



Motivation: An Important Factor in Effective Foreign Language Teaching in Iran

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

Received 31st December 2013
Accepted 10th March 2014
Published 21st April 2014

ABSTRACT

A willingness to learn foreign languages is increasing in Iran and foreign languages institutes are seeking to provide the best strategies of effective teaching. Since motivation is one of affective factors that has a crucial role in effective language teaching, this study aims to investigate whether Iranian foreign language learners are motivated to learn foreign languages, what is the main motivation of Iranian foreign language learners to learn foreign languages in Iranian school settings (public universities and language learning institute) and whether contexts, kind of languages and the gender of foreign language learner influence on the motivation of foreign language learners. This descriptive survey was done on 215 learners who were studying English, French and German languages at Isfahan University and 3 language learning institutes of Isfahan. The data gathering tool was a researcher-made questionnaire including 12 items based on a 5 point Likert scale. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by experts and its reliability was 0.78 with Cronbachs Alpha. The data were analyzed through SPSS software using one sample t-test, two independent sample t-test, ANOVA and Friedman test. The result revealed that Iranian foreign language learners participated in the research were motivated to learn foreign languages, their main motivation to learn foreign languages was immigration or study abroad and contexts, kind of languages and sex had no effect on their motivation. Foreign language teachers by being aware of motivation and its role in effective language teaching can promote foreign language learners' motivation which makes progress in foreign language learning.

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Keywords: Motivation; effective foreign language teaching; immigration; study abroad; Iran.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, learners and learning as most important parts of effective teaching have been emphasized [1]. Foreign Language study like other fields of science is seeking factors that help learners have effective learning. Motivation is one of important affective factors in language learning process, which has crucial role [2-6] in educational outcomes [7-8], attainment, rate of progress in language learning [9-11] and promoting language proficiency [12]. It means that highly motivated learners would make dramatic progress in learning a language [13-16], so the concept of motivation in general and second/foreign language [L2] motivation in particular, has caught the attention of scholars, instructors and learners of second/foreign language acquisition (SLA) [17-19].

Studies which have been conducted in this respect, have proposed different frameworks and models such as psychological framework [9], social psychological framework [20], and social framework [21-22]. One of the most influential models of this type is Gardner's socio-educational theory of motivation [23]. In this model, "motivation is conceptualized as a combination of variables [24], meaning the combination of effort plus desire to reach the goal of learning the language plus suitable attitudes toward learning the language [5,25]. The Gardner's theory of L2 learning's motivation defines motivation as "the extent to which the individual works or tries to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" [20]. In this explanation, motivation is described as goal-directed or the learners' immediate goal to do something such as learning a language. Gardner believes that in order to comprehend why learners are motivated, it is necessary to understand the learners' ultimate goal or purpose for learning the language. Gardner refers to this as the learner's orientation [26].

According to [5,25-28], motivation is categorized in two branches: Instrumental motivation and integrative motivation [5,25-26]. Integrative orientation is a desire to enhance the affiliation with the target community" [26] or is recognized by positive outlooks toward the target language group and potential for integrating into that group, or at least a desire to meet and interact with members of the group [27]. Instrumental orientation, in contrast, is a more functional orientation which refers to learners' interests in learning the language in order to achieve some non-interpersonal purpose such as to pass an exam or to advance a career [26-29]. L2 motivation does not necessitate selecting either integrative or instrumental motivation. Therefore a learner might learn an L2 well with an integrative motivation or with an instrumental one, or indeed with both [30].

[31] categorizes instrumental orientation into two groups. On the one hand, instrumentality-promotion relates to more internalized reasons for learning a language and so forms part of ideal L2 self. On the other hand, instrumentality-prevention, related to the avoidance of a feared end-state, pertained more to external reasons for learning a language, and so is subsumed into ought-to L2 self [32].

Until today, many changes have occurred in the field of second and foreign language motivation in order to make the study of motivation more relevant to classroom practice [33]. Within a social-cognitive perspective, contexts tend to be conceptualized as factors influencing the construction of motivation and one needs to study motivation partly as a function of that context" [34]. "In other words, not only are students motivated in multiple

ways, but their motivation can vary depending on the situation or the context in the classroom or schooling setting" [35].

