Motivational Practices And Student Motivation In Saudi Intermediate Efl Classroom

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Abstract

Motivation has been identified to be an important element of all the aspects of good teaching. Motivation learning is a long-term development in which teachers employ different strategies to enhance the effectiveness of EFL classes. In Saudi Arabia, underachievement in EFL classes has been associated with the lack of motivation among students. Underachievement in L2 learning has severely attracted attention from scholars who seek to understand the underlying causes. This paper investigates the role of motivation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning among Saudi intermediate students. It explores how intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors affect learners' attitudes, engagement, and academic achievement in EFL classrooms. The study highlights the challenges faced by Saudi EFL learners, such as lack of exposure to authentic language use and limited communicative opportunities, which often result in decreased motivation. Moreover, it examines motivational strategies employed by teachers, including the use of praise, goal setting, interactive activities, and culturally relevant content. The findings suggest that effective motivational practices can significantly improve students' language performance, confidence, and willingness to participate. The paper concludes by emphasizing the importance of teacher awareness, student-centered learning, and supportive classroom environments in fostering sustained motivation in EFL education.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, English Language learners, motivational practices, motivational strategies, engagement, Saudi Arabia.

الممارسات التحفيزية وتحفيز الطلاب في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية للمرحلة المتوسطة في المملكة العربية السعودية

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ملخـــــص

تُعد الدافعية عنصرًا أساسيًا في جودة التعليم، كما تُعد قوة دافعة في نجاح تعلم اللغات. وفي سياق تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL) في المملكة العربية السعودية، غالبًا ما يُعزى تدني تحصيل الطلاب إلى ضعف الدافعية، مما جذب اهتمامًا متزايدًا من الباحثين لفهم أسبابه. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف أثر الدافعية على طلاب المرحلة المتوسطة في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية، مع التركيز على العوامل الداخلية والخارجية التي تؤثر على مواقف الطلاب، وتفاعلهم، وأدائهم الأكاديمي. وتُبرز الدراسة التحديات الرئيسة التي تواجه الطلاب السعوديين، مثل محدودية التعرض للغة الحقيقية، وقلة فرص التواصل الهادف. كما تتناول الاستراتيجيات التحفيزية التي يستخدمها المعلمون، بما في ذلك الثناء، وتحديد الأهداف، والأنشطة التفاعلية، والمحتوى الثقافي المناسب. وتُظهر النتائج أن تطبيق ممارسات دافعية فعالة يساهم في تعزيز ثقة الطلاب بأنفسهم، ومشاركتهم، ومستواهم اللغوي العام. وتُختتم الورقة بالتأكيد على أهمية وعي المعلمين، والتعليم المرتكز على المتعلم، وتهيئة بيئة صفية داعمة من أجل تنمية دافعية مستدامة لدى الطلاب.

الكلمـات المفتاحيـة: اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة اجنبية، متعلم اللغة الإنجليزية، ممارسات الدافعية، الاستراتيجيات التحفيزية الارتباط، المملكة العربية السعودية.

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Introduction:

Many scholars and educational studies have identified Motivation as an essential part of language learning attainment and achievement. Motivation has been identified to be an important element of all the aspects of good teaching (Alrabai, The effects of teachers' in-class motivational intervention on learners' EFL achievement, 2014). Motivation learning is a long-term development in which teachers employ different strategies. The crucial aspects of motivation revolve around the fact that it helps students overcome undesirable learning challenges they face when learning the new language. This makes motivation a key factor in learning and the acquisition of second and foreign language. Despite the undeniable importance existing in motivation, it has been acknowledged by scholars that Saudi EFL learners do not process high levels of motivation (specifically L2 motivation). The reasons behind this cases of the causes of low levels of motivation are complex and diverse. The nature of research on motivation in relation to the Saudi context has however impacted greatly on the improvement of the situation (Liton, 2012). This study examines the existing motivational strategies and practices, in Saudi intermediate EFL classrooms and the impacts they have on enhancing the Saudi students learning.

