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Motivation for Iraqi EFL University Students' toward Language Proficiency: A Correlational Study

A B S T R A C T

Language proficiency is dependent on numerous factors, one of these critical factors that have emerged as key influencers which is motivation. Motivation refers to the internal and external forces that direct and sustain behavior related to learning. Understanding the relationship between Language proficiency and motivation, can shed light on effective strategies for enhancing student language proficiency. The present study is conducted to determine the correlation between Iraqi EFL university students' motivation and language proficiency. The present study aims at finding out: 1-Iraqi EFL university students' level of motivation toward language proficiency. 2-The correlation between Iraqi EFL university students' with motivation and language proficiency. The total population of the study represent 300 college students who are studying in morning studies in the departments of English at the colleges of education of the universities of Tikrit and Samarra during the academic year 2023-2024. The sample of the present study is 160 third- year college students who are randomly selected from the department of English at the College of Education of the University of Tikrit. The study instruments include a motivation questionnaire and language proficiency test. The language proficiency test is prepared and all instruments are submitted to specialists in the field of teaching English as a foreign language and linguistics to ensure its face validity. The reliability of the study instruments has been secured by using Alpha Cronbach method. The values obtained are satisfactory to ensure their reliability. Then, the study instruments are administrated to the sample students. T-Test of one coefficient and multiple regression are used to analyze the data obtained and achieve the study aims. The major findings of this study can be summarized as follows: 1.Motivation in the research sample is at a low level. 2.Language proficiency in the research sample is at a high level. 3.The correlation between motivation and language proficiency is statistically significant. In the light of the results certain conclusion are formulated, most important of which are: It is found that the correlation between motivation and language proficiency is a positive and statistically significant relationship. Motivation refers to the cause of the organization to force students to do or learn things. Also motivation is vital to support goals that related to language learning.

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الدافعية لدى طلبة الجامعات الدارسين للغة الانكليزية تجاه الكفاءة اللغوية: دراسة ارتباطية

فاتن علوم محمد/ وزارة التربية اثنانوية المتفوقات انكريت

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الخلاصة:

تعتمد الكفاءة اللغوية على عوامل عدة, تعد الدافعية احدى هذه العوامل الرئيسية والتي تعد عاملاً مؤثراً. تشير الدافعية الى العوامل الداخلية و الخارجية التي توجه و تعزز السلوك المرتبط بالتعلم. إن فهم العلاقة بين الدافعية و الكفاءة اللغوية يمكن أن يسלט الضوء على استراتيجيات فعالة لتحسين كفاءة اللغة لدى الطلبة. لذلك تم اجراء الدراسة الحالية لمعرفة العلاقة الارتباطية بين الدافعية و الكفاءة اللغوية لطلبة الجامعة العراقيين الدارسين اللغة الانكليزية لغة اجنبية تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى إيجاد: 1: مستوى الدافعية تجاه الكفاءة اللغوية لدى طلبة الجامعة العراقيين الدارسين اللغة الانكليزية لغة اجنبية. 2: العلاقة بين الدافعية والكفاءة اللغوية لدى طلبة الجامعة الدارسين اللغة الانكليزية لغة اجنبية . يتكون مجتمع البحث من 300 طالب في الدراسة الصباحية في قسم اللغة الانكليزية في كليتي التربية لجامعتي تكريت وسامراء الذين تم اختيارهم عشوائياً ، تتضمن ادوات البحث استبيان (الدافعية) واختبار كفاءة اللغة. تم اعداد اختبار كفاءة اللغة من قبل الباحث و تم تقديمه الى المختصين في مجال طرائق التدريس واللغة للتأكد من صدق الاختبار. وتم تأمين ثبات ادوات البحث باستعمال الفا كرونباخ. إن القيم التي تم الحصول عليها كانت مرضية. وللتأكد من الثبات و الموثوقية.تم اعطاء ادوات الدراسة لطلبة العينة, ولتحليل البيانات التي تم الحصول عليها و تحقيق اهداف الدراسة تم استعمال اختبار لعينة واحدة و معامل ارتباط بيرسون وتحليل التباين والانحدار المتعدد. يمكن تلخيص النتائج الرئيسية لهذه الدراسة على النحو الآتي :1- يعاني الطلبة العراقيون الدارسون اللغة الانكليزية لغة اجنبية من مستوى متدن من الدافعية.2- إن الكفاءة اللغوية بحسب نتائج البحث تعد في أعلى مستوياتها.3- لقد تبين أن العلاقة بين الدافعية و الكفاءة اللغوية هي علاقة إيجابية. وفي ضوء النتائج تمت صياغة بعض الاستنتاجات واهمها : وجود علاقة ايجابية بين الدافعية و الكفاءة اللغوية. حيث إن الدافعية تعد عنصراً منظماً لقدرات الطلبة لزيادة رغبتهم في التعلم. و تعد الدافعية عاملاً حيوياً لتحقيق الأهداف وخاصة الأهداف التعليمية. الكلمات المفتاحية: الدافعية , الكفاءة اللغوية, الاصغاء, التحدث, القراءة, الكتابة.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Motivation is vital in language learning. One of the most difficult aspects of teaching is how to motivate language to student. The secret may be as it is identifying the students' motivation then making the lesson relevant and enjoyable. Motivation is a complex human construct that has long posed difficulties for those who attempt to understand and explain it for. Aliakbari and Ahmadi (2014) contend