[36,37] have extended the theory underlying motivated strategies for learning and adopted an expectancy-value approach to classroom motivation. In expectancy-value theories, motivation is described by an interaction between what the learner thinks will happen and the value or attractiveness of the planned consequences(s) [38,36]. Notice that the depth of learning in a particular course depends on the degree to which students value the learning tasks, control their cognition, experience intrinsic versus extrinsic interest in the material, avoid test anxiety and feel effective in their learning (self-efficacy beliefs).

There are different reasons to learn foreign languages and these reasons are differed from one person to another [39,32]. Believe that today with the advances in industry, technology and society, communicating with other nations is necessary, so one should know these nations' language. According to [9,28,40,20], finding a better job is the main reason to learn second languages and learning second languages means earning more money. Immigration, study abroad [23,41-42], researching, applying it in life and adaptation [43] can be considered as reasons of learning foreign languages.

Some reasons such as watching movies in second/foreign languages, listening to radio programs in second/foreign languages, reading books, magazines, newspapers in second/foreign languages, having foreign friends [28,44], following instructions in second/foreign languages [9,40] and listening to music in second/foreign languages are categorized as hobbies, activities are done for pleasure and not as a business [45].

The study of [9] undertaken on 228 Turkish university students showed that all learners, both in public and private university, were motivated to learn English as a second/foreign language, the main motivation of Turkish learners to learn English was getting a well-paying job meaning instrumental motivation and private university students' motivation level was significantly higher than public universities students'. The study of [43] conducted on Chinese students found that students believed that learning English as a second/foreign language is important, the main goal of students was instrumental and researching, using in life and adaptation are reasons to learn second/foreign languages.

[23,42,41] believe that immigration or study abroad is the only reason to learn a second/foreign language. Based on [9,40], watching movies in second/foreign languages, listening to radio programs in second/foreign languages, reading books, magazines, newspapers in second/foreign languages, having foreign friends and following instructions in second/foreign languages are reasons of learning foreign languages.

In a study which was conducted on 453 second-year students in the faculty of a large private university in Kyoto, Japan; [23] classified items concerning traveling and studying overseas as integrative motivation. The results of [42] showed that study abroad (integrative motivation) is an effective factor in learning a second/foreign language. However some studies (e.g. [9]) demonstrated that second/foreign language learning's motivation can be classified as both integrative motivation and instrumental motivation.

Gender is a factor influences on second/foreign language learning's motivation [29]. In their study found some evidence implying the effects of gender differences on motivation and attitudes toward learning a second/foreign language. These researchers comprehended that female students had greater motivation toward studying a second/ foreign language than

male students [23,46]. The study of [47] conducted on college students showed that females indicated significantly higher level of foreign language anxiety than males. Similarly, the results of [48] revealed that girls had more positive self-concepts as second/ foreign language speakers. But this study showed that girls and boys had equal positive attitudes towards learning English as a second/ foreign language. The 2000 GCSE findings demonstrated that girls outperformed boys in French, German and Spanish [46]. In their study found that, girls had a higher degree of motivation to learn foreign languages than did boys, irrespective of the language to be learnt. The studies conducted by [49,29] revealed that girls had more positive attitudes to L2 speakers.

[28] in their study investigated on Iranian students' attitudes and motivations toward learning English(as a foreign language) found that both instrumental motivation and integrative motivation were seen in Iranian learners to learn English as a foreign language and the girls had a more positive attitude toward learning English than boys [50]. In their study conducted on 780 high school students found that the motivation of female students was more than male students.

The different languages being learned, might have equal or different emotional responses from foreign language learners too [25]. In their research on a sample of 526 Hong Kong Chinese tertiary students found that there are quite distinct patterns of motivation towards the various foreign languages being learned [51] reported a differential rise in the number of students entering for GCSE examinations in French (4%), German (22%) and Spanish (40%) between 1991 and 1994 [52]. In his study found that students saw German as an easy, logical, enjoyable, interesting and useful language. The study of [53] concluded that the majority of pupils of both sexes preferred learning German to learning French. According to [46], higher need to learn French was the only reason of significant difference between French and German results of girls studying French and German.

