

Students' Perception about the Role of External Factors of Motivation in Second Language Learning

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Abstract

The study was conducted to investigate the influence of external factors of motivation on the students of 9th grade in second language learning. A close end questionnaire comprising of 45 statements was used to collect data from students. The questionnaire included three factors as the indicators for the enhancement of motivation among the students i.e. teacher as an agent of motivation, nature of course content, and classroom atmosphere. A sample of 9 schools was selected with three schools each from private, public and government schools. Total number of students surveyed was 225. The analysis showed a strong relationship of teachers' attitude to motivation, a significant difference in students perception about role of teacher was found in different types of schools. A significant correlation was observed between classroom atmosphere and motivation. Students felt that nature and presentation of content is an important factor in learning of L2 but they did not recognize it as motivating factor. An improvement in any/all of these factors can cause a significant improvement in the learning of second language.

Introduction

There is hardly any argument about the emphasis laid in learning of English as second language since the inception of Pakistan (Pakistan Educational Conference, 1947, p.15; Commission on National Education, 1959, pp.124-125; National Education Policy, 1969, p.14, National Educational Policy and Implementation Programme, 1979, pp. 59-61; National Education Policy'92, 1992, pp.17-19). Many policy measures were adopted over the years to enhance the quality of English language learning in public schools but with very little success. All these exercises aimed at improving achievement of students in English by applying various strategies like hiring more qualified teachers, revising textbooks, training of teachers, appointing English language teachers in middle schools, introducing English as compulsory subject from grade one etc. These efforts were focused on providing supportive policy measures and improving cognitive appeal of the textbooks. Almost negligible effort was seen to explore the "affective" factors which directly or indirectly contribute in effective learning of second

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language. Motivation is the cross-cutting affective factor which determines the potential extent of all other factor affecting learning of second language. Therefore, it is worthwhile to explore the possible impact of motivational factors in learning of second language as perceived by the students.

It seems appropriate to define motivation at this stage of the review for clarifying the use of term in remaining study. The variable, **Motivation**, refers to the driving force in any situation. Motivation to learn the second language is viewed as requiring three elements. **First**, the motivated individual **expends effort** to learn the language. That is, there is a persistent and consistent attempt to learn the material by doing homework, by seeking out opportunities to learn more, by doing extra work, etc. **Second**, the motivated individual **wants** to achieve the goal. Such an individual will express the desire to succeed, and will strive to achieve success. **Third**, the motivated individual will **enjoy** the task of learning the language. (Gardner, R.C & Lambert, 1992).

There is broad consensus among almost all L2 learning theorists on the importance of motivation as fundamental factor in learning of L2 (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Krashen, 1985; Oxford, 1994; Ames & Ames, 1989; Ngeow & Hwa, 1998; Oxford & Shearin, 1994) but they have divided the sources of motivation into intrinsic and extrinsic depending on the source of urge forcing the individual to learn second language. Fisher (1990) differentiated them as learner's natural interest (intrinsic satisfaction), the teacher/institution/employment (extrinsic reward) and success in the task. In short, motivation may root from getting some kind of inner satisfaction through their learning, achieving some kind of material benefit or feeling a sense of achievement (Littlejohn, 2001).

The intrinsic factors, which remained the subject of interest for researchers most of the time, included age, gender, religion, goals, need, interest, curiosity, attitude, expectancy, self-efficacy / competence, native language proficiency, and native language proficiency.

This study focused on the external factors, which were least attended till recent years, like role of teachers, quality and presentation of course content and classroom atmosphere (Domyei, 2001; Alison, 1993; Good & Brophy, 1994). These factors were selected due to their direct relevance with learning. Some others factors like social identity (peer groups), role models, home support and learning environment are not included in the study because of time constraints and complications in data collections.

Objectives of the study

The study will be conducted to:

1. Analyze the role of teachers' attitude on the students' motivation to learn a second language.

2. Find out the impact of classroom atmosphere on the students' motivation to learn a second language.
3. Look for the influence of course content on the students' motivation to learn a second language.
4. A school-wise comparison will also be carried out to find the differences in the perception of students regarding the three external factors of motivation.

Methodology

Population

The students of 9th grade in the schools formed the population of the study.

Sample

Many schools were contacted for allowing data collection but very few of them responded positively due to their internal policies, especially in case of private and semi-private (public) schools. Nine schools were selected from the schools consented to participate in study for data collection on the basis of their representativeness of rest of the schools in respective category and convenience of the researcher. Their distribution is given in the table 1.

