

The Correlation Between English Learning Motivation and Strategy, University Student, Iran

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Abstract: The main aim of the present study was to investigate the relationship between learning motivation and strategy adopted by Iranian student. The result of the study indicated that the majority of the students use learning strategy and learning motivation at medium level. Students most prefer affective strategy. In addition, instrumental motivation is more predominant. There were significant correlations between learning motivation factors and learning strategy factors. Therefore, according to the findings, students are supposed to be motivated on learning strategy and promote comprehensive English learning.

Key words: Motivation • Correlation • Learning strategy • Iran • Student

INTRODUCTION

It is well known that four most important factors have been recognized to influence the success in SLA including native language variables, input variables, instructional variables and individual variables [1]. In fact, we concern about learners and their changes due to some points such as what learning strategies they adopt, what motivations they hold, how they regard themselves, whether they can control themselves and how they attribute their successes and failures [2]. Thus, prosperous teaching is not only a matter of teaching methods, it also encompass students' abilities and obligation. It is well known that non-intellectual factors influence learning process and they can even affect learners' attainment [3]. Learners' individual differences affect learning language. Some factors such as learning strategies and motivation have been considered as great significance for SLA. Motivation encompasses the affective states that affect the learners' effort degree in second language learning. There are many motivational theorists claim that there is close relationship between motivation and learning [2]. According to Oxford, there are two reasons why learning strategy plays important role. Strategy is a tool for self-study, especially to improve communicative ability. In addition, person who uses appropriate learning strategies is more confident and more efficient in learning process [4].

In Iran, investigation on learning strategies applied by students in some special language skills such as vocabulary learning, listening and reading. They hardly include motivation influencing the choice of learning methods. Besides, they mainly involved in university students in some Iranian universities with higher English level. In the present study, we take Azad-Islamic University, an ordinary local university, as an example. The main purpose of current investigation is to achieve further perception into learning motivation and strategy and promote English learning.

Literature Review: According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), motivation is the driving force in any situation that leads to action. They pointed out that an important motivation theory is the expectancy value theory. This assumes people are motivated to do something they feel is worth doing and expect to succeed in their action [5]. Dornyei (2001) indicated that there are two key factors, including individual expectations of success and the value individuals put on success. If individuals have high positive feelings on both factors, they will have a high degree of positive motivation [6]. If one factor is missing, they will be less motivated. He added there are various factors that affect expectancy of victory. These factors are past experiences, judging individual abilities and competence and maintaining self-esteem. Dornyei (2001) refers to the second theory, which refers to individuals' thinking about their ability to carry out

activities. Self-efficacy is influenced by previous performance and learning, as well encouragement from other people [7]. He concluded those reactions such as anxiety and a low sense of self-efficacy in a demanding action means that individuals easily lose their belief in their ability to do the task and subsequently they give up. In contrast, according to a strong sense of self-efficacy builds confidence and increases effort to avoid failure [6].

The importance of motivation in enhancing second/foreign language learning is undeniable. According to Lifrieri (2005) "when asked about the factors which influence individual levels of success in any activity-such as language learning, most people would certainly mention motivation among them". Brown (2000) reported that "it is easy in second language learning to claim that a learner will be successful with the proper motivation". With similar views, Gardner (2006) posits that "students with higher levels of motivation will do better than students with lower levels". He adds that "if one is motivated, he/she has reasons for engaging in the relevant activities, expends effort, persists in the activities, attends to the tasks, shows desire to achieve the aims, enjoys the activities, etc" [12].

Foreign Language Motivation concerns the desire of language learners to master the foreign language [7]. Gardner (1985) concluded that there are three factors of foreign language motivation, that are, 1) motivational intension 2) learning language desire and 3) the attitudes toward learning the language.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

College students in Grade 2010 were the subjects including in this study, majoring in Environmental studies and biology in Azad-Islamic University from four natural classes, whose ages ranging from 20 to 22. There are 180 participants in the survey with 78 males and 102 females. The subjects have completed about one-year English learning and gathered enough experience and stable motivations in English learning.

A questionnaire is designed to collect measurable data. This questionnaire includes two parts. The first part is learning strategy questionnaire mainly based on Malley and Chamot (1999) and Oxford's(1990) and the second part, learning motivation questionnaire is a modified one according to the "Attitude/Motivation Test Battery: Technical Report (1985)" by R.C.

According to [2], learning strategy questionnaire is divided into four parts including, cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social

strategies. Motivation questionnaire is divided into three parts including, instrumental motivation, integrative motivation and learning situational motivation. The declarations are given five options of use frequency in the form of five Likert Scales from 0 (Never true of me) to 6 (Always true of me). The persons that are studied were required to make their choices by selecting one of the five numbers on the answer sheet. To determine the reliability, the Cronbach value was used. The Cronbach Alpha value of learning strategy part is 0.903 and the motivation part is 0.839. The questionnaires were distributed among the students in class. After the collection of 180 valid questionnaires, numbers chosen by the subjects were input into SPSS program to do statistical analyses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained for students learning strategy and motivation are summarized in Table 1. About 83% of the students were reported as "sometimes used", whereas 1% was reported as "never used" or "always used" learning strategies. The total means score of students' learning strategy and motivation was 2.93 and 3.38 respectively. From the table it can be seen that 67.7% students were recorded as "sometimes used". No students' motivation frequency was reported at "always" level and the students that were reported at "never" level was 2%. Generally, the results indicate that the students in this university do not use learning strategies and their motivation is not strong.