that most students learn English because they believe it will benefit them in one way. They want to earn more money to fulfill certain education requirements, to travel abroad or to meet more people with the aid of English. Without strong motivation, students will fail in their attempt and their hopes of learning.

1.2 Aims of the study

The present study aims at finding out :

- 1-Iraqi EFL university students' level of motivation toward language proficiency.
- 2-The correlation between Iraqi EFL university students' with motivation and language proficiency.

1.3 Hypotheses of the study

-There is no statistically significant correlation in Iraqi EFL university students' motivation and language proficiency.

1.4 Limits of the study

- 1-Iraqi EFL university 3rd year students in the department of English, university of Tikrit, and Sammarra.
- 2-The academic year 2023/2024.
- 3-Language proficiency :listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

1.5 Value of the study

The study is hoped to be valuable for:

Students: Encourage the students to use their personal motivation to achieve their learning goals.

Teachers: Helping the students to be motivated and use their desires and needs to learn.

Curriculum designer : Using divers activities in curriculum that the teacher can monitor to improve students language proficiency.

1.6 Definition of the Basic Term

Motivation: According to Ryan & Deci (2000), To be motivated means to progress or to be in motion to do something.

Operational definition : Motivation can be defined as a stimulant to reach a specific goal in learning because of the learners' needs.

Language proficiency: The term “proficiency” can be interpreted in sense used by Bachman(1980) to refer in general to “knowledge, competence or ability in the use of a language, irrespective of how, where, or under what conditions it has been acquired”.

Operational definition: language proficiency refer to individuals ability to read, write, speak and comprehend a language at a standard essential to succeed in an academic setting.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1The Concept of Motivation

Although motivation researchers study this issue based on how behavior strengthens and how it leads to specific goals, consequently study of motivation is a research for “Event condition” which gives power and direction to behavior. Whenever, if we consider an event condition, for powerful and guided behavior, we enter to the territory of motivation. In fact, any agent that causes (internal or

external) activity in living creature is considered as a kind of motivation, Nabi et al.(2017).

2.2 Motivation and Education

Taylor (2012) contend that the origin of the term motivation is movere (to move). In regards to learning, motivation involves inner forces, enduring traits, behavioral responses to stimuli, and variety of beliefs and affects. Taylor added that the study of motivation can be divided into two main categories: behavioral and cognitive theories. Behavioral theories “view motivation as a change in the rate, frequency of occurrence, or form of behavior as a function of environmental events and stimuli”.

2.3 Motivation and Learning Theories

According to Weiner(2005) social cognitive motivational theory and cognitive theories of motivation are examples that reflect the view of this perspective. Different theories, in both perspectives, have proposed diverse lists of motivators, some containing a few divers, others holding a varied collection of specific divers. Here are the five theories of motivation:

- a. Reinforcement Theory (Learning Theories)
- b. Social Cognitive Theory
- c. Self-Worth Theory
- d. Self-Regulation Theories
- e. Achievement Goal Motivation Theory

2.4 language proficiency

Baclig(2020) viewed that language proficiency goes beyond the attainment of some knowledge or skill; it is the application of knowledge or skill. There are four

main skills of a language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills can be described in educational purposes in the following way:

I. Listening: is the ability to understand the language of the teachers and instructions in the classroom, comprehend and extract information, and follow the instructional dialogue through which teachers provide information.

