
L2 LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS ON MOTIVATION IN ESL CLASS: A STUDY OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT MEHRAN UNIVERSITY OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY, JAMSHORO SINDH

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ABSTRACT

Motivation plays a vital role in second language learning. An element of motivation in L2 learning has always been a major aim in ESL classes in order to encourage learners and make language learning more interesting for them. If the students are not proficient in English language, they fail to cope up with the challenging tasks such as findings white-collar jobs, which require proficient speakers of English. The objective of this study is to investigate whether there is a significant difference between perceptions of male and female students in their motivational level in learning English at Mehran University. This study employed a quantitative approach. A second language motivational research questionnaire was administered with 162 first year students aged between 19-21 to determine the perceptions of male and female students about the factors that may cause difference in their motivation of learning L2 in ESL classes at Engineering University. The results of this study suggest that there is a statistical significant gender difference of students' motivation in terms of their perceptions about course content and teacher's attitude in ESL class.

Keywords: Motivation, Gender Difference, Perception, ESL Class

INTRODUCTION

The students getting technical education in Mehran University of Engineering & Technology, Jamshoro belong to different socio-cultural backgrounds. In this co-education system, the ratio of female students is getting higher day by day. The female students are equally as interested as male students to take English classes and are eager to learn more about L2. The current study is based on first year students at university where English is compulsory subject. This three credit-hour subject is fully taught in English and requires the students to attend classes for a total three hours per week. Besides facilitating students to the variety of different innovative thinking skills, this subject aims to help students learn and acquire English language appropriately. Though it is a matter of fact, the students who were attending English classes had already experienced study of English at schools too. Despite of the fact the students both boys and girls could not develop interest and are facing many obstacles to learn L2. The class performance

was not satisfactory; they had some sort of hesitations in learning second language. Instead of the alliance with English for many years, there was still a problem of their average level of performance in the ESL learning, their proficiency of English language was appallingly low. Therefore, it was decided to find out the reasons of low interest or motivation and low proficiency level of students both male and female in learning second language during undergraduate studies.

OBJECTIVES

- To explore the motivation level of (male female) students about ESL class.
- To investigate any significant difference in the perceptions of male/female students.

HYPOTHESES

The Following hypotheses were formulated for the present study:

- H₀** There is no significant difference in motivation of ESL students' (male and female) perceptions.
- H₁** There is a significant difference in motivation of ESL students' (male and female) perceptions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theme of motivation has got a focus of attention by many writers especially in the field of L2 acquisition (Doneyey & Schmidt 2001; Brown, 2007). Dornyei (2001a) point out that motivation is the primary source to taking initiative in learning second language. It is also the dynamic vigour to continue the extended and dreary process of learning language. Devoid of adequate motivation, yet a person having extraordinary capabilities is not able to achieve extensive aims and objectives, and even the suitable curriculum and fine teaching methods are not sufficient for the achievement of students. Brown (2007:168) presents the perception of motivation in his three view points as:

1) In behavioral perspective: Motivation is extremely one of the crucial terms. It is fairly the reward of eagerness which is determined to obtain positive reinforcement, determined by the reward of past practices or experiences of human activities. Pavlov, skinner and Thorndike present very practical theories of human behavior. The focus of their theories is motivation or motivational behavior. According to view point, while performing different tasks, the external forces like teachers, parents, educational needs, peers, career orientations or job provisions are somehow the great source of motivation.

2) The cognitive term: In this term of motivation there is much importance given on one's decision making. According to Dornyei, "the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and degree of effort they will exert in that respect" (Dornyei, 2005). Moreover, six requirements to build motivation were recognized:

- The requirement for searching and investigation. (Searching for unidentified)
- The requirement for manipulation-resulting change.
- The requirement for an action, movement (physically and mentally).
- The requirement for motivation or encouragement, by environment, by different individuals, thoughts, beliefs.
- The requirement for information- process and internalize the outcomes of investigation, maneuvering, movement or seek for answers to problems.
- The requirement for personality or ego improvement, which Dörnyei (2005) named as self-esteem.

