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An Investigation of Factors that Affect Students' Motivation towards English Language Learning: The Case of Wolaita Sodo University 1st Year English Major Students

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Abstract:

A language teacher cannot teach a language properly if he or she is unable to understand the relationship between motivation and its effects upon language acquisition. The main objective of this research was to find out factors that affect students' motivation towards English language learning: the case of Wolaita Sodo University 1st year English major students. To achieve the stated objective, a quantitative descriptive case study design was employed. Questionnaire was the instrument to collect data from the participants. The data was analyzed quantitatively using tabular representation. The finding of the study indicates that students are not motivated in learning English as a major. Also, they argued that teachers are not playing a motivation role so as to make students passionate to the programs. Following the finding, the recommendation has been made.

Keywords: Motivation, English Language learning, Factors.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

Kabilan (2000) indicated that there should be a mutual coordination between the teacher and student. Every student is different from one another; therefore, a teacher should use different creative styles and strategies in teaching.

One missing ingredient which researchers and practitioners consider so important that all the other factors might be futile without it. This ingredient is motivation—the force which drives learners to make optimal use of the available learning resources and achieve their learning objectives (Kimura, Nakata, & Okumura, 2001). “Motivation serves as the initial engine to generate learning and it later functions as an ongoing driving force that helps to sustain the long and usually laborious journey of acquiring a foreign language” (Cheng & Dornyei, 2007:153).

However, several researchers and educators in the area of teaching foreign languages note that there are many factors that affect the students' motivation in learning foreign language (Hernandez: 2004, Yu and Downing: 2012).

A language teacher cannot teach a language properly if he or she is unable to understand the relationship between motivation and its effects upon language acquisition. This is because all the students have inherent psychological needs and internal motives and reasons that engage them in classroom learning activities. They can perform effectively if teacher is supportive and enough motivator (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2002).

The major source of motivation is passion and confidence (Champan & Aspin, 1997). It is an obvious fact if you are passionate about some goal you can achieve it. Good learning is associated with learner's passion. If teacher is able to create positive and supportive environment in the class then the students would be more passionate to learn language so the class room environment should be student centered. At any study level we cannot ignore the role of student. Teacher can shift a student from passive to progressive learner.

Moreover, according to Macrof and D'cruz (2001), positive self-esteem, positive attitude, clear understanding of goals for language learning, the relevance of conducive environment can contribute to the success of language learning. It means that self-confidence is the key factor in learning a language. It provides us the positive energy in which we are enjoying the task and understand the real sense of communication.

Motivation mostly affects the foreign language learning. Without proper motivation, language cannot be learned. But one cannot deny the fact that motivation can be affected if a student is feeling discomfort in the class and he or she disliked the teacher methodology and style Lifrieri (2005). Many sources can contribute to the lack of motivation which is beyond the control of the teacher. The student cannot perform in a stressed condition (Lile, 2002). Thus, it is necessary make study on factors that affect students motivation. Therefore, the present study will focus on factors that affect students motivation of English Major students: Case of Wolaita Sodo English major first year students.

1.2. Statement of the problem

The use of English language in the academic and professional life of the students is of paramount importance. It is an effective tool to improve the performance of students in oral and written communication. The others who have passed English as a subject they always found it very difficult to mark English as an interesting subject therefore students are advised to improve their communication skills in English to increase their chances and opportunities in professional life. Several factors persist which might cause for bad performance in English language that might be attributed to motivation and attitude towards English language.

Motivation has been regarded as a key factor in learning of language. McDonough (1983) stated that motivation of the students is one of the most important factors

influencing their success or failure in learning language. Motivation involves the study of many factors like student teacher relationship, self-respect and classroom circumstances. Because, it is a much understood feeling that you cannot perform well in a stressful and tense condition.