A limited body of research focusing on meta motivational beliefs—especially in the field of foreign language education in the Middle East—restricts our ability to fully grasp how learners interpret, regulate, and adjust their motivation when facing language-related difficulties (Al-Hoori,2024). The available studies and information on foreign language motivation among Saudi learners have helped identify the different levels and types of language motivation. Motivation is needed to help the Saudi learners expend and persist in their efforts in the learning processes, an element that may extend for a long period of time. Scholars believe that without any motivation, even individuals with remarkable abilities in the classrooms cannot accomplish any goal, either short term or long term and neither is good teaching strategies and curricula good enough to ensure the student's achievements. An important aspect existing in motivation research is the study of the strategies used by

teachers to enhance motivation. This research has played a crucial role in linking theories into practice by translating motivational theories into strategies and techniques that teachers could use in EFL classrooms.

Literature Review

Identified as one of the most important aspects, enhancing EFL learning in Saudi has long been investigated based on the importance it has on the learning process. Defined, motivation is an abstract and hypothetical concept that is used to explain why humans behave and think as they do. This means that motivational strategies are techniques that may be used to both generate and maintain the student's motivation (Alrabai, The effects of teachers' in-class motivational intervention on learners' EFL achievement, 2014). Theexisting research has been on the field of L2 motivation and the relation it has in enhancing student's success. As identified by Alrabai (2014) motivation remains an important concept of enhancing the learning of SL/FL acquisition that includesthe enhanced attitudes, self-confidence, aptitude, language anxiety, and intelligence. Motivation in this revolves around the combination of both effort and the desire to achieve the goal of leaning the new language (Alrabai, Motivational Practices in English as a Foreign Language Classes in Saudi Arabia: Teachers Beliefs and Learners Perceptions, 2014). This also includes the combination of favourable attitudes towards the learning of new languages.

History shows that motivation has been an important aspect of education since the 1960s. Even with this, however, it has been identified that the 1990s acted as the turning point in the research for EFL motivation. During these periods, the attention shifted from the past concepts and increased focus on more education-oriented approaches, an aspect that laid the foundation for motivation research on L2 learning (Vibulphol, 2016). This shift as identified Alshehri and Etherington (2017) has resulted to the increased appearance of situational specific motivational concepts that include self-efficacy, self-confidence, self-determination, learner autonomy, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, and language anxiety. According to their arguments, intrinsic motivation revolves around the desire to learn for an individual's sake without the inclusion of any external incentives (Alshehri & Etherington, 2017).

According to Bandura's theory, learning English as a second language among female students is strongly influenced by their personal motivation to face and overcome difficulties. In the Saudi EFL context, some learners may feel anxious due to a perceived imbalance in the opportunities they have to build confidence in their reading, speaking, and writing abilities (Al-Mubireek, 2022; Arta, 2018; Bensalem, 2021; Shoaib, 2023).

Since the shift to the SL motivation, many articles have proposed different techniques that help sustain, generate, and promote learner motivation in English language classes. Bahous (2011) identified that motivational techniques and strategies refer to the instructional interventions that are applied by teachers to stimulate and elicit student's motivation (Bahous, 2011). Several frameworks such as the motivational teaching practice developed by Dornyei present some of the most important techniques and sub-techniques that are important for enhancing the teacher's awareness of the importance of motivation (Alshehri & Etherington, 2017). The first dimension from the framework revolves around the creation of the essential motivational conditions that include, building a friendly and supporting atmosphere in the classrooms, and creating cohesiveness among learners within the classroom. The second dimension revolves around the important aspects of developing student's motivations such as acquitting learners with values and cultures of a foreign language. These are important for promoting the learner's expectations and help them have clear,attainable,and realistic goals (Alshehri & Etherington, 2017).

The third dimension of the framework revolves around the maintenance, and the protection of the learner's generated motivation. Once students develop motivation, it is important for teachers to ensure that they maintain it so as to shun what students are learning and the importance it has on their lives. The fourth dimension revolves around encouraging students to have and hold positive motivational self-evaluations as language learners. These techniques are important in increasing self-satisfaction to the students, an aspect that in turn helps them maintain their focus on learning the language (Shousha, 2018)

Current studies also show that there is a need for a pragmatic education-centred approach when teaching EFL students in Saudi. This should include the

examination of classroom reality, identifying and analyzing the need for the EFL classes. This should include questioning if the students need to learn the foreign language or not. The lack of interest would present a major challenge when teaching EFL. However, motivation has been identified as an important aspect of enhancing the different interests of the student (Vibulphol, 2016). This is effective when teachers employ specific strategies. To some extent,motivation revolves around ensuring that the students develop a sense of identity. developing identities helps them incorporate elements from the learning cultures that help them understand the environmentalfactors, the featured personalities, social dimensions, and the cognitive factors (Moskovsky, Alrabai, Paolini, & Ratcheva, 2013). Instructional materials in EFL settings often fail to account for the different ways students perceive and respond to teaching methods, which can influence how effective those methods are in promoting or hindering second language learning (Shoeib, 2022).