As shown in Table 2, affective strategy is cognitive strategies such as repeating, memorizing and taking notes, looking up dictionaries and reference books, while social strategy occurs in lower preference. The reason for students' preferences may be traced back to the English learning experiences of the students' in school. In schools in Iran, because the education system is examination oriented, most students, especially those in higher forms learn English through intensive drills in cognitive strategies. It might come from the fact that Iranian students preferred to use strategies to support their learning. The majority of Iranian English education major students used cognitive strategies and affective strategies in decreasing order of preference. This notable result was supported by the finding of [2], which noted that cognitive strategies might be among the most important, especially for learners at beginning or intermediate levels. Compared with natural learning environment, social strategies are less used in classroom teaching environment [8].

Table 1: Student learning strategy and motivation

Level	Learning strategy	(number and percentage)	Learning motivation	(number and percentage)
5.5-6	2	1%	0	0%
4.5-5.4	29	15.6%	29	16.1
3.5-4.4	44	24.4%	70	38.8%
2.5-3.4	67	37.2%	46	25.5%
1.5-2.4	36	20%	31	17.2%
0-1.4	2	1%	4	2%

Table 2: The mean score and SD of each strategy and motivation classes

Type	Mean and SD	Total mean score
Cognitive strategy	3.84 ± 0.32	2.93
Metacognitive strategy	3 ± 0.56	
Affective strategy	2.76 ± 0.12	
Social strategy	2.14 ± 0.62	
Instrumental motivation	4.1 ± 0.72	3.38
Integrative motivation	2.83 ± 0.3	
Learning situation motivation	3.22 ± 0.46	

Table 3: The correlation between motivation and learning strategy

	Instrumental motivation		Integrative motivation		Learning situation motivation	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Cognitive	0.88	< 0.01	0.81	< 0.01	0.42	NS
Metacognitive	0.53	NS	0.91	< 0.01	0.57	NS
Affective	0.69	< 0.05	0.67	< 0.05	0.37	NS
Social	0.75	< 0.05	0.21	NS	0.68	< 0.05

NS. Not Significant, $P > 0.05$

In motivation part, students' instrumental motivation type is the most dominant with the average of 4.1. When a learner is aroused or motivated by some kind of information such as "is a useful communication tool" and "helpful for future job", the learner feels positive to learn English as he or she desires to learn English by himself or herself not because of being forced. There is much research concerning the English learning motivation types, such as the study done by Degang (2010) which was aimed to investigating the English learning motivation level and type of Thai students who were studying business English at an English-Medium university whether they were instrumentally or integrative motivated. The age range of most of the participants in the study was 19-23. The participants consisted of fifty Second-Year undergraduate Thai students who had begun to enroll in a few English business subjects. The study result showed that the students were almost equally instrumentally and integrative motivated to learn English, but they were more integrative to learn English [9] whose result contrasts to that of this current study which showed that Thai First-Year Undergraduate English majors are slightly extrinsic-instrumentally motivated to learn English.

The results of correlation analysis to find the relationships between motivation and learning strategy are summarized in Table 3. According to these data, there were significant relationships between motivation and learning strategy, except for few cases. The stronger correlation observed between cognitive learning strategy and instrumental motivation and integrative motivation and between metacognitive learning strategy and integrative motivation show that these strategies could more motivate the student for learning English. Students with higher integrative motivation have more intrinsic interest in learning activities and they would try to find more positive methods to facilitate their learning and thus promoting more frequent learning strategy use [2].

There is research which is related to motivational factors of Cambodian undergraduate students. It was a survey of Cambodian University Students in Phnom Penh which was conducted by Lim (2012). This research is aimed at finding correlations between motivational orientation and English proficiency of undergraduate Cambodian students at Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The main motivational factor is instrumental motivation which can be divided into 3 main categories, that are, 1) future career 2) further education 3)

technology accessibility [10]. IELTS tests were used to test the participants' English proficiency. The result of the study shows that there is no correlation between motivation and their English proficiency [10]. The result from this current research also revealed that Cambodian First-Year undergraduate students are more extrinsic-instrumentally motivated to learn English.

There was a significant relationship between social learning type and learning situation motivation. The results revealed that the more interested a learner is in social responsibility, the more probable he or she would undergo negative or conflict changes in self identity, though a learner could also come to better understand his or her own culture. However, the ambivalent feelings for this type of learners may derive from that to learn the target language and culture is necessary in the globalization English world on one hand and to worry about losing his or her identity in the native culture on the other [11].

CONCLUSION

The findings of current study present a picture which establishes that Iranian students adopt learning strategies at medium level. This study also confirms the opinion of some researchers who believe that motivations affect the choice and use of learning strategies. Taken together, findings from both qualitative and quantitative data of the present study give a consistent picture, there are many factors affecting language learning strategy choice such as internal factors, external factors and factors affecting motivation such as learning task, teacher, interest and anxiety. Generally, it is clear that the teacher, the class atmosphere, materials and facilities, as well as personal characteristics of the student will have an influence on the individual's learning motivation.

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