

## ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AND MOTIVATION AMONG MALE AND FEMALE UNDERGRADUATE ESL LEARNERS IN TURBAT, BALOCHISTAN

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### ***Abstract***

*The current study explored the motivation of the undergraduate learners to learn English in Turbat, Balochistan. It investigated the impact of proficiency on the motivation of the learners and also examined gender differences in English learning motivation and proficiency among undergraduate students. The data for the current study was collected from undergraduate students of Turbat, Balochistan in University of Turbat and two degree colleges of the city. The data collection was done through five-point Likert scale questionnaire and it was followed by a proficiency test and semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data was analyzed through simple regression analysis using SPSS. The results revealed that proficiency was a significant predictor of learners' motivation to learn English in Turbat, Balochistan. The results also showed that both of the genders had a good proficiency in English as their scores in last exam in English were good and they performed well in proficiency test as well. Furthermore, the study found noticeable gender differences among the participants. Female students performed comparatively better than male students in both previous English examination scores and the proficiency test, which may suggest comparatively stronger motivation and engagement toward learning English among female learners.*

***Key words:*** *Motivation, Proficiency, Undergraduate, Learning English, Turbat*

### **1. Introduction**

This study investigated the impact of perceived proficiency of undergraduates from Turbat, Balochistan to learn English as second language using Dornyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System as the theoretical framework. The L2 Motivational Self System is "a theoretical framework for describing people's motivation to learn modern languages" (Lamb, 2012 p. 998). Being widely spoken and taught across the country, English is the official language of Pakistan according to its constitution and, therefore, is used for written correspondence in government departments (Coleman, 2010). As there have been many developments in the world knowledge, people across the world are learning English

English therefore has become a Lingua Franca and it is no more the language of only one nation. Association of English with Anglophone nations only is not accepted any more (Blommaert, 2010).

This study investigated the most significant motivational factors of undergraduate students of Turbat to learn English. The research focused on the perceived proficiency of the students for learning English. Using the motivational self system to examine the

motivation of the students to learn English helped understand the different factors of learners' motivation.

In addition to examining the relationship between proficiency and motivation, the study also explored gender differences in English learning motivation among undergraduate students. Previous studies in second language acquisition have suggested that female learners often demonstrate higher motivation and better language learning outcomes than male learners. Therefore, this study also aimed to examine whether female undergraduate students in Turbat showed higher motivation and proficiency in English learning compared to male students.

English is spoken and taught in Pakistan to a great extent. People across the country have a taste for learning English. About their motivation to learn English a number studies have been conducted in the context of Pakistan, but several of these studies are in the context of Punjab province of the country. The studies (Shahbaz, & Yongbing, 2015; Pathan, Shahryar & Mari, 2010; Islam, 2013), for instance examined the students' motivations to learn English in Pakistani context. The importance of ESL learners' motivation to learn English has greatly increased in Pakistan. Balochistan is a vast area and the largest province of Pakistan in terms of size. Almost no studies have been carried out on ESL learners' motivation and perceived proficiency to learn English in context of Balochistan except Rasool's (2018) study on undergraduate motivation to learn English. This study focused on undergraduates' motivation to learn English. It was necessary to know what motivates them as far as their learning of English was concerned. Data for this study was collected from Turbat, the second largest city of Balochistan province. However, the researchers kept in mind the ethical issues that arose from the research. In order to approach the female participants there were some cultural issues. Therefore, their informed consent was taken before the data collection and the researchers told them about the goals of the research. The researchers also explained to them about the importance of their participation, how they would be involved, what would be the use of their data and the security of their record. We also assured them of the privacy of their data.

### **1.1 Background**

The introduction of the concept of L2 motivation was started in 1950s proposed by Gardner and O (1959) which had a great influence on the field of second language acquisition (SLA). They gave the concept of integrativeness in which they stressed on the importance of integrating and learning more about another cultural community. According to the concept the integrative motivational learners learn the second language in order to get to know about the culture and the people of that particular language. This motivational theory was so influential for decades.