The Status of English Language in Saudi Arabia

　　Historically English was first introduced in Saudi schools during the 1950s.According to arguments from several articles; English, during the period was only taught to intermediate and secondary schools (Shousha, 2018). This has however changed over the years. Today, English is taught from grade six of primary school up to the third grade of high school. The rationale of this late learning of English language revolves around the fact that young children need to learn their mother language before learning other languages (Moskovsky, Alrabai, Paolini, & Ratcheva, 2013). Today, English is a prerequisite for admissionto most university degrees in Saudi Arabia. This means that even with some critiquing teaching English in Saudi schools, it remains an important language in the region. With many individuals viewing the English language as a foreign language, there have been numerous challenges experienced in teaching English. This also makes Arabic the dominant language reducing opportunities for people to hear, write English and speak within and outside the classrooms (Vibulphol, 2016).

　　The Saudi government has increased the recognition of the importance of the English language through making it mandatory in schools, colleges, and universities

in Saudi Arabia. Even with this, however, the level of achievement in learning English has remained far beyond the expectations. Even after many years of study, Saudi students are still unable to communicate fluently and effectively in English and have only been able to achieve the most basic writing and reading skills. These phenomena, according to many scholars may be associated witha significant number of cultural, religious, social, and political barriers that undermine learning English in the region (Alrabai, Learning English in Saudi Arabia., 2018).

Other challenges associated with the low levels of achievement revolve around the nature of the classroom instruction which in most cases are teacher-centred rather than student centred. Most of the Saudi classrooms are overcrowded reducing the effectiveness of the teachers and reducing the effectiveness of the English classes (Liton, 2012). All these are important aspects that are discussed in this study as they contribute to low levels of motivation to learn English in Saudi Arabia. It is therefore important for EFL teachers to focus on some motivational techniques in their teaching practices. It remains necessary to evaluate some of the current situations of teacher's motivational practices within the EFL classrooms and understand how much influence the learner's motivation. In recent years, educational environments in Saudi Arabia have increasingly embraced more integrated approaches (Kamaeva et al., 2022). Institutions across the country have implemented hybrid and digital learning models to better address the varied needs of learners (Almusharraf & Engemann, 2020; Alsowat, 2021). As technology is expected to facilitate higher levels of English language proficiency among EFL students, it also prompts reflection on which instructional strategies are most successful in promoting student motivation and active participation in a global educational context.

Motivation and Studying in a Second Language

Numerous studies show the importance of motivation in almost every aspect of life. Bahous (2011) provides that motivation plays an important role in energising human behaviour and providing them with the right direction. Bahous also identified motivation as a significant dimension in language learning. Initially, ESL and L2 motivation was seen as an aspect influenced by the learner's attitudes towards the existing social perceptions (Bahous, 2011). This means that the existing perceptions

among students tend to influence their existing motivation towards the study of ESL. As time passed, however, motivation was identified as an important aspect of achieving success in the study of enlisting language and also other second languages. Current studies show that teachers have the responsibility to enhance the existing motivation within classes (Moskovsky, The L2 motivational self system and L2 achievement: A study of Saudi EFL learners, 2016). As identified teachers should act as an agent to achieving success in learning English.

Motivational Strategies

Given the existing importance of motivation in ESL learning, further investigation on how learners can be motivated is important to understand and sustain EFL in classrooms. According to several studies, the approaches and actions undertook by teachers play an important role in increasing the learner's motivations. Most of the existing research focuses on examining the existing EFL teacher views about the existing motivational strategies. Other studies have also focused on the effectiveness existing in the use of specific motivational strategies on student motivation and find the existing positive relationships between the two variables. Dornyei has examined several practices that are important motivational strategies in comparison to others. Even with the existing studies, there is a need to conduct further research on the teacher and student perceptions of the EFL strategies in Saudi Arabia

Important Themes Related to The Motivational Strategies for Teaching EFL

Vibulphol (2016) identified several themes that are important in enhancing the motivation among EFL students. The identified themes were based on the existing perspectives of EFL teachers, and included, the climate, tasks, goals, learner autonomy, personal relevance, and even cultures (Vibulphol, 2016). According to Vibulphol, these themes are based on the primary objectives of teaching EFL to Saudi students. The themes include setting personal examples to students (teachers should show a specific degree of motivation to their students), creating personal, and relaxed atmosphere within the classrooms, present the important tasks properly, increase the learner's linguistic self-confidence, make the language classes interesting, and developing a good relationship with the EFL students. Other important themes

included the promotion of the learner autonomy, personalisation of the learning process, the increase of goals and orientedness specifically for learners, and the familiarising the learners with specific target language cultures (Vibulphol, 2016).