II. Speaking: It is the ability to use oral language properly and effectively in learning activities within the classroom and in social interactions within the school.

III. Reading: Reading is the ability to comprehend various texts and using them for different purposes at the age and grade-appropriate level.

IV. Writing: It is the ability to produce written texts with content and format to complete classroom assignments at the age and grade-appropriate level.

3. Procedures

3.1 Population and Sampling

The population in the present study represent 300 college students who are studying in morning studies in the Department of English at Tikrit University and Sammarra college during the academic year 2022-2023.

The sample of the present study is 160 third-year college students who are randomly selected from the department of English at the College of Education for Humanities of the University of Tikrit during the academic year 2022-2023.

3.2 Research Instrument

3.2.1 Motivation Questionnaire

The questionnaire of motivation is adopted from Clement et. al.(1994). Its final form consists of (15) items. It is scored according to five points (strongly agree,

agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree), which are given the score(1, 2, 3, 4, 5) respectively for the negative items and vice versa for the positive items.

3.2.2 Language Proficiency Test

The language proficiency test consist of four parts, the first is devoted to reading skill, which includes (10) objective items; a score of (2) is given for the correct answer for each item and (zero) for the wrong answer, and the total score is (20).

The second part deals with writing skill, which includes essay writing to be scored according to (5) essay indicators; the highest score of each indicator is (4), and the lowest score is (1), and the total score is (20). The third part of language proficiency test is dedicated to listening skill, it includes (10) objective items. The total score is (20), given a score of (2) for the correct answer for each item and (zero) for the wrong answer. The last part is devoted for the speaking skill, which take the form of interview to be scored according to (4) speaking indicators, the highest score for the indicator (5) and the lowest score (1); the total score is also (20).

3.3 Construct validity of the questionnaires

The researcher verified the construct validity of the tow questionnaires through tow indicators:

1.Discrimination power of items indicate distinguishing between high- level and low- level individuals.

2.Internal consistency, Palmer& Groot (1981).

3.3.1 The discriminating power of items

After applying the scale to the sample members, which numbered (160) students, correcting the answer forms, and to extract the discriminatory power of the scale

items, the scores of the sample members were arranged from the highest total score to the lowest, and the two extreme groups in the total score were identified at (27%) in each group, see table (3-5).

Table (3-5)

The discriminatory power of the motivation scale items

Item no.	group	Mean	S.D	t.test	
				Computed	Tabulated
1	Upper	3.814	0.906	4.447	1.99
	Lower	3.000	0.787		
2	Upper	4.186	0.795	9.476	1.99
	Lower	2.674	0.680		
3	Upper	4.419	0.499	11.214	1.99
	Lower	2.814	0.795		
4	Upper	4.558	0.502	12.560	1.99
	Lower	2.628	0.874		
5	Upper	4.698	0.599	9.162	1.99
	Lower	3.139	0.941		
6	Upper	4.326	0.778	7.272	1.99
	Lower	3.209	0.638		
7	Upper	4.605	0.541	14.665	1.99

	Lower	2.651	0.686		
8	Upper	4.442	0.548	3.061	1.99
	Lower	3.791	1.283		
9	Upper	4.349	0.482	5.420	1.99
	Lower	3.605	0.760		
10	Upper	4.488	0.506	7.549	1.99
	Lower	3.698	0.465		
11	Upper	4.186	0.450	6.650	1.99
	Lower	2.767	1.324		
12	Upper	4.512	0.506	9.745	1.99
	Lower	3.069	0.828		
13	Upper	4.395	0.541	8.345	1.99
	Lower	3.419	0.545		
14	Upper	4.767	0.427	12.015	1.99
	Lower	2.907	0.921		
15	Upper	4.837	0.433	12.768	1.99
	Lower	2.884	0.905		

* The tabular T-value at a significance level of (0.05) and a degree of freedom (84) equals (1.99).

After calculating the t-test value calculated for all items of the motivation scale, it was found that all values are greater than the tabulated value of (1.99) at a significance level of (0.05) and a degree of freedom (84), which indicates that all items have discriminatory power between individuals who possess a higher limit of ability. And individuals who possess a minimum level of ability.