Nevertheless, the idea of integrativeness lost its influence after Dornyei questioned its pertinence as it was no more useful in the context of ESL where the language learners did not have direct contact with the L2 community (Dornyei, 2005). He substituted it with his L2 Motivational Self System.

Keeping the L2 motivational self system in mind this study investigated the impact of perceived proficiency of undergraduate learners' motivations for learning L2. The level of language learners' proficiency is an important factor in predicting motivation (Falout & Maruyama, 2004). This study investigated if proficiency in L2 was the integral component of the learners' ideal or ought to self, to what extent it impacted the motivation of the learners.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Motivation plays a great role in learning second language. The purpose of this study is to determine the undergraduate students' motivated behavior to learn English using the three constructs of L2 motivational self system. This study will explore the impact of proficiency on learners' motivated behavior for learning English in Turbat, Balochistan. The study also examined whether there were differences between male and female learners in terms of English proficiency and motivation.

## 1.3 Objective of the study

1. To investigate the impact of proficiency on learners' motivation for learning English in Turbat, Balochistan.
2. To examine gender differences in English learning motivation and proficiency among undergraduate students.

## 1.4 Research questions

1. To what extent does proficiency impact learners' motivation for learning English in Turbat, Balochistan?
2. What differences exist between male and female undergraduate students regarding English proficiency and motivation?

## 2. Literature Review

In late 1950s the concept of integrativeness of L2 motivation was given by Gardner and Lambart (1959) in which they opined that the second language learners learn the L2 to get themselves integrated to the society of the particular language. According to the concept the English as Second language is read to be integrated with the English speaking population. The concept of integrativeness had a great influence for long time. However, after Dornyei's (2005) rejection of it, the concept lost its influence to a great extent. According to Dornyei (1998) there was no direct contact of the learners to the L2 community. Because of globalization, the concept of English being the lingua franca has become stronger, and it is not the language of only one community instead it has become the language of the world (Blommaert, 2010). The socio-psychological construct of L2 motivation was replaced into L2 Motivational Self System by Dornyei (2005, 2009) which comprises of three main constructs, the Ideal L2 Self, Ought to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience. This shift from one concept to another brought a huge change in SLA.

Several researches have been conducted on L2 motivation in context of different countries. Lamb (2012) conducted a study on young language learners' motivation in Indonesia. One goal of the study was to test Dornyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System. Another goal of the study was to compare the learners' motivation from rural and urban areas. In his quantitative study he collected data from 527 participants. The findings of this study were that the Learning Experience was the most influential motivating factor for both rural and urban students. Another finding of the study was that the learners had a great interest in Ideal L2 Self and International Posture.

Similarly, Taguchi, Magid and Papi (2009) conducted a research which was a comparative study conducted on L2 Motivational Self System in Iran, China and Japan context where 5000 participants were involved from the three countries using three versions of questionnaire one designed for each country. The research findings suggested that the concept of L2 Ideal Self was a better motivational factor than the concept of integrativeness. And similar to Lamb's (2012) study, the results of the study indicated that learning experience was the most important element to contribute for the learning efforts of the L2 learners.

Magid (2014) conducted an experimental study applying L2 Motivational Self System in context of Singapore in which he described a program he developed to motivate grade five elementary school English learners. He enhanced their vision of ideal L2 self and made their goals more clear for learning English. The findings of the study were that 90% of the participants from experimental group became more motivated and confident to learn English while from control group only 50% were motivated and 75% became more confident to learn English.

Lamb (2012), like Magid (2014), conducted a study on the motivation of junior high school pupils of Indonesia. In the study he examined students of 13 and 14 years of age from three different areas, metropolitan city, a provisional state and a rural district. He used Dornyei's (2009) theory of L2 Motivational Self System in which he employed a 50-item questionnaire to see the views of 527 learners. The findings of the study suggested that there was a positive view about the experience of learning English and it was the strongest predictor of motivated learning behavior while about the metropolitan group Ideal L2 self was the significant factor only.

