similar status. Today, even the lower middle-class families send their students to private school where teaching of English is given a better status and emphasis. The interview data in this study offered an in-depth insight into how participants perceived that learning of second language is connected with a symbol of status in our country. Some participants even mentioned that female education in English medium schools and colleges are made possible by pay heavy fees so that they have better opportunities to get married in families with higher financial status. Participants also mentioned that use of English words by some students would easily put an impression of able and intelligent student.

Therefore, there are reasons that people take it as a symbol of high social and financial prestige if their children study in English mediums and attain a high level of English proficiency. For instance, student-participant-1 mentioned,

Talking in English means that the student belongs to some educated family where the parents and children frequently use English in their domestic conversations. Correctly or incorrectly, an English-speaking individual gives an impression that he/she is from a financially well-off family. These kinds of students would be given respect and their opinion would always matter provided that people talking to them are not from the same educated class.

Discussion and Conclusion:

Present study was conducted to understand the factors participants considered motivate learners of English as a second language. It was a qualitative analysis which may not be generalized to other contexts as every context has its unique circumstances. Under the circumstances the Pakistanis live, this study is crucial for understanding the factors that are in action to motivate learners of second language. The findings, based on qualitative analysis of participants' perceptions, suggest that the motivating factors are not extrinsic only, there are certain intrinsic factors which maintain the internal urges and liking for learners to learn second language. The findings of this study are a further confirmation of previous researchers who highlighted similar factors responsible for learners to learn second language. The findings are useful to understand the true picture of Pakistani society, as perceived by the participants, which put a special emphasis on learning of English as a second language. English as a second language starts right from the start of educational journey of a student in Pakistan. It goes along no matter how far a student in Pakistan continues his education. It is a sign of relief for the researchers that urge for learning English as a second language is not triggered by extrinsic factors alone, rather there are a large number of people who have a taste for other language and culture. These people are interested to understand the present trends in all walks of life. They are interested to know ever changing social and political spectrum around the globe and across the nations. Fortunately, they can have an easy access to this information from around the world in English language. It is researcher's personal feeling that whether it be intrinsic or extrinsic, we need English as our second language to share our potential with the world and get benefit from experiences and knowledge of people living in the developed countries.

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