Table 1
Distribution of sample schools

	Public	Private	Government	Total
Boys	1	-	1	2
Girls	2	1	2	5
Co-educational	-	2	-	2
Total	3	3	3	9

From each school twenty-five students were included randomly in the sample to fill in the questionnaire. The selection of students from classes having more than twenty-five students was carried out using systematic random sampling based on student registration number as it appeared in the attendance register of the class. In private and public sector the number of students in certain cases was less than twenty-five, therefore all students in such schools were included in data collection. In two of these schools we have to combine two sections of the 9th grade to make the number of sampled students equal to twenty five.

The distribution of students in selected schools is given in table 2.

Table 2
Distribution of sample students

	Schools									Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Boys	25	-	-	8	17	-	-	25	-	75
Girls	-	25	25	17	8	25	25	-	25	175
Total	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	225

Instrument of Research

Keeping in view the nature of research, questionnaire was considered as the appropriate instrument for the collection of data. A close-ended questionnaire was prepared, with questions mainly distributed in three factors i.e. teachers' attitude, course content and classroom environment. These factors were chosen because of their direct relevance with students' learning. The content of the instrument was selected on the basis of the researcher's experience at various schools and literature reviewed in connection with this study.

Table 3
Factor-wise distribution of questionnaire

Factor	Description	Example	Reliability Cronbach- α
Role of teacher as motivating force	Fifteen items were developed to assess the affect of teacher's attitude on students' motivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your teacher appreciates your efforts. Your teacher encourages you to take part in discussion. 	0.855
Course content	This section comprised of fourteen items in the assessing the effect of course content on students' motivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You think that your English textbooks develop your interest in English language. Your textbooks exercises are relevant. 	0.772
Classroom environment	Sixteen items were included in the questionnaire to assess the affect of classroom atmosphere on motivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are free to share your ideas in classroom. Your class fellows are co-operative and supportive ideas in classroom. 	0.808

Note: overall reliability of the is 0.914

Administration of the Instrument

The questionnaire was distributed to all the respondents selected for data collection by the researchers personally. Before distributing the questionnaire among the students the nature and purpose of the survey was explained to them, moreover they were assured strongly that their responses will be kept confidential in order to relieve them from any kind of fear and pressure. Respondents were asked to read the questionnaire carefully and if they find any statement of question ambiguous or difficult they can ask it freely from the researchers. Students were asked to encircle the number best representing their level of agreement or disagreement with the given statements. It was requested to give answer to each question and do not leave any question unanswered. Furthermore, when students returned their questionnaire, it was checked by the researchers and if they find any question unanswered, they immediately requested the concerned student to consider responding to missed statement. Similar procedure was followed in each school, in each class and for all the students to minimize the missing data.

Validity of the Instrument

To ensure the validity of instrument, two experts on language teaching and research were consulted. The revisions suggested by experts were incorporated in the final questionnaire. The suitability of language for secondary school students was ensured by consulting three practicing teachers, one from each type of school included in the sample.

Results

This section presents an analysis of teachers' attitude, impact of classroom atmosphere and influence of course content on the students' motivation to learn a second language. A further analysis of school wise differences of student perception across various types of school will also be carried out regarding three external factors of motivation.

Table 4 shows measures of mean, SD and correlation coefficient for the effect of teachers' attitude on students' motivation in private, public and government schools. To calculate the correlation coefficient, we found the correlation of students' score on teacher's attitude, which comprised of 15 questions/ statements about the contribution of teachers' attitude in motivating students and the collective score of students on the remaining factors in the questionnaire.

The mean scores show that students in private and government schools feel that their teachers do enough to motivate them as compared to teachers in public schools. The mean score in private schools and

government schools is 57.15 and 56.35 respectively, which is reasonably higher than the mean score on this factor in public schools i.e. 52.87.

Table 4
Comparison of means on external factors of motivation by school type

Factor	Type of school	Range of scores	Mean Scores (\bar{X})	Std.
Teacher's attitude	Private	15-75	57.15	11.05
	Public		52.87	11.49
	Government		56.35	9.62
Course content	Private	14-70	44.00	9.67
	Public		39.08	9.77
	Government		47.25	7.59
Classroom atmosphere	Private	16-80	50.33	11.09
	Public		47.04	11.70
	Government		53.49	9.01

N=225, $p < 0.01$

The higher mean score in private schools is an expected result because teachers in private schools are generally perceived to have close interaction with students but having similar mean for government schools is an encouraging finding, which indicates that students in government schools also see their teachers as motivating elements for their studies. In public schools comparatively low mean indicates that students do not feel their teachers do enough to motivate them for studies, which is contrary to commonly held perception that teachers in public school have closer interaction with students as compared to government schools.