Papi (2010) held a research on Iranian students' motivations to learn English as second language. The study explored "The temporal evolution of the motivational characteristics of Iranian learners of English as a foreign language" (p. 287). In the study Papi (2010) used a questionnaire survey and collected data from 1041 English learners from Iran. The findings of the study suggest that ideal L2 self, Learning Experience and promotion focus variables such as attitudes towards L2 community and instrumentality improved with age till entry to university. While the ought-to L2 self and the family influence had a great decline with the passage of time. This finding is identical to the findings of the study of Spanish context (Calvo, 2015) in which ought-to L2 self was not of great importance.

Researches about proficiency and motivation have also been conducted in different context. In his research on motivation and proficiency Vandergrift (2005) investigated the relationship between motivation, L2 listening proficiency and metacognition in context of France. The finding of the study revealed that there was a negative relationship between motivation and L2 listening proficiency. Motivation did not seem to be a dependable predictor of proficiency in L2 listening. One another research was conducted by Kim & Kim (2017) on relationship between resilience, motivated behavior and proficiency on Korean context. The study explored five resilience factors among which persistence played the most significant role in L2 learning. It showed the highest correlation with motivated behavior and proficiency.

Several studies have highlighted gender differences in second language learning motivation and achievement. Female learners are often found to be more motivated and academically successful in language learning compared to male learners. Studies have shown that female students usually demonstrate greater classroom participation, positive attitudes toward language learning, and stronger academic commitment. These differences may be influenced by social, educational, and psychological factors.

All of the studies mentioned above investigated and explored the role and importance of motivation to learn English. Majority of these studies applied Dornyei's (2009) theory of L2 Motivational Self System as the theoretical framework. However, the aim of this study is to investigate the motivations of learners specially the female undergraduates to learn English and see which one of the three constructs, Ideal L2 self, Ought-to L2 self and Learning Experience, is the most prevailing predictor for motivation. The study will also explore the motivational tools that influence the

female undergraduates' motivation to learn English. The third aim of the research is to assess the views of female undergraduates about English being the medium of instruction in higher education in Pakistan and find if it is one of the tools of their motivation to learn English.

### **3. Research Methodology**

In this chapter the researchers will describe the research method of the current study, the research design, data collection, sampling and research analysis tools. In the first section research design is explained, in the second section the data collection and variables of the study will be discussed and in the final two sections sampling and research analysis tools will be discussed.

#### **3.1 Research design**

Mixed methods research was used in the study because its aim was to have a deep examination of the L2 motivation. The mixed methods research helped to understand a problem in a better manner as Creswell (2012) argued that “the core argument for a mixed methods design is that the combination of both forms of data provides a better understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data by itself” (p. 22). In the procedure both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. The mixed method research design is a process of collecting both quantitative and qualitative data and analyzing them in a either a single study or more (Creswell, 2012). In the study after collecting the quantitative data, We collected some qualitative data as well in order to compensate the weaknesses of collected quantitative data. We used explanatory sequential design to collect the data. This design was suitable for this study because it was a mixed method research in which first quantitative data was collected and then it was followed by qualitative data collection. The quantitative data and the results gave a general perception to the problem and more analyses and explanation was required through the qualitative data to extend the general picture (Creswell, 2012). Using this design, the researchers collected data by providing questionnaires to the undergraduate students of the three institutions and after that a few students were interviewed as well. First the quantitative data was collected and then qualitative data was collected to elaborate the results of the quantitative data. The participants of the study were undergraduate students from three different institutions of Turbat: University of Turbat, Govt. Girls Degree College Turbat and Govt. Atta Shad degree College Turbat.