3) Constructivism: The sight of constructive motivation gives more stress on societal role and individual role which means the relationship between social context and an individual with his own preferences. Each individual is motivated in different way, and act uniquely according to his own surroundings. These distinctive performances are bound with social and cultural settings which cannot be wholly separated from the milieu. In motivation, the view of constructivism is the two-way process means the communication with other individuals as it more likely comes from one's self-determination (Brown, 2007:169).

Gardner's socio-educational model focuses on four classes of variables (Chambers, 2001).

i) Social Milieu: The L2 acquisition is taken place under the influence of literary and cultural context. If the cultural conviction is that learning second language is hard, then the common ratio of attainment is probably not to be high. The communication is also one of the aspects (Chamber, 2001).

ii) Individual Differences: It focuses on four categories of individual differences which influence achievement directly: (a) Intellectuality and efficiency (b) language and ability (c) endeavor and aspiration, and (d) Contextual anxiety and apprehensions (Chambers, 2001).

iii) Language Acquisition Context: Formal context is the classroom situation where learner receives guidance, training, rationalization or practices on language with proper instructions. In informal context can be a situation like talking to friends, inside or outside home, conversation, listening to the radio, watching television. In short, where there is no any instruction given and learner is not bound with it, he can learn language in casual and comfortable atmosphere (Chambers, 2001).

iv) Learning Outcomes: It means aptitude in the language, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, etc. A non-linguistic outcome means the approaches and principles which are gained from the experience and practice.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study aims to investigate the dependent variables, such as, teachers' attitude, course content and language anxiety in relation to the independent variables of students' gender. The analysis of the dependent and independent variables of this research aims to evaluate students' perceptions of the second language learning situations. There are many language teachers playing role in reducing students' demotivation and uphold their motivation in learning. The course content and teaching material in language learning are the most important part of ESL classes. Gorham and Christophe (1992) explained very precisely that if the learner does not like any area of the subject it will cause distraction and the subject is presumed quite boring which gives negative impact on his motivation. Hasegawa (2004) recognized the environment of the classroom activities; the teacher's attitude, his/her personality, his/her way of teaching and the relationship with students; students' language anxiety of learning second language, his/her negative attitude towards English learning; anxiety of using English in front of teachers and classmates; anxiety of exams and getting bad grades; and of course, the overall atmosphere of classroom. These are the factors that may affect students' motivation in learning second language and make them reluctant to learn English or to dislike it altogether.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the current study, quantitative method has been chosen. For quantitative analysis, second language motivational research questionnaire was constructed to verify the factors which cause the learners' interest in attending English classes at Engineering University. The questionnaire which contained sixteen statements concerning students' motivational perception covering teachers attitude, language anxiety, course content in English class, was distributed among 162 participants and collected responses from first year students of Mehran University of Engineering and Technology Pakistan. The participants aged between 19-21 years, both boys and girls. The purpose is to find the answer of hypothesis that whether there is any difference in boys and girls students' perception about their motivation level while attending English class or not in terms of three factors, language course, teachers attitude and language anxiety. The data was examined through SPSS which is cross tab analysis, item means, standard deviations, and simple ANOVA test.

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

In order to explore the affiliation between the variables, dependent variable (course content) and independent variable (students' gender), a statistical crosstabs analysis was conducted to find out the significance difference. Following tables illustrate the affiliation between these variables.

The frequency distribution shows that according to gender, 38% male students expressed agreement having more English classes than taking now and 23% female students showed agreement on that (Table 1.1).