The mean scores show that students in private and government schools believe in the effectiveness of course content on students' motivation in second language learning whereas students of the public school do not hold the same strong opinion about the role of course content as an important factor. The mean score in the private and government schools is 44 and 47.25 respectively, which is significantly higher than the mean score on this factor in public schools i.e. 39.08.

The highest mean score in government schools is an interesting finding as it is generally believed that the course content of government schools is outdated and boring but to our surprise, students of these schools are more satisfied with their course content than students of any other school system. The reason may probably lies in its simplicity and easy form. Before conducting the research it was our general opinion that students of private schools will most likely to favor their course content than the students of any others as it is a common belief that the course content of private schools is

very carefully designed. The results show another amazing finding that the students of public schools are less satisfied with the kind of course content they are being taught.

The mean scores of classroom atmosphere on students' motivation in private, public and government schools show that students in these schools consider classroom atmosphere as an important factor of motivation in second language learning as compared to the students of public schools. The mean score of government and private schools is 50.33 and 53.49 respectively which is significantly higher than the mean score on classroom atmosphere in public schools i.e. 47.04.

The highest mean score of classroom atmosphere is again achieved by students studying in government schools, also established the fact that the students of government schools are happier and more satisfied with their classroom atmosphere as compared to those of private and public schools. Whereas until now it is believed that classroom in government schools is not a pleasant place at all and in most of these schools the case is still the same. There can be two reasons for this high mean score, at the first place it can be possible that the standard of sampled schools is comparatively better than other government school and at the second place the reason lies in the students' lower social and economic background therefore they haven't experienced any better place than their school. The mean score of private schools comes at the second place with respect to its effectiveness on the students' motivation, it is quite astonishing because it is generally preconceived that classrooms in this sector are quite attractive and liberal place for their students, the reason may be that the students in these schools belong to upper social and economic class, therefore they have more exposure and might have experienced much better places as compared to their own institution. But a common finding is that students do perceive that classroom atmosphere do play an important role in motivating them irrespective of the type of the school they are studying. The least satisfied students among these three sectors are once again the students of public schools. This is also very surprising as the difference between the public and other types of schools indicates that students of public schools think that their classroom atmosphere is not as much supportive as it should be to motivate them.

It can be concluded that the teachers' attitude with a mean of 55.45 emerged as the most important and strongest factor which motivates students to a large extent in all three sectors.

Table 5 shows that the views of students about all three factors of external motivation are significantly different by type of school which further confirm that the difference in their respective means shown in Table 4 is not by chance.

Table 5
Difference among various types of schools on external factors of motivation

		Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig.
Teacher Attitude	Between Groups	776.720	2	3.36	.036**
	Within Groups	25653.040	222		
	Total	26429.760	224		
Course content	Between Groups	2539.849	2	15.46	.000*
	Within Groups	18237.707	222		
	Total	20777.556	224		
Classroom Atmosphere	Between Groups	1561.929	2	6.87	.001*
	Within Groups	25240.293	222		
	Total	26802.222	224		
p* < 0.01		p** < 0.05			

Classroom atmosphere ($X = 50.28$) comes next to it and with a little difference course content ($X = 43.43$) is perceived as least important among the three investigated factors.

Discussion

The study has evidence to require us revisiting our perception about what our schools are offering to students and how they take it as far as these three external motivation factors are concerned. This has direct implication for teachers, students and school administration simultaneously to improve the standard of learning in second language learners.

Although it is very encouraging finding that students in government schools are by far more satisfied with regard to the investigated external factor of motivation but a lot of caution needs to be exercised while basing in decision on the basis of finding of this study because it contradicts the common understanding. Thus, urging further researches in this domain to reduce the doubt.

There has long been discussion about utility of having more than one different system of schools being offered simultaneously. The finding that these schools are different from one another as perceived by students on the investigated factors of external motivation is not very surprising. The importance rests in the fact that these differences can be used as a source of mutual improvement. If opportunities are created for short exchanges from

one-type of schools to other, opening platform for sharing experiences through workshops and festivals, classroom observations for teachers of one type of schools at other schools etc., our system can benefit from this diversity. In this manner, these perceived school differences can become a mutual learning platform.

There had been activities organized at various levels where the role of these factors have been indirectly recognized and efforts to improve these factors have been made but the students outlook of importance of these factors was by far ignored or not given proper weight. The study clearly suggests that students mechanism of assessing the role of these factors' contribution is not same as ours therefore knowing about how the students perceive about the contribution of these elements might add a new dimension of our activity of professional development of teachers, presentation of content in textbooks and achieving conducive classroom environment.

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