#### **3.2 Data Collection**

Data was collected from undergraduate students of Turbat, Balochistan from three higher educational institutions, University of Turbat, Govt. Girls Degree College Turbat and Govt. Atta Shad (Boys) Degree College Turbat. Three of the institutions had undergraduate programs where students were enrolled in a great number, so it was relevant to collect data from these three different institutions. We used primary data in the study. The primary sources were questionnaires and that was followed by interviews. This was the technique of questionnaire surveys and follow-up interview where once the quantitative data was collected it was followed by the qualitative data collection which could “remedy this weakness” (Dornyei, 2007, p. 171) of quantitative data.

#### **3.3 Participants**

The participants consisted of both male and female undergraduate students. Among the 200 participants, 105 were male students and 95 were female students. Including participants from both genders enabled the researchers to compare their motivation and proficiency levels in learning English.

### **3.4 Sampling**

The researchers followed the random sample method in this study. Random sample is when each member of the target population would be chosen by chance or random basis to be included. The random sample “involves selecting members of the population to be included in the sample on a completely random basis (Dornyei, 2007, p 97). Following this method, the researchers first provided questionnaires to the undergraduate students of different departments of University of Turbat, Govt. Girls Degree College Turbat and Govt Atta Shad Degree College Turbat. After the completion of this process of data collection, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews of those students who were willing to participate in semi-structured interview phase. In the beginning the researchers informed the participants about the nature and the objectives of the study. When the questionnaire data collection process was completed We asked whether or not the participants were willing to be interviewed. So, the researchers asked those who were interested should give their contact details at the end of the questionnaire so that the researchers could contact them for taking their interviews for having a deeper understanding of their views regarding the topic being studied.

### **3.5 Instruments**

#### **3.5.1 Questionnaire**

In the first phase of data collection the researchers distributed questionnaire to the participants. In order to understand the motivation of L2 learners, a questionnaire, which was based on L2 Motivational Self System (Dornyei, 2005, 2009) and perceived proficiency was employed. In this study the researchers used five-point Likert scale. After developing the questionnaire, it was piloted in order to check its reliability and the validity. The researchers requested 40 undergraduate students from the three institutes to check the suitability of the items. Once the pilot study was done, the researchers administered the questionnaire to two hundred students of the three institutes for the main study where they were asked about the English scores of their last exam. Among the two hundred participants, 105 were undergraduate students and 95 females participated in the study.

#### **3.5.2 Proficiency test**

Collecting data via questionnaire was followed by the second phase of data collection. In the second phase, the researchers held English Language Proficiency Test of almost 50 participants from the three different institutions. The researchers surveyed 10 reading passages selected from their English course of different classes which were used in their previous English classes for last 4 years. In the test the students' time duration was measured and examined. It was checked how much time an individual took to complete the passage and it was followed by different questions whose answers were present in the passage. The average time each student took to complete the test was between 35 to 60 minutes.

### **3.6 Data Analysis tools**

In order to analyze the data simple linear regression analysis was used. The score the students mentioned as they had obtained from their last exam was the main element to examine and analyze. While the proficiency test result was analyzed according to the answers the students gave while they were asked questioned from the passages and according to their comprehension as they explained the passage after they ended reading the passage.

#### 4 Results and Discussion

The result of the current study showed that proficiency had an impact on the motivation of the students. The regression analysis revealed that proficiency accounted for 35% of the variance in learners' motivation, as shown in Table 1. The findings suggest that proficiency was a significant predictor of learners' motivation to learn English in Turbat, Balochistan.

**Table 1. Simple regression analysis of proficiency predicting learners' motivation.**

| Variable    | R2  | B   | T       | Sig.    |
|-------------|-----|-----|---------|---------|
| Proficiency | .35 | .32 | 5.487** | p < .05 |

The findings of the current study revealed that although proficiency positively influenced learners' motivation, previous English examination scores did not always accurately represent students' actual English language proficiency. Some students who had obtained lower marks in their previous English examinations performed comparatively better in the proficiency test conducted during this study. This suggests that formal examination scores alone may not be sufficient indicators of learners' practical language abilities.

One possible explanation for this difference is that previous English examinations mainly assessed memorization and written performance, whereas the proficiency test in the current study focused more on reading comprehension, understanding, and practical language use. Therefore, some learners who previously obtained lower academic scores demonstrated better actual language proficiency during the test.