The second statement of course content: 'I will continue to put efforts in learning English even if it is very hard'. 34% male students expressed agreement and 22% female agreed on that (Table 1.2). The statement 'I feel that in English class, I am learning something' 62% males and 28% females agreed with this statement (Table 1.3). The statement of 'Even if English is not compulsory subject, I would choose to study it.' 42 % males and 21 % female students expressed agreement on that (Table 1.4).The statement which was asked about English materials use in class is easy to understand. 47% male and 25% females' students agreed on that statement (Table 1.5)

Table 1.1		I would like to have more English classes then I am taking now					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Gender	Male	10	10	13	38	37	108
	Female	5	4	3	23	19	54
	Total	15	14	16	61	56	162

Table 1.2		I will continue to put efforts in learning English even if it is very hard.					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Gender	Male	8	5	9	52	34	108
	Female	1	2	3	26	22	54
	Total	9	7	12	78	56	162

Table 1.3		I feel that in English class, I am learning something					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Gender	Male	10	6	10	62	20	108
	Female	3	0	4	28	19	54
	Total	13	6	14	90	39	162

Table 1.4		Even if English is not compulsory subject, I would choose to study it.					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Gender	Male	10	10	15	42	31	108
	Female	0	4	5	21	24	54
	Total	10	14	20	63	55	162

Table 1.5		The English materials use in class are easy to understand					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Gender	Male	10	12	21	47	18	108
	Female	1	6	9	25	13	54
	Total	11	18	30	72	31	162

The frequency distribution shows that according to gender, 44% male students and 20% female students expressed agreement on the statement that 'English teacher gives me opportunity to participate in class' (Table 1.6).

The second statement of teachers' attitude, 'I want to speak English like my language teacher does'. 31% of male students expressed agreement and 16% of female students agreed on that (Table 1.7).

The statement 'If I have a problem of understanding something in English class, my English teacher always help me'. 43% males and 25% females agreed with this statement (Table 1.8). The statement 'My teacher's instructions are good and clear,' 37% males and 24% female students expressed agreement on that (Table 1.9).

Table 1.7		English teacher gives me opportunity to Participate in class.					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Gender	Male	9	7	17	44	31	108
	Female	2	3	3	20	26	54
	Total	11	10	20	64	57	162

Table 1.7		I want to speak English like my language teacher does.					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Gender	Male	12	5	11	31	49	108
	Female	3	0	1	16	34	54
	Total	15	5	12	47	83	162

Table 1.8		If I have a problem of understanding something in English class, my English teacher always helps me.					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Gender	Male	13	16	19	43	17	108
	Female	1	4	11	25	13	54
Total		14	20	30	68	30	162

Table 1.9		My teacher's instructions are good and clear.					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Gender	Male	6	12	21	37	32	108
	Female	2	2	5	24	21	54
Total		8	14	26	61	53	162

In order to explore the affiliation between the variables, dependent variable (language anxiety) and independent variable (students' gender), statistical crosstabs analyses were conducted and find the significance difference. Following tables illustrate the affiliation between these variables. The frequency distribution shows that according to gender 32% male students and 18% female students expressed agreement on the statement that 'I am not as good in English as my other fellow students are in class' (Table 1.10).

The second statement of teachers' attitude, 'I fear that fellow students will laugh at me when I make mistakes in English', 34% of male students expressed agreement and 23% of female students agreed on that (Table 1.11).

The statement 'I get nervous when I speak English in classes, 38% males and 29% females agreed with this statement (Table 1.12). The statement 'I feel embarrassed to talk in front of classes, 38 % males and 24 % female students expressed agreement on that (Table 1.13).

The statement of 'I feel inferior to my classmates for my English ability', 33 % males and 22 %female students expressed agreement on that (Table 1.14).

Table 1.11		I am not as good in English as my other fellow students are in class.					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Gender	Male	12	29	23	32	12	108
	Female	5	16	11	18	4	54
Total		17	45	34	50	16	162

Table 1.10		I fear that fellow students will laugh at me when I make mistakes in English.					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Gender	Male	17	16	21	34	20	108
	Female	9	8	7	23	7	54
	Total	26	24	28	57	27	162

Table 1.12		I get nervous when I speak English in class.					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Gender	Male	16	13	20	38	21	108
	Female	2	13	3	29	7	54
	Total	18	26	23	67	28	162

Table 1.13		I feel embarrassed to talk in front of class.					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Gender	Male	15	21	21	38	13	108
	Female	7	13	7	24	3	54
	Total	22	34	28	62	16	162

