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Motivation of Iraqi Non-English Majors in Learning English

Motivasi Mahasiswa Jurusan Non-Inggris di Irak dalam Belajar Bahasa Inggris

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Abstract

This study examines the significance of motivation in English Language Teaching (ELT) among non-English majors at Al-Farahidi University in Iraq. While English courses are mandatory, effective communication remains a challenge. This research addresses the gap in understanding student-directed motivation, specifically in the Iraqi academic setting. Using a descriptive approach, a questionnaire was distributed to 50 third-year students at the College of Administration and Economics, assessing their attitudes and motivation towards learning English. The findings revealed high levels of motivation, with students recognizing the necessity of English for communication and career prospects, despite some perceiving it as complicated and irrelevant to their major. Statistically significant differences in motivation were observed based on age but not gender. The study suggests that aligning instructional approaches with students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations can enhance engagement and improve English proficiency among non-English majors, contributing valuable insights to the discourse on motivation in language learning within the Iraqi higher education context.

Highlights:

- High Motivation Level: Students recognize the necessity of English for communication and career prospects.
- Age-Based Differences: Statistically significant differences in motivation were observed based on age.
- Instructional Adaptation: Aligning teaching methods with intrinsic and extrinsic motivations can enhance student engagement and proficiency.

Keywords: Motivation, Non-English Majors, Extrinsic Motivations

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Introduction

It is a fact that, with the development of the social economy and living in an age of global information, university students' perspectives have broadened and they expect to know and learn things outside their living areas. Motivation is seen as an essential element in the effectiveness of learning a foreign language and has a significant impact on English language education. Numerous significant studies and investigations have been conducted to explore the importance of learners' motivation to learn and develop their language proficiency.

Motivation seems so clear to many of us, whether we possess it or not, and often we ascribe actions and outcomes to its immense force. In the Collins Dictionary, motivation is defined as "The act or an instance of motivating desire to do; interest or drive incentive or inducement (and in terms of psychology), the process that arouses, sustains and regulates human and animal behavior." Similarly, the Oxford Dictionary describes motivation as "A reason or reasons for acting or behaving in a particular way, or desire or willingness to do something or possess enthusiasm." Clearly, in both accounts, motivation is defined as the condition where a person is induced to act in a certain way, or where a certain subject or activity stimulates a person's desire to participate. According to Brown, "motivation is commonly thought of as an inner drive. Impulse, emotion or desire to that moves one to a particular action" [1]. He identifies three types of motivation in the first edition of his book [2]. For Compell and Pritchard, motivation has to do with a set of independent/dependent variable relationships that explain the direction, amplitude and persistence of on individual's behavior, holding constant the effects of aptitude, skills and understanding of the task and the constraints operating in the environment.

Keller clarified that "motivation refers to the choice people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect." Crookes & Schmidt. Gardner and Lambert suggested two main

types of motivation: integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation refers to the extent to which a learner is prepared to adopt the culture of the target community. Instrumental motivation is applied to the situation where a learner may need the target language in order to achieve a specific objective. In their study, Gardner and Lambert (1959) examined the role of motivation in L2 learning, two distinct types of motivation were identified: integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation refers to a type of motivation in language learning where individuals are driven by a desire to connect with the target language community on a deeper level. It goes beyond simply acquiring language skills and encompasses a broader goal of adapting into the culture and social norms of the community [3].

Motivation is a major subject matter in education. At the same time, this is one of the most critical challenges. Every teacher asked how to motivate her/his students. Motivation is critical in language learning. One of the most difficult aspects of teaching is stimulating a language student. The idea is to uncover the students' motives and then make the lesson relevant and entertaining [4]. Motivation can be the most crucial element that Academics can work to improve learning. It has been the subject of numerous theories as to what is the most effective way to inspire students and teachers. It has been a focal point across various disciplines, attracting attention from scholars in psychology, human development, education, sociology, and business. Academic motivation studies, in particular, witness diverse perspectives, with researchers employing varied terminology to convey similar concepts [5].