The article stresses that these themes should guide the purpose of teaching EFL to students. However, these themes and objectives may not be as effective as presented in the article. This aspect is related to the different levels of diversity existing in different learning environments which in most cases are influenced by teachers and their students (Vibulphol, 2016). It is therefore important to examine the effectiveness, validity and the suitability of these themes when applying them to the EFL classrooms specifically the Saudi EFL classrooms.

Granting learners the freedom to take control of their English learning requires educators to recognize and reflect on their own beliefs about various student populations (Boudouaia et al., 2022; Kuo & Lai, 2006). Teachers may unconsciously shape the learning environment based on preconceived notions that reflect societal and cultural attitudes toward language education. Studies on second language learning also show that such biases can affect how learners engage with the language and progress in their studies.

Problem of the Study

The lack of motivation in Saudi Arabia is a well-recognised problem that has over the years resulted in poor performance related to EFL and L2 (Alrabai, The effects of teachers' in-class motivational intervention on learners' EFL achievement, 2014). Based on this, numerous questions have been asked on the importance motivation plays on enhancing the achievements of the EFL students. In Saudi Arabia, the lack of motivation acts a primary challenge toward teaching ESL students. In most instances, the challenge not only revolves around the absence of students in classrooms mentally but also the lack of knowledge and motivation for studying English (Bahous, 2011). The answer to questions related to the low achievement levels in ESL classes in Saudi Arabia has primarily been associated with the lack of motivations. Several factors, identified in the literature review, for example, politics, culture, and religions are some of the most dominant factors that result to the low levels of motivation. Even with this, however, it is important to

understand that motivation is a multifaceted aspect of the dynamic interaction between both students and their teachers. It is therefore important for teachers to familiarise with the most effective strategies to use in these classrooms so as to enhance motivation among the EFL students.

The significance of the study

With the low levels of achievements among EFL students in Saudi Arabia, it is the responsibility of teachers to employ motivational practices so as to enhance the student's motivation in achieving more. Several questions have been asked regarding what strategies can be employed so as to enhance the achievement of EFL students in Saudi (Alrabai, Motivational Practices in English as a Foreign Language Classes in Saudi Arabia: Teachers Beliefs and Learners Perceptions, 2014). Motivation has been among the most important aspects in solving the challenges associated with these low achievements. However, an important question still revolves around the concept of student motivation and the motivational strategies to help improve student achievements in relation to EFL (Shousha, 2018). This study provides insights into the motivational students and student motivation and their roles in enhancing the achievement of EFL students. It will, therefore, be crucial to gather and examine date from both teachers and students in Saudi go as to gather insights on the importance the different aspects of motivation and the importance it has on enhancing performance among EFL students.

Research Questions

Based on the problem statement and the significance of the study, the following were the research questions.

- What are the motivational practices employed by teachers in EFL classrooms in Saudi?
- What are the roles of motivation in enhancingstudent achievement In EFL classrooms?
- What are the existing perceptions regarding the different motivational practices and perceptions of teaching EFL students in Saudi?
- What are the motivational strategies that are specific to teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia?

Research Objectives

The following will be the objectives for the study.

- Examining the motivational practices employed by teachers in EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia.

- Examine the importance of motivation in enhancing student achievement in EFL classrooms.

- Examine the perceptions regarding the different motivational practices and perceptions in teaching EFL students in Saudi Arabia.

Methodology

The following study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods of research. Qualitative methods were primarily used for the gathering of data from the relevant literature, the EFL students, and some EFL teachers. The project participants included both EFL students from Saudi and EFL teachers. The teachers were important in presenting the strategies they employ in the EFL students in Saudi. The students, on the other hand, helped present the different levels of motivation and perceptions towards EFL lessons (Liton, 2012). To gather data, questionnaires,bothopen-ended and close-ended were used for the study. Questions in the questionnaire were designed for both the students and the teachers. This implies that the questionnaires for the students helped address the perceptionand the motivational level while those for the teachers helped address the perceptions and the motivational strategies used. To some extent, the questionnaires also provided information on the existing understanding of the importance of motivational strategies in teaching EFL.