In the present actual circumstance, the researchers observed that students are being demotivated in the English language classroom where they are majoring the language. They thought that learning English has no instrumental value. Some are thinking that after the graduation by the program, the job opportunity is rarely posted. In a sense they argue for null vacant position after graduation of the program. Moreover, they go on to complain that they are placed to the department by the faculty without prior consideration of their interest and preference to join the department. Even, under this circumstance the instructors are not motivating and orienting students on the essence and significance of the programs as students are freshmen. Additionally, there is no adequate language laboratory which are essential to undertake courses effectively. They are also in the mood of low self-confidence, stress and depression.

Briefly, such kind of frequent complain and dissatisfaction of students towards learning English language as a major initiated us to conduct the present study. As far as the knowledge of the researchers concerned on research, so far there is no research that has been conducted on the same title and on the same setting.

Therefore, an attempt has been made to investigate factors which affects students motivation towards English language learning: case of Wolaita sodo university 1st year English major students. On this basis, the main objective of this research was to find out factors that affects students motivation towards English language learning: the case of Wolaita Sodo university 1st year English major students.

1.3. Specific objectives

1.3.1. To find out whether students are motivated or not.

1.3.2. To find out whether there is communication gap between the students and teachers which resulted for low motivation.

1.3.3. To find out whether students' have low self-confidence regarding the essence of the program.

1.4. Research questions

1.4.1. Are first year students who are taking English language as major motivated ?

1.4.2. Is there communication gap between the students and teachers, which resulted for low motivation?

1.4.3. Do students' have low self-confidence regarding the essence of the program?

2. Methodology

The main purpose of this research was to investigate factors that affects students' motivation towards English language learning. The researchers used the tool of questionnaire for this paper. In descriptive case study research design,. In this study quantitative method was employed. The present study examines factors that affect motivation upon learning foreign language.

2.1. Data collection instrument, population and sampling technique

Firstly, the researchers took population from Wolaita Sodo University Ethiopia, and selected students of 1st year English major class. From the total population of 30 students, all has been taken.

Those students were selected by using convenient sampling technique for the present research. Students of Wolaita Sodo University (WSU) are taken as a sample of this research because the stated problem is persistent and highly observable in addition to convenience of the selected participants.

2.2. Instrument of the study

To measure the causes which affect motivation of students regarding learning English major, the researchers formed a questionnaire based upon 4-point Likert scale. The questionnaire consisted of 22 questions. It was based upon four options SA: Strongly Agree, AG: Agree, DA: Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree. The researchers took opinion from the students for this purpose and asked them to choose one suitable answer from the given options. It was designed to find the real thinking of the students towards factors affecting English language leaning motivation and motivation in the English language classes. The students were requested that they should answer all the questions carefully and honestly and were assured them that their responses will be kept secret so they should not answer in a prejudiced way. The data from the questionnaires were analyzed thorough

3. Result and Discussion

All the students were asked different questions related to motivational factors. In the questionnaire they admitted that motivational factors had a great role in learning English language. The questionnaire consisted of 22 questions containing 4 options Strongly Agree (SD), Disagree (DA), Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (AG).

Overall response of the participants in percent and number.

No.	SD		DA		SA		AG	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	7	23.33	5	16.66	8	26.66	10	33.33
2	2	6.66	8	26.66	12	40	8	26.66
3	5	16.66	4	13.33	14	46.66	7	23.33
4	3	10	3	10	18	60	6	20

Table 1. Over response of the participants in % and number, on four variables.

In response of first question 33.33% respondents agreed that they are not motivated enough to attend the program and 26.66% people strongly agree upon this, while 23.33% strongly disagreed and 16.66% disagreed with this fact. So if we calculate agreed and strongly agree respondents it is about 59.99% and the total of disagreed and strongly disagreed is only 39.99% that is lesser than agreed respondents. Therefore, the findings highly support the fact that majority of students are attending the program without any interest and motivation.