In Iran, formal language is Farsi and other languages like English, French and German are considered as foreign languages. In recent years, a willingness to learn foreign languages has grown and is increasing in Iran and public and private language institutes are seeking to provide better outcomes through effective methods of foreign language teaching. On the other hand, research on the relationship between motivation as a crucial factor in language learning and effective foreign language teaching has done a little in Iran and most of them have examined just English. Moreover, most of these studies have examined the motivation of public institutes learners such as university students and have neglected private institutes learners' motivation and the effect of the context of language learning on the willingness to learn a foreign language. So a study on the learners of various foreign languages (English, French and German) with the aim of examining the motivation of Iranian foreign language learners, the type of motivation, integrative, instrumental or both of them, and the effect of the motivation on effective foreign language teaching in Iran is necessary. Therefore this study is investigating the motivation of Iranian foreign language (English, French and German) learners, both at public universities and language learning institutes and the effect of context, the kind of foreign language and gender on the motivation of Iranian foreign language learners to provide the condition of effective foreign language teaching and learning in Iran. So, the objective of the present research is the examining of the role of motivation in effective foreign language teaching in Iran.

Research Questions are as follows:

1. Are the foreign language (English/French/German) learners, both at public universities and language learning institutes, motivated to learn foreign languages?
2. What is the main motivation of public universities and language learning institute learners to learn foreign languages?
3. Is there any difference between public universities learners and language learning institute learners' motivation to learn foreign languages?
4. Is there any relationship between motivation to learn foreign languages and the kind of foreign language?
5. Is there any difference between male and female's motivation to learn foreign languages?

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey design to investigate the motivation of foreign language learners in Iran as an important factor in effective foreign language teaching.

2.2 Participants

The participants of this study were all of BA students of the English faculty of Isfahan University and all learners of 3 Isfahan language learning institutes. The sample was made up of 215 learners who were studying English/French/German languages at Isfahan University and 3 Isfahan language learning institutes and were selected by simple random sampling method.

2.3 Instrument

The data gathering tool was a researcher-made questionnaire including 2 parts, part 1 related to learners biography and part 2 included 12 items which ask learners about the reasons of studying second languages. These reasons categorized in 3 branches: 1) finding job, 2) immigration and study abroad and 3) hobbies. The scale of the questionnaire was 5 point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). For scoring the items, completely disagree was assumed to get the score equal to 1, and completely agree the score equal to 5. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by experts and its reliability was 0.78 with Cronbachs Alpha.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through SPSS software using one sample T-test, the Friedman test, two independent sample t-test and ANOVA.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research question 1:

Are the foreign language learners, both at public universities and language learning institutes, motivated to learn foreign languages?

The analysis of research question one is presented in Table 1. Based on Table 1, the total mean score showing the motivation of foreign language learners was 4.15 out of the total score 5. One sample t-test showed that there is a significant difference between this mean and the assumed average score of 3 ($P= 0.00$ and $<0/05$) which means that almost all of foreign language learners of 2 places, public universities and language learning institutes were motivated to learn foreign languages.

Table 1. The level of foreign language learners' motivation to learn foreign languages

	N	Mean	Sig
Total motivation	215	4.15	0.00

Research question 2:

What is the main motivation of public universities and language learning institute learners to learn foreign languages?

Table 2 represents the analysis of research question two and shows that the mean score of immigration or study abroad was the most ($M = 4.36$). In other word, the primary motivation of Iranian public universities students and language learning institutes learners to learn foreign languages was immigration or study abroad. Moreover, the findings of Freidman test showed that, in the ranking of language learning reasons, immigration and study abroad are placed in first rank and differences between ranks of foreign language learning reasons are meaningful ($P=0.001$ and $<0/05$).

Table 2. The main motivation of foreign language learners to learn foreign languages

	N	Mean	Mean ranking	Friedman Test sig
To immigrate or study abroad	212	4.36	2.23	.001
To find a better job	214	4.09	1.99	
Hobbies	206	4.11	1.79	

Research question 3:

Is there any significant difference between public universities learners and language learning institute learners' motivation to learn foreign languages?

Table 3 shows the analysis of research question three and reveals that the mean score of language learning institutes learners' motivation ($m = 4.20$) is more than the mean score of public universities learners' motivation ($m = 4.12$), but, the result of two independent sample t-test suggests that there is no significant difference between the level of motivation of public universities learners and language learning institute learners ($P= 0.20$ and $>0/05$).

Table 3. Differences between the level of motivation of public universities and foreign language learning institutes learners to learn foreign languages

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	sig
University students	104	4.12	0.48	.047	0.20
Language learning institutes learners	98	4.20	0.51	.05	

Research question 4:

Is there any relationship between the motivation to learn a foreign language and the kind of foreign language?