In order to further understand the learners' motivation to learn English, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a few undergraduate students from the three institutions of Turbat. The interview findings supported the quantitative results of the study. Most of the participants expressed positive attitudes toward learning English and considered English important for higher education, employment opportunities, and communication in the modern world.

Several participants stated that English was necessary for academic success because it is the medium of instruction in higher education in Pakistan. Some students also mentioned that proficiency in English could help them achieve better career opportunities in the future. The participants showed interest in improving their speaking, reading, and communication skills in English.

Moreover, female participants appeared comparatively more confident and positive while discussing their English learning experiences. They showed greater interest in classroom participation and language learning activities. Male participants also demonstrated positive attitudes toward English learning; however, some participants reported difficulties related to limited practice opportunities and lack of confidence while using English in communication.

The interview findings suggest that undergraduate students in Turbat generally possess positive motivation toward learning English. The findings also support the quantitative results that proficiency and motivation are positively related and that female learners demonstrated comparatively stronger engagement toward English language learning.

It was found that there was an average result of almost all students in proficiency test. Among 50 students, 28 students got more than ten marks in proficiency test as the total marks were 20 in this test. And in these 28 students, the highest marks scorers were also included and those who obtained comparatively less marks in their last

exam in English were also included. These findings indicate that students' previous examination scores may not fully measure their actual English language proficiency. The result of the current study are contrary to the results of Vandergrift's (2005) study where it was found that there was a negative relation between the proficiency and motivation of the students. However, the studies of Kim (2009) and Tsuchiya (2006) had similar findings with that of the current study. They found good relations between the proficiency and motivation. There were some external some internal elements of motivation for the participants of these studies.

#### 4.1 Gender Difference in Motivation and Proficiency

The findings of the study revealed noticeable differences between male and female participants regarding English proficiency and motivation. Female students performed comparatively better than male students in both the previous English examination scores and the proficiency test. Among the students who obtained higher marks in English examinations, the majority were female participants. Similarly, female students also showed better performance in the proficiency test.

These findings suggest that female learners in Turbat may possess stronger motivation toward English language learning compared to male learners. One possible reason may be that female students demonstrate greater academic commitment and classroom engagement in language-related subjects. The findings support previous research indicating that female learners often show more positive attitudes and higher motivation toward second language learning.

The findings of the current study suggest that among 86 high scores of English paper in last exam, 57 scores belonged to female participants and they had the highest scores than the male participants. While among 28 students who scored more than 10 in proficiency test 16 were female participants. We showed that female students were more proficient than the male students. Their scores in both of the phases of the data collection were higher than the scores of the male participants. It may suggest that female students demonstrated comparatively stronger motivation toward learning English Table 2 presents the result.

**Table 2.** Gender-wise Comparison of English Examination and Proficiency Test Scores

| Participants             | Students Scoring Above 85 in Previous English Exam | Students Scoring Above 10 in Proficiency Test |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Male Participants (105)  | 29 students  | 12 students                                   |
| Female Participants (95) | 57 students  | 16 students                                   |

So it shows that proficiency had a good relation with the motivation of the learners. It had a good impact on their motivation. The results of the current study reveal that proficiency can play a role to predict the motivation of the learners. However, it was also found that females scored better in their last English paper and in proficiency test as well.

#### 5 Conclusion

The current study investigated the impact of proficiency on the motivation of the undergraduate students. The results showed that motivation did have an impact on the motivation of the students. It was found that the students were proficient and were motivated to learn English ahead. They not only scored good in their last exams but also in proficiency tests. The study found that female participants were more

proficient than the male participants and they had obtained more scores in their last exams in English paper. The study also found significant gender differences in English language learning. Female participants demonstrated comparatively higher proficiency and stronger motivation toward learning English than male participants. These findings suggest that gender may play an important role in influencing English language learning motivation among undergraduate students in Turbat, Balochistan.

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