In the answer to the second question majority of the ratio of 40% strongly agreed and 26.66% agreed indicated that classroom environment should focus on student while 6.66% strongly disagreed and 26.66% only disagreed. The total agreed persons are 66.66% while disagreed ratio is 33.32%. As the Figure 1 shows, the results highly favour student centered environment.

In the answer to question three around 46.66% students strongly accepted that their language teacher uses different approaches for their understanding. On the other hand, 23.33% agreed while 13.33% disagreed and 16.66% strongly disagreed. The sum of agreed respondents in question 3 is 69.99% and other non willing respondents are only 29.99%. Therefore, the findings of question 3 are highly recommending the importance different practices and approaches when they learn foreign language.

Regarding the fourth question, 60% strongly agreed and 20% only agreed while 10% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed. The total of agreed respondents are 80% and 20% are unwilling respondents. So the results of question number 4 show that by using different activities and examples we can enhance motivation.

Overall response of the participants in percent and number.

No.	SD		DA		SA		AG	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
5	5	16.66	6	20	8	26.66	11	36.66
6	3	10	5	16.66	12	40	10	33.33
7	5	16.66	4	13.33	9	30	12	40
8	4	13.33	3	10	11	36.66	12	40

Table 2. Over response of the participants in % and number, on four variables.

For question number five, 36.66% admit the fact that there is a communication gap between the instructors and the students with respect to motivating students to attend the program . In this regard, the ratio of strongly agree is 26.66%. The percentage of disagree 20 and strongly disagree is 16.66.

The sum of agreed respondents is 63.32% and disagreed people are only limited to 36.66%.

If we take a look upon question number six, we can see that 40% are strongly favoring the point that teacher should avoid those tests and exercises which are a great cause of failures because failure has been a great hurdle in learning. 33.33% also admitted the fact of failure and only 16.66% disagreed while 10% strongly disagreed the question. The calculated ratio of agreed persons is 73.33% and disagreed only 26.66%.

In the answer of question number seven, 40% of students were in the support of reduced sized language group. On this basis the percentage of strongly agreed was 30%. The ratio of disagree was 13.33% while strongly disagreed were 16.66%. The sum of agreed is 70% and disagreed only 29.99%.

Favoring question number Eight, 36.66% were strongly agreed and 40% were agreed. So these percentages suggest that a language teacher should consider group process if he/she wants to maintain the learning process in the class. 10% disagreed and 13.33% strongly opposed that. The total of agreed is 76.66% and disagreed 23.33%.

Overall response of the participants in percent and number.

No.	SD		DA		SA		AG	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
9	2	6.66	2	6.66	19	63.33	7	23.33
10	3	10	3	10	18	60	8	26.66
11	4	13.33	3	10	14	46.66	9	30
12	3	10	2	6.66	20	66.66	5	16.6

Table 3. Over response of the participants in % and number, on four variables.

In question number nine, about 63.33% claimed that if they enjoy successful experience then their motivation level is increased to pursue a new task and they had the support of 23.33% agreed students. The ratio of disagree and strongly disagreed is 6.66% and 6.66%. The sum of agreed is 86.66% and disagreed only 13.32% highly supports the statement that experience of success gives learners a high motivation level for attaining their new goal.

In response to question number ten, 60% of respondents has strongly proved the importance of student teacher frank relationship and 26.66% also admitted that if your language teacher is frank with you then your performance would be much better in class. 10% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed. The total ratio that supports frank teacher student relationships is 86.66% while on the other hand total disagreed are only 20%. Therefore, the results clearly support the statement that says there should have been comfortable relationship between student and the teacher

In response to question number eleven, 46.66% were strongly agreed that external satisfaction or appreciation is vital for good performance in learning foreign language. They also got the support of 30% agree people. We have 10% disagree and 13.33% strongly disagreed people. The total sum of supporting respondents are 76.66% that shows if a student gets external appreciation from teachers then they will be more successful than others.

