

The Effectiveness of the Different Types of Motivation in Learning a New Language in the Palestinian Context

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Abstract

The weakness of the Palestinian students who spend twelve years studying English in the primary and elementary school has been extensively investigated and researched. Yet, few researches were conducted on the students themselves, in addition to the motivation that stands behind learning a new language. In this research, I will categorize the types of motivation that stands behind learning a new language in the Palestinian context and relate them to the proficiency level of the learner. I endeavor to understand the relation between the types of motivation a learner has with the learned language's proficiency level in the Palestinian context. I am using seven types of motivation depending on Noels et al. (2000) classification. Noels et al. (2000) classified motivation into external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, knowledge, accomplishment, stimulation, and Amotivation.

Keywords: Extrinsic motivation, Intrinsic motivation, Amotivation.

Introduction

One of the controversial issues in the educational circles in Palestine is why many of the Palestinian students who spend twelve years in learning English, graduate from school with poor English skills? Different studies have been conducted investigating the curriculum itself along with how it is introduced to the students. Consequently, number of changes related to the curriculum have been adapted, and the teachers are incessantly under training to be properly prepared to teach students.

Nevertheless, personally, I consider this is not enough. Researchers should examine this issue by understanding the students themselves, the motivation that stands behind learning a new language in the Palestinian context, and the social influences that affect this process. Subsequently, the results should be associated with the reality of the Palestinian school students who learn English.

In order to obtain actual results, I conducted a survey asking about the motivation that stands behind learning a new language, how they learned it, in addition to their reading, writing, and speaking level in it. By that, I intend to connect their motivation with their language proficiency. I want to observe if the students who learn a new language since they desire to learn it, would achieve better results comparing with students who learn a new language because they are compelled to. In addition to this main issue, I am trying to answer the following questions:

- Which is the most popular motivation that stands behind learning a new language in the Palestinian context?
- What is the relation between the different types of motivation and the proficiency level in the learned language related to the Palestinian context?
- How understanding the different types of motivation that play important role in learning a new language would help to improve the process of learning English of the Palestinian students?

Literature Review:

According to Ellis, motivation, with its both types intrinsic and extrinsic, is the second most important individual factor that affects the process of learning a new language (comes after aptitude). (Ellis, 2008). Yet, there is no clear definite definition of motivation. Personally, I prefer to refer to Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, where motivation defined as "The factors that determine a person's desire to do something." (1985: 185) (Orio, 2013).

The role of motivation in second language acquisition has been widely researched, and types of motivation have been evolved by different researchers. Al-Ghamdi, in his article, has discussed five different types of motivation. The intrinsic motivation, where you do something because you enjoy doing it, the extrinsic motivation, where you do something because you are waiting for a certain outcome, the integrative motivation, where you learn language because you are interested in its culture or people, the instrumental motivation, where there are certain rewards will be obtained as a result of learning the new language, and the teachers' motivation, where the teacher encourage students to learn the new language. (Al-Ghamdi, 2014).

However, in order to ease the process of classifying the types of motivation I had in my survey, I dependent on Noels et al. (2000) classification of motivation. Noels et al. (2000) classified motivation into three leading categories, extrinsic, intrinsic, and amotivated. Also, extrinsic motivation was divided into three categories, " (1) external regulation, which involves behavior motivated by sources external to the learner such as tangible benefits and costs; (2) introjected regulation, which involves behavior that results from

some pressure that individuals have incorporated into the self; and (3) identified regulation, consisting of behavior that stems from personally relevant reasons." (Ellis, 2008). Moreover, intrinsic motivation was also divided into three categories, "(1) knowledge (i.e., the motivation derived from exploring new ideas and knowledge), (2) accomplishment (i.e., the pleasant sensations aroused by trying to achieve a task or goal), and (3) stimulation (i.e., the fun and excitement generated by actually performing a task)." (Ellis, 2008). Meanwhile, Amotivation is "the absence of any motivation to learn." (Ellis, 2008).