3.3.2 Internal Consistency (Items Validity)

It appears from table (3-6) that all the values of the correlation coefficients calculated for all items of the motivation scale are greater than the critical value of the correlation coefficient at a significance level of (0.05) and a degree of freedom (158), which indicates that all of the items are valid.

Table (3-6)

The items validity of the motivation scale items

Item no.	Item validity	Item no.	Item validity	Item no.	Item validity
1	0.407	6	0.583	11	0.410
2	0.659	7	0.731	12	0.693
3	0.773	8	0.337	13	0.596
4	0.707	9	0.542	14	0.702
5	0.749	10	0.361	15	0.812

*The critical value of the correlation coefficient at a significance level of (0.05) and a degree of freedom (158) is equal to (0.135).

3.3.3 Face Validity of Motivation

The researcher verified the face validity of the motivation scale by determining the definition and components of these motivation and their relative importance and preparing the items according to the importance of each component of the motivation of the scale. This was achieved when experts specialized in English language agreed on the validity of the components and items in measuring motivation.

3.3.4 Construct Validity of Motivation

The indicators that indicate construct validity are:

1. The assumption from which the researcher started is that there is a difference in the characteristic that individuals have, which is reflected in their performance and response to the scale, which is one of the effects of construct validity. Calculating the discriminatory power of the scale items and excluding non-distinctive items is an indicator of construct validity.
2. The correlation of the item to the total score of the scale : The researcher analyzed the items using the internal consistency method by calculating the correlation coefficient between the score of each item and the total score of the component to which it belongs, as this relationship is assumed to be significant and positive to be an indicator of the validity of the construct, and it has given a partial contribution to verifying the validity. The construct, as an experimental validity of the internal consistency of the scale, as indicates that Internal consistency is related to the validity of the construct.

3.3.5 Reliability of Motivation:

To calculate reliability, the scale was applied to a sample of (160) students. the (Alpha Cronbach) equation was applied to the grades of the sample members,

which numbered (160) male and female students. The value of the scale's reliability coefficient was (0.872), which is an additional indication that the scale's reliability coefficient is good.

3.4 Construct Validity of Language Proficiency Test

3.4.1 Difficulty and Discrimination Power of Items

The test was applied to the research sample of (160) male and female students, their answers were corrected, the total score was extracted, arranged in descending order, and the upper group and the lower group were determined, so the number of each group reached (43) students, at a rate of (27%). To calculate the difficulty coefficients of the items, add the number of correct answers in the upper group with the number of correct answers in the lower group and divide them by the number of members of the two groups. The item discrimination coefficients were calculated by subtracting the number of correct answers in the upper group from the number of correct answers in the lower group and dividing it by the number of members of one group .

To calculate the difficulty coefficients of the items, the answer frequencies were calculated for each grade weight, the frequencies were multiplied by the corresponding weight, summed for the two groups, and divided by the number of members of the two groups multiplied by the highest weight.

As for the paragraph discrimination coefficients, the frequencies were multiplied by the weight corresponding to the upper group, the product of multiplying the frequencies by the weight corresponding to the lower group was subtracted from it and divided by the number of members of one group multiplied by the highest weight.

To judge the effectiveness of the difficulty coefficients of the language proficiency test items and their discrimination coefficients, the researcher used indexing according to the opinion of Ebel (1972). If the difficulty coefficients are 0.19 or less, then the paragraph is very difficult, if they range between 0.20 - 0.29, then the paragraph is difficult, if they are between 0.30 - 0.69, then it is moderately difficult, and if they are between 0.70 - 0.79, then the paragraph is easy, and if it is between 0.80 and more, then the paragraph is very easy. The acceptable range for difficulty of paragraphs ranges between 0.20 - 0.80.

To judge the effectiveness of the discrimination coefficients of linguistic proficiency test items, the researcher used an index according to Ebel (1972). If the discrimination coefficients are 0.19 or less, then the item has poor discrimination and should be deleted from the test, and if it ranges between 0.20 - 0.29, then the item has borderline discrimination. The item will either be improved or deleted from the test, and if it is between 0.20 and 0.29, then the item has borderline discrimination. 0.30 - 0.69 is good, and it is preferable to improve the item , and if it is between 0.40 and more, then the item's discrimination is very good.

3.4.2 Face Validity of Language Proficiency Test

The apparent validity of the linguistic proficiency test was achieved by presenting them to a group of experts and taking their opinions on the validity and suitability of the test.