Notably, motivation is recognized as a complex feature influencing English Language Learners, significantly shaping the outcomes and levels of accomplishment in language acquisition. Motivation has been identified as a complicated feature that influences English Language Learners, which significantly influences the outcome and degree of accomplishment in language learning [6]. Learners' motivation varies, though; some learn for an intrinsic drive, while others are forced by extrinsic efforts, which significantly affect learners' language learning [7]. Understanding intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is fundamental for academics in various domains. It enables the design of environments that foster genuine interest and sustained engagement,acknowledging the complicated relationship between internal desires and external incentives in driving human behavior [8].

Motivation is an important factor for learning. The learners need to have the desire to learn. Motivation is the major impulse for starting to study a foreign language and, later, the driving force for continuing the long and often challenging learning process. Furthermore, all of the other components involved in foreign language learning assume some level of motivation [9].

The term motivation has several different definitions. According to R. C. Gardner, to be motivated, the learner must have something to look forward to, such as a goal or target. This goal would be to study a foreign language. There must be something that the student intends to achieve or gain with the target language, serving as the means to that end. The learner's motivation for learning another language may range from attaining a sense of success, meeting the expectations of others, or being able to buy a new automobile by getting a better job due to command of the target language [10]

Gardner believes that to be motivated, the learner necessitates, requires, and needs to have something to anticipate, expect, and long for, a reason, a principle, or a rationale for the target. In the case of learning a foreign language, this intention or target would be learning a foreign language. Learning a foreign language process occurs when the learner is motivated. So, teachers have to readily acknowledge the importance of raising the learners' motivation specifically for those who have problems in learning [11]. Consequently, motivated students are eager, committed, and willing to put up the necessary effort to study, and they eventually have a greater ability to grow their abilities in the subject being taught.

Teaching English in the Iraqi context is not an easy task, students in the university in all fields of study need to study English

as a compulsory lesson. In return, they need to learn all the skills (Listening- Speaking – Writing – Reading). Many students grasp the language, but most struggle to adequately communicate their views. These studies largely focused on teacher–directed instruction to produce effective approaches and methods of teaching the

language. This study will focus on the student's motivation to learn English as a foreign language in non-English major classes at the University of Al-farahidi.

Methods

English is universally regarded as a medium of interaction. It is taught at various levels throughout Iraq's higher education institutes. Some university programs use English as the medium of instruction. Besides, English is the language of various Iraqi conferences. The participants in the current study are the students of the College of Administration and Economics at Al-farahidi University where English is compulsory in all the stages. The participants' level varies from lower- intermediate to intermediate according to the assessment at the end of the semester. At the time of data collection, most of the students had been learning English as a foreign language in Iraq for at least 10 years.

This study relied on the descriptive approach in order to describe the variables and obtain the required data. The data collection process for this study involved administering a questionnaire of 15 items to gather information from the participants. The questionnaire was distributed to 50 participants who were in the 3rd class at the College of Administration and Economics at Al-Farahidi University. The purpose of the questionnaire was to collect data to explore the motivation of the students toward learning English as a foreign language. The students were asked to respond to each item of the questionnaire by choosing one of two options: agree or disagree.

1. Study Population

The study population consists of students from the Faculty of Management and Economics at Al-Farahidi University, where the English language is compulsory at all levels.

2. The Study Sample

The study sample consisted of 50 students from the Faculty of Management and Economics at Al-Farahidi University.

3. Validity of the Study Tool

In order to investigate the questionnaire apparent validity, it is presented to a group of specialists to measure its validity.