The Study:

My survey was filled by 170 Palestinian participants, who had learned 231 new languages other their mother tongue. I had read their reasons for learning the new languages and classified them under seven different categories, which are external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulations, knowledge, accomplishment, stimulation, and amotivation. The first three categories are defined as part of the extrinsic motivation. Meanwhile, the fourth, the fifth, and the sixth are defined as part of the intrinsic motivation. The last one is the absence of any motivation.

The main difficulty I had while conducting my study was in classifying answers of the participants' motivation into one of the previous seven classifications. Sometimes the answer was clear. However, in other times, it was ambiguous. As a result, I was obliged read it several times to be able to classify it. Very few times I was forced to cancel the paper because simply I didn't understand the motivation therefor I wasn't able to classify it under certain category.

I asked each participant to classify his proficiency level in the learned language in writing, reading, and speaking skills from 1, which indicates very low, to 5 which indicates very high. After that, I found the average of the language proficiency by summing up the three results and dividing them on three, which is the number of skills I measured. By finding the results, I divided the languages into two categories within the same classification; the languages below average which scored less than 3, and languages at and above average which scored 3 or more.

I know this is not a precise indicator of the language proficiency level of the learner especially that the learner is the one who is measuring himself\ herself. Yet, this can provide me with general indicator about the language proficiency level. Also, I found the average of the language proficiency level of each classification by summing all the average proficiency level of each language in the classification and dividing it on the number of languages in the same classification. This helped me to find the effectiveness of the motivation in obtaining high proficiency level in the learned language.

Finally, I need to clarify that the survey was conducted in Arabic, the native language of Palestinians, since I am measuring the motivation of learning new languages in general and not only English. For that reason I didn't use English since I can't be certain that everybody will understand the questions and answer them properly.

The Results:

The following table clarifies the number of languages that were learned under each classification with its percentage from the whole number of the learned languages, the number of languages at and above average in the proficiency level and its percentage from its classification, the number of languages below average in the proficiency level and its percentage from its classification, and finally the average level of language proficiency of the whole classification.

Kind of Motivation	No. of Languages	Its percentage from the whole number of languages	No. of languages at and above average	Its percentage from the same classification	No. of languages below average	Its percentage from its classification	Average level of language proficiency of the whole classification
External regulation	74	32%	59	79.7%	15	20.3%	3.6
Introjected regulation	10	4.3%	10	100%	0	0%	4
Identified regulation	49	21.2%	38	77.6%	11	22.4%	3.5
Knowledge	52	22.5%	29	55.8%	23	44.2%	3.2
Accomplishment	4	1.7%	4	100%	0	0%	4
Stimulation	22	9.5%	9	40.9%	13	59.1%	2.4
Amotivation	20	8.7%	7	35%	13	65%	2.5

Table (1)

The following table shows the difference between extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, and amotivation:

	No. of Languages	Its percentage from the whole number of languages	No. of languages at and above average	Its percentage from the same classification	No. of languages below average	Its percentage from its classification	Average level of language proficiency of the whole classification
Extrinsic motivation	133	57.6%	107	80.5%	26	19.5%	3.7
Intrinsic motivation	78	33.8%	42	53.8%	36	46.2%	3.2
Amotivation	20	8.7%	7	35%	13	65%	2.5

Table (2)

After analyzing and classifying the answers and the tables, I reached the following results:

External regulation, where the learner is learning the new language because he\ she is waiting for a certain materialistic outcome, such as being able to study certain specializations or being employed in certain jobs, was the most chosen motivation. Languages that were learned because they were necessary for education or jobs' opportunities were 74 languages. Also, the percentage of the languages, learners achieved a proficiency level at average or above was 79.7%, which came the third between all the classifications. It is worth noticing that external regulation is the most popular motivation that motivates Palestinians to learn new languages with high proficiency related to other motivation classifications, since it came in the third place among other classifications in the rank on the language proficiency level.