3.4.3 Construct Validity of Language Proficiency Test

Since all the test items in which they were retained have broad levels of difficulty, extending from easy to difficult, and have the ability to discriminate between individuals , this is an indication of the validity of the construct.

3.4.4 Reliability of Language Proficiency Test

In order to extract reliability in this way, the same forms were used that were used in the retest method. The values of the reliability coefficients for linguistic proficiency test were (0.819) , which are good reliability coefficients, which affects the internal consistency of the items, that the high consistency of the items affects their homogeneity and the stability of the good test , which is the degree of reliability. High compared to the values of stability coefficients in previous studies.

3.4.5 Scoring Scheme of the Questionnaires

The score of the questionnaire is based on the Likert Scale Type. Likert Scale Type is a scale with several points, usually at least three but not more than seven. The questionnaire is a multiple- choice form of five alternatives. See table (3-7)

Table (3-7)

Scoring scheme of motivation questionnaire

Item	Scale				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Partially Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Positive	1	2	3	4	5

3.4.6 Scoring Scheme of language proficiency Test

The test is scored of 80 point and consists of four questions. Each question is worth 20 marks. Question 1 has ten items and 2 marks of each item, question 2 has five criterion items four marks for each item, question 3 has four criterion items five marks for each item, and question 4 has ten items 2 marks for each item.

4.1 Data Analysis and Discussion of Results

4.2 Result and Discussion

4.2.1 The Level of Motivation among Iraqi University Students Studying English as a Foreign Language.

To achieve this goal, the researcher used the one sample T-test for the difference between the mean of the research sample for the motivation of the scale and the theoretical mean of the scale, where he calculated the arithmetic mean and the standard deviation of the scores, as shown in table (4-1).

Table (4-1)

Results of the t-test for one sample to compare the mean of the research sample on the motivation scale and the theoretical mean of the scale

Variable	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Theoretical mean	T-test	
					Computed	Tabulated
Motivation	160	57.644	7.715	75	28.455	1.960

*The value of the tabular T-test is at a significance level of (0.05) and a degree of freedom (159) equals (1.960).

It is clear from the table that the T-value for motivation is statistically significant, as the calculated T-value was greater than the tabular one. This means that there is a statistically significant difference between the sample average on the motivation scale and the theoretical average, and in favor of the research sample below average, which indicates that motivation in the research sample is at a low level.

4.1.4 Correlational Relationship between Motivation and Language Proficiency among Iraqi University Students Studying English as a Foreign Language.

To achieve this goal, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to calculate the correlation between the scores of the sample members, which numbered (160) male and female students' on the motivation scale and their scores on the Language proficiency test . Then the t-test was used to indicate the correlation coefficients, as shown in table (4-5).

Table (4-5)

The value of the correlation coefficient between motivation and language proficiency and its corresponding t-value

Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation Coefficient	T-test	
			Computed	Tabulated
Motivation	Language Proficiency	+0.508	7.362	1.960

*The value of the tabular T-test is at a significance level of (0.05) and a degree of freedom (158) equals (1.960).

It is clear from table (4-5) that the correlation coefficient between motivation and language proficiency is statistically significant, as the calculated T-values were greater than the tabulated T-values, which indicates the existence of a statistically significant positive correlation between motivation and language proficiency. The higher motivation scores, the bigger language proficiency scores.

5.1 Conclusions, Recommendations

5.2 Conclusions

In the light of studying the present study the following conclusions are drawn:

- It is found that the correlation between motivation and language proficiency is a positive and statistically significant relationship, meaning that the higher level of motivation in students, the better their language proficiency.

5.2 Recommendations

After surveying and discussing the results of the study, it is recommended:

For Teachers

-The importance of admitting student effort will motivate and encourage them to take risks and persevere. Recognize the student's effort by either by giving them a grade for their effort or providing extra points.

-Teachers should set genuine performance goals and help students attain them by encouraging them to set their own rational goals.

-Teachers can use deferent strategies to increase motivation by allowing students some choices if possible, using lessons with higher-order thinking, collaboration, and student participation, among other strategies.

For Students:

- Students have to define their success criteria by creating their Individual goal-setting structures and tactics.

For Curriculum Designer:

- Curriculum designer need to promote students' alertness, knowledge, and interest in the language classes as well as trying to support and preserve their motivation.

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