In question number twelve, students with 66.66% showed that confidence on the essence of program plays a great part in their learning. They believe that confidence on the essence of the program maintains the positive energy and motivation in them. It in turn helps them in their successful learning achievements. 16.6% were agreed 6.66% disagreed and 10% strongly opposed it. The sum of supportive respondents are 83.26 with a significant numerical difference from those who do not agree.

Overall response of the participants in percent and number.

No.	SD		DA		SA		AG	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
13	2	6.66	10	33.33	7	23.33	11	36.66
14	1	3.33	3	10	18	60	8	26.66
15	5	16.66	6	20	10	33.33	9	30
16	6	20	5	16.66	11	36.66	8	26.66

Table 4. Over response of the participants in % and number, on four variables.

For question number thirteen, about 36.66% agreed that English is too difficult to understand and demand intense study. 23.33% strongly agreed with them. Remaining was 33.33% disagreed and 6.66% strongly disagreed. The total of agreed student is 59.99% while 39.99% are disagreed one who does not consider English as difficult subject and need intense study.

In a reaction to question number fourteen, we have a large ratio of 60% strongly passionate persons accompanying with them 26.66% agreed students. Disagreed are 10% and strongly opposed are only 3.33%. The sum of agreed one is 86.66% while disagreed are only 13.33%. So in this question it is highly suggested that passion is very much vital in our learning process. Therefore, the results clearly suggest the statement that says if a teacher creates a trust worthy relationship among the students then ratio of passionate students would be increased because we cannot learn without passion.

Regarding question number fifteen, about 33.33% strongly claimed that if the class room atmosphere is motivating then they are safe, secure and orderly. 30% agreed 20% disagreed

and only 16.66% highly disfavored it. The total of favoring respondents are 63.33% and disagreed are only 36.66% in sum.

In the final question, 36.66% strongly agreed and 26.66% agreed the opinion that we learn English only for extrinsic purpose like for a job or some reward. While, disagree and strongly disagreed are 16.66% and 20%, respectively. The total sum of agreed is 63.32% while others having disagreed with this question are 36.66%. The findings clearly showed that, in which 70% students were learning English language only to get some reward or job. Likewise in our studies students were only extrinsically motivated to learn English language so they can have better future opportunities.

Conclusion

Motivation has paramount importance and it is determined by the factors like self-confidence, class room condition, passion and role of student teacher in the class. The findings showed the importance of the facts that it cannot be moved forward if these factors are not properly treated. We can see that the majority of our students are not able to speak English fluently nor they can write it well. The very reality behind the scene is that the language teachers are failed to coordinate with the students.

Teacher applies the same practices that cannot help to motivate students in English language class. When the students failed to be self confident, in the end they will be unable to learn a foreign language. Moreover, the results indicated that if the factors can be utilized in a right direction it is possible to get much better results. So, while teaching English language it is advisable to consider different factors that contribute to the motivation of students. Moreover, in addition to classroom instruction students should be motivated about the program. Specifically the instructors are recommended to motivate students in such a way that developing students confidence towards the program.

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Appendix (Students Questionnaire)

No.	Item Description	SD	DA	SA	AG
1	Students are motivated enough to join the program.				
2	Class environment should be student centered.				
3	Your language teacher uses different strategies for your understanding.				
4	Teacher can increase motivation to learn by beginning lessons with examples, activities, or questions.				
5	There is a communication gap between the instructors and the students				
6	Tutor and teacher should avoid those practices that guarantee failure.				
7	Language learning group size should be reduced.				
8	Maintaining the learning process requires teacher to focus on group processes.				
9	Experience of success provides student with more power to pursue a new goal.				
10	There should be a frank relationship between the teacher and student.				
11	External praise is very much important for a better performance in the class.				
12	Self confidence is most vital part in the class.				

13	Students consider English as a difficult subject.				
14	Passion is necessary for learning English as a second language				
15	Motivating environments are safe secure and orderly places that focus on learning.				
16	English is learned for pleasure or only for a job and career.				