Introjected regulation, where the learner learns the new language because others such as the family or the community believe he\ she should, was in the sixth rank between the other classifications in the number of languages that were learned using this motivation. Although this motivation is not popular with Palestinians, especially that 4.3% from all languages were learned because of it, yet, it achieved, with accomplishment, the highest proficiency level between all classifications. All learners achieved at or above average in the proficiency level, which was 4.

Identified regulations, where the learner learns the new language because he supposes it is necessary for certain conditions, came in the third rank according to the number of languages that were learned depending on this motivation. Palestinians thought that they need to learn a new language because of the occupation mainly, or because they thought they need to learn a global communicating language. The level of proficiency was relatively high. It came in the fourth place with an average of 3.5 in language proficiency.

Knowledge, where learners learn the new language because they are attached its culture or people, came in the second rank according to the languages number. This classification was close in its numbers with the identified regulation classification. It also achieved a relatively high level of language proficiency, which was 3.2 and it came in the fifth place according to it.

Accomplishment, which is learning a new language because a person intends to learn it in order to complete an achievement, was the least popular motivation. It came in the last place with only 1.7% of the languages were learned because of it. Meanwhile, it achieved, with internal regulation, the highest proficiency level. Its average was 4, and the learners achieved 100% at or above the average of the language proficiency.

Stimulation, which is learning for the sake of fun or enjoying the process of learning, wasn't quite popular. 9.5% of the languages Palestinians learned were for the sake of fun and enjoyment. Due this reason many of them didn't seriously learn the new language. Consequently, they achieved the least proficiency level with an average of 2.4.

Amotivation, where the learner learns the language because he\ she has to, was the fifth reason for learning a new language. It wasn't popular among Palestinians. In the same time it was before the last in the language proficiency level, with an average of 2.5 only.

The table below shows the rank of the motivation classifications depending on the number of languages that were learned because of them:

Rank	Motivation's classification	Number of languages	Percentage of languages
1	External Regulation	74	32%
2	Knowledge	52	22.5%
3	Identified Regulation	49	21.1%
4	Stimulation	22	9.5%
5	Amotivation	20	8.7%
6	Introjected Regulation	10	4.3%
7	Accomplishment	4	1.7%

Table (3)

The table below shows the order of the motivation's classification depending on the language proficiency level:

Rank	Motivation's Classification	Average of Language Proficiency Level
1	Introjected Regulation	4
2	Accomplishment	4
3	External Regulation	3.6
4	Identified Regulation	3.5
5	Knowledge	3.2
6	Amotivation	2.5
7	Stimulation	2.4

Table (4)

Depending on the tables (3, 4), I conclude that in order to help our students to be motivated and achieve relatively high proficiency levels in the same time, and relying to the Palestinian context, students should be aware of the necessity of learning a new language in order to be advanced in their education and the more better opportunities they would obtain for their jobs. It seems that getting better education and better job is a main concern for the Palestinians, and to use this concern would help us it motivate Palestinian students.

Conclusion

It seems that Palestinians tend to be more extrinsically motivated, especially when it comes to their education or job. Also, the results show that learners who had extrinsic motivation achieved higher proficiency level in learning a new language comparing with those who had intrinsic motivation. In the view of the fact that 80.5% from the languages that were learned depending on extrinsic motivation achieved at or above average of proficiency level. Meanwhile, intrinsic motivation achieved only 53.8% of the languages with at or above average of proficiency level. This contradicts with what Ormrod (2014) found. She illustrated that extrinsically motivated learners tend to process information superficially, and to perform only easy tasks. Meanwhile, intrinsically motivated learners tend to process information effectively, and to achieve at high levels.

So the results were unexpected, since other studies also suggest that learning language with intrinsic motivation would encourage the learner to achieve higher proficiency level “A number of researchers and theorists have contended that intrinsic motivation correlates more closely with language learning success than extrinsic motivation,” (Fen & Kiat, 2015). However, it seems that when the Palestinians learn a new language for exploration, fun or by being motivated by themselves, they don’t devote themselves to reach a relatively high proficiency level.

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