Table 1.14		I feel inferior to my classmates for my ability to learn English language.					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Gender	Male	12	17	33	33	13	108
	Female	3	8	16	22	5	54
	Total	15	25	49	55	18	162

To investigate the significant perception differences and gender differences in students' motivation level or not in terms of three factors, Language course, teachers attitude and language anxiety. The one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out. In these research questions, male and female first year students were categorized into two groups of one categorical independent variable and factors such as, language course, teachers attitude and language anxiety were the dependent variables. The one way ANOVA test describes whether there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of two different categories of independent variable (male and female students) and dependent variables (language course, teachers' attitude and language anxiety) in the form of

ratio level such as motivational level in ESL class. In this case, it facilitated to make clear whether male and female perceptions on motivation differ significantly in terms of language course, teachers' attitude and language anxiety in ESL class.

TABLE 2.1
GROUP STATISTICS

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
English Anxiety	Male	108	3.1722	.86875	.08360
	Female	54	3.2148	.78366	.10664
Course Content	Male	108	3.7074	.81593	.07851
	Female	54	4.0407	.64120	.08726
Teacher's Attitude	Male	108	3.6782	.97519	.09384
	Female	54	4.1481	.64340	.08756

TABLE 2.2
ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
English Anxiety	Between Groups	.065	1	.065	.092	.762
	Within Groups	113.305	160	.708		
	Total	113.370	161			
Course Content	Between Groups	4.000	1	4.000	6.880	.001
	Within Groups	93.024	160	.581		
	Total	97.024	161			
Teacher's Attitude	Between Groups	7.949	1	7.949	10.282	.002
	Within Groups	123.696	160	.773		
	Total	131.645	161			

DISCUSSION

The results of quantitative method (ANOVA) reveals that there is statistically significant difference between the mean scores of male students' motivation level and female students' motivation level of learning English in ESL classes (Table 2.1). Therefore, Null hypothesis which says that '*There is a significant gender difference of students' motivation in terms of their perceptions about ESL class at University level*' may be accepted concluding that the course content and the teacher's attitude are de-motivating factors for students (in terms of gender) in the ESL classes in comparison to the language anxiety at Mehran University (Table 2.2). The results indicated that the students of Mehran University have many expectations with ESL class to learn English. They learn English for intrinsic and extrinsic interests. But

there are certain factors which hinder in their learning English. The language course and the teacher's attitude are perceived as de-motivating factors for students (in terms of gender) in the ESL classes in comparison to the language anxiety at Mehran University (Table 2.1). The perceptions of both male and female students, their motivation level were reported in the results. The male students were de-motivated to learn English because they were not satisfied with the course content taught in Mehran University and the teachers' attitude, while female students were more satisfied and content taking interest in language classes. On the other hand, the language anxiety level to learn English in language class found same ratio in both male and female. The mean score in language course, and teachers' attitude items was higher than language anxiety as in Table 2.1.

Regarding language anxiety, there is no significant difference in students' motivation of learning English language. Both male and female have almost same anxiety level in learning English in ESL classes. Hence it is clear that the anxiety level of English language in students (i.e. male and female) is equal so that they get de-motivated in ESL class due to this factor.

CONCLUSION

Although, the L2 motivation started in 19th century to bring explicit environment in English learning of professional group of students. Since the engineering students are being taught general English language courses but they cannot meet their literacy and learning needs. They have no proper guidance in this regard. Students from any region or background, when they enter in their professional life, start thinking about grooming themselves in terms of body language and communication skills. They know the importance of English language in today's world that's why they want to improve language skills. This study attempted to determine the factors that decrease the motivation level to learn English and also suggested the recommendations to increase the motivation level of students. The findings of this study revealed that the factor of success in English learning lies in motivation; if the student is intrinsically motivated he will be more confident and achieve the purpose of language learning. The study provides evidence to help those language teachers who are more concerned with the needs of engineering students before adopting and implementing any course contents and methodologies in teaching English to the professionals (engineering students). In addition, the study focused the motivating factors for engineers in order to make teaching and learning process of language more effective and proficient of encouraging the capabilities of students to communicate in English in order to congregate the challenges as professional engineers.

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