The analysis of research question 4 is shown in Table 4. Table 4 reveals that according to the results of ANOVA test, there is no significant difference between English, French and German as a foreign language from the level of motivation to learn a foreign language ($P=0.38$ and $>0/05$) or there is no relationship between motivation to learn foreign languages and the kind of foreign languages.

Table 4. The rate of the difference between various foreign languages (English, French and German) from the level of motivation to learn a foreign language

	F	sig
Total	0.960	.384

Research question 5:

Is there any difference between male and female's motivation to learn a foreign language?

The analysis of research question three is presented in the Table 5. Table 5 shows that according to the results of the ANOVA test, there is no significant difference between male and female's motivation to learn a foreign language ($P=0.56$ and $>0/05$).

Table 5. The rate of difference between male and female's motivation to learn a foreign language

df	F	Level of significance	sig
203	0.327	0/05	0.56

3.1 Discussion

The findings of Table 1 revealed that foreign language learners, both at public universities and language learning institutes, were motivated to learn foreign languages. This finding is in accordance with the findings of [9,43]. These studies showed that learners were motivated to learn English as a foreign/second language. This finding gave support of [36] that the depth of learning in a particular course depends on the degree to which students value the learning tasks, control their cognition, experience intrinsic versus extrinsic interest in the material, avoid test anxiety and feel effective in their learning (self-efficacy beliefs). These motivated Learners value learning foreign languages and it is one of the factors affecting in the depth of learning foreign languages.

The results of question two showed that among the reasons of learning foreign languages including immigration or study abroad, finding jobs and hobbies, the mean score of immigration or study abroad was the most. In other word, the main reason of these learners to learn a foreign language is immigration or study abroad. This result is in accordance with [23,42,41] that stated immigration or study abroad as the only reason of learning a foreign language. This finding can be in line with [32,39] that most of foreign/second language

learners immigrate or go to study abroad to familiar with new technology and new industry. In other word, these learners don't want to think or act like foreign countries people [9].

If the aim of Iranian learners who want to immigrate is "to come closer to the other language community or other ethnic groups", the main motivation of these learners is categorized as integrative motivation. This result is in accordance with [23,42] that classified items concerning traveling and studying overseas as integrative motivation.

By study overseas, Iranian learners desire to be familiar with foreign country's technology and industry, so the main motivation of these language learners to learn foreign languages is categorized as instrumental motivation. This result is in accordance with [43,9]. Based on [31], if instrumental orientation is instrumentality-promotion, it relates to more internalized reasons for learning a language.

However "being familiar with foreign countries' technology" requires "to come closer to the other language community" too, so the main motivation of Iranian learners to learn foreign languages can be categorized as both integrative and instrumental motivation. This result is in accordance with the result of [28] and the explanation of [9,30] that a learner can learn with both integrative motivation and instrumental motivation.

The results of question 3 showed that the level of learners' motivation in language learning institutes was more than the level of learners' motivation at public universities, but this difference was not significant. It means that the context of both settings is the same. This result is different from the findings of [9] that found that private university students' motivation level was significantly higher than public university students'.

The findings of question 4 showed that there was no significant difference between 3 foreign languages (English, French and German) from the level of motivation to learn a foreign language. These findings are different from the findings of [25,51,52,53] that there is a significant difference between foreign languages such as English, French and German at the level of motivation to learn these languages. One reason for the result of this research is that Iranian learners learn a foreign language just for the benefits that a language provides for them and all of foreign languages (English, French, German) have equal value for Iranian foreign language learners.

The finding of question 5 revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female's motivation to learn a foreign language. In other word, the level of motivation to learn a foreign language is the same in men and women and girls and boys have equal positive attitudes towards second/foreign language learning. This result is in accordance with [48] that girls and boys have equal positive attitudes towards foreign language learning. But this finding is not accordance with [46,23,50,28,47,49,29] that girls have a higher degree of motivation to learn foreign languages than did boys. One explanation for the result of this research is that the main reason and motivation of Iranian learners is being familiar with foreign countries' technology or new sciences and there isn't a difference between male and female in this view.

4. CONCLUSION

Since motivation has a crucial role in foreign language teaching and learning succession, foreign language teachers and instructors need to become more aware of affective factors such as integrative and instrumental motivation. Teachers who are aware of motivation may

help learners by promoting their integrative or instrumental motivation and their intrinsic motivation. They need to plan assignments or class activities concern in motivation that would provide opportunities for students to communicate and interact with native speakers or near-native speakers of L2 through social networking technology which may hold and increase their motivation in learning a foreign language.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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