Literature reviews was conducted to provide the already existing motivational strategies that can be used in EFL classrooms. This helped provide the underlying concepts in relation to the importance of motivation when teaching EFL to students. This also helped in developing the questionnaire to be used for gathering information from the participants.

Quantitative research methodology was used for the analysis of the collected data. This means that the study included an examinationof the existing relationship between the identified variables. This played a crucial role in explaining the data

collected, reporting some unanticipated aspects from the study and describe the assumptions. Even with this, however, the study was a qualitative form of study. The quantitative methodology was used to quantify the collected data from the participants,an aspect that helped define the identified concepts and provide the findings from the study.

Results and Discussions

The questionnaires provided to the students and the teachers comprised of approximately 20 questions (both open-ended and closed). The answers from the questionnaires showed several themes that align with the themes identified in the literature review. 70% of the responses from the teacher's show that their objectives revolve around setting examples, creating personal and relaxed atmosphere, ensuring students complete tasks properly, increase the student's linguistic self-confidence, make the classes interesting and also develop and enhance their relationships with the students. 90% of the selected teacher sample provided this as the primary objectives and strategies when teaching ESL. It was evident from the teacher's responses that they believed they could influence the achievements of their students with these objectives. These were also the motivational strategies that were identified to be specific to the EFL language in Saudi. Teachers who employed these strategies provided that their classes had high attendance, and many of the students showed high interests in learning the new language.

From the questionnaires, it was evident that religious and cultural believes were a major influence on the student's lack of achievement in learning English. 50% of the students still provided that even with the fact that they attended English classes, they still used their mother language to communicate, an aspect that is closely related to the cultural and religious influence in the region. Students, however, showed they depended on their teachers to influence their interests in learning. In this, they gave examples of teachers that kept them motivated through their teaching strategies and skills.

Evidently, motivation is an important aspect of teaching ESL to Saudi students. With the many negative aspects that result from the negative influences in society, it is

important for teachers to employ motivational strategies so as to enhance the student's attendance and improve their achievements. As evident, setting personal examples to students (teachers should show a specific degree of motivation to their students), creating personal, and relaxed atmosphere within the classrooms, present the important tasks properly, increase the learner's linguistic self-confidence, make the language classes interesting, and developing a good relationship with the EFL students are the most important strategies specific to the Saudi EFL students. Other important strategies include promotion of the learner autonomy, personalisation of the learning process, the increase of goals and orientedness specifically for learners, and the familiarising the learners with specific target language cultures. These strategiesare based on the existing perceptions from the teacher on what they believe would enhance the learning of English language in Saudi Arabia

Conclusions

As evident, study on the underlying challenges in relation to the underachievement of EFL students in Saudi Arabia remains an important aspect in identifying the role of motivation when teaching a foreign language. The study in this through this aimed at identifying the importance of motivation in teaching EFL students in Saudi and identify the underlying strategies that are the most significant for the Saudi context.

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Motivational Practices and Student Motivation in Saudi Intermediate EFL Classroom Questionnaires

1- Do you believe motivational is important for education? If yes, please explain.

2- Does motivation enhance the learning of EFL language in Saudi Arabia?

3- What are the challenges thatexist within the education sector in Saudi Arabia?

4- What challenges do you face when teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia?

5- What attitudes do students have in regard to learning EFL?

6- Is motivation among the challenges you face as an EFL teacher? If yes, please explain.

7- Do you employ motivational strategies in the classroom?

8- What motivational strategies do you know can be used in the EFL classrooms?

9- What motivational strategies do you use in the classrooms?

10- How effective would say the motivational are in relation to enhancing EFL students in Saudi?

11- How would you rate the impacts of motivational strategies on teaching EFL?

12- What recommendations would you provide for teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia?

Questionnaire for students

1- How interested are you in studying English?

2- Do you value English as a second language?

3- What motivates you to keep learning English?

4- Are there any challenges in learning English as a second language? If yes, please name and explain.

5- How do you personally avoid these challenges?

6- On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the English learning experience?

7- On a scale of 1-10 how would rate the motivational intensity scale?

8- On a scale of 1-10 how would rate the linguistic self-confidence scale?