4. Stability of the Study Tool

In order to investigate the questionnaire reliability, Alpha-Cronbach test is used. It turns out that the value of the Alpha-Cronbach coefficient is equal to 0.87. The questionnaire was prepared based on a five-point Likert scale as shown in the following table:

The five-point Likert scale

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Table 1. *The five-point Likert scale*

Based on this, the arithmetic-mean values of the sample members' answers will be treated as follows:

Coding	1	2	3	4	5
Arithmetic-Mean	1-1.79	1.8-2.59	2.60-3.39	3.40-4.19	4.20-5
The Level	Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high

Table 2. *Mean values based on the Likert scale*

5. The Demographic Characteristics of the Study Sample

The demographic characteristics of the study sample that was selected from the mentioned study population were studied, as shown in the following table:

The Characteristic		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	25	50%
	Female	25	50%

	Total	50	100%
Age	20 years ago	18	36%
	21 years ago	15	30%
	22 years ago	10	20%
	23 years ago andAbove	7	14%
	Total	50	100%

Table 3. *The demographic characteristics of the study sample*
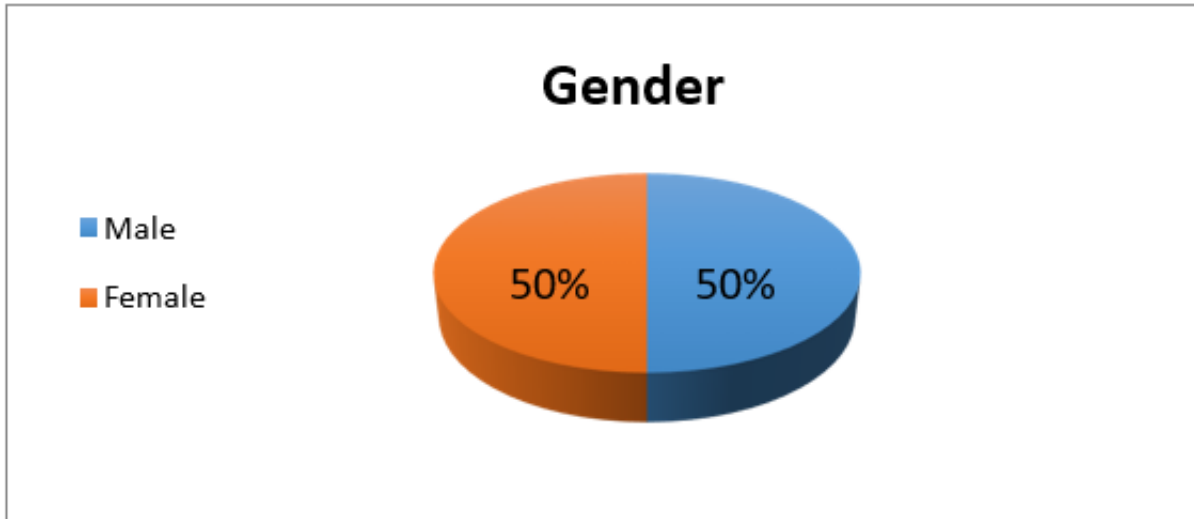
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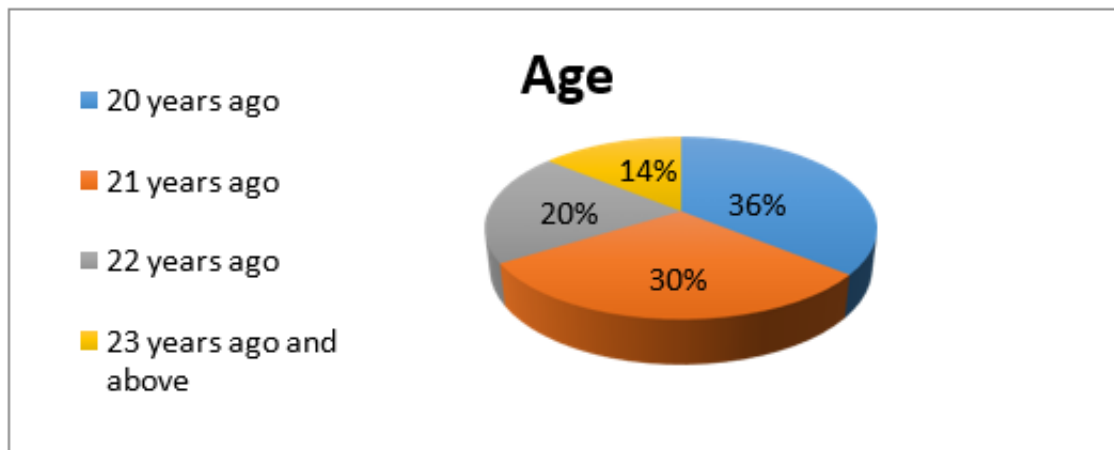
Figure 2. *Percentage Age*
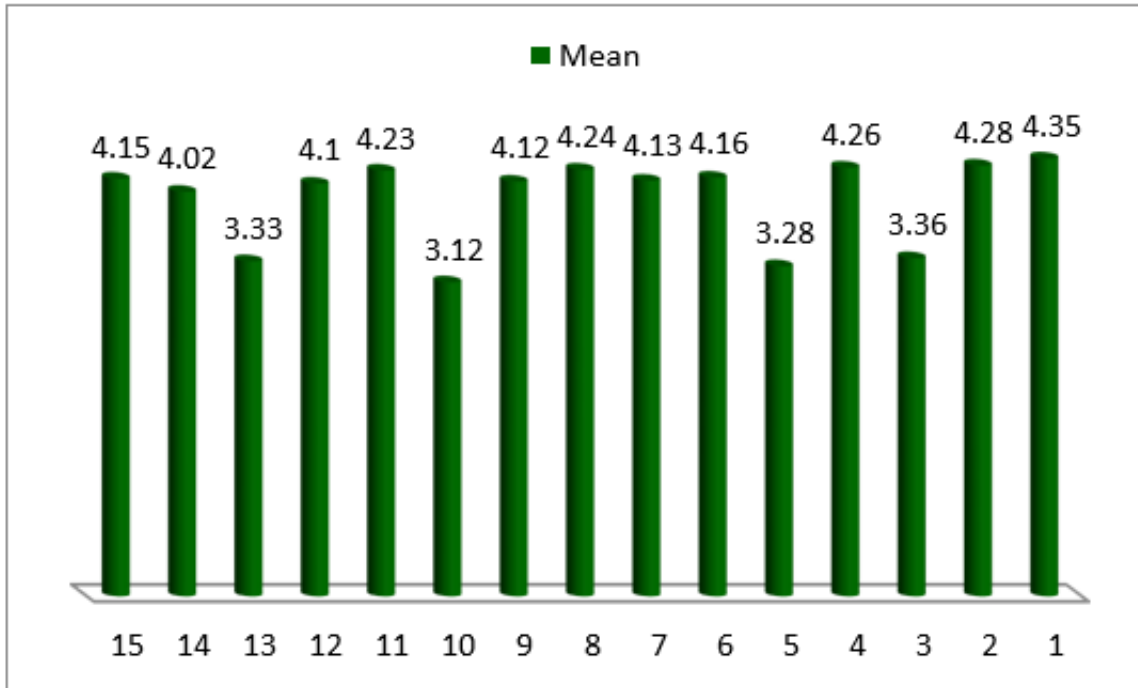
Figure 3.

No.	Questions	Mean	Deviation	%	Deg.	Materiality
1-	I enjoy English classes because I believe they are very necessary.	4.35	0.81	87%	1	Very high
2-	I have a desire to improve my English level constantly.	4.28	0.73	86%	2	Very high
3-	English is a complicated language.	3.36	0.72	67%	12	Medium
4-	English helps us communicate easily with people from different cultures.	4.26	0.83	85%	3	Very high
5-	I believe that learning English is not required for my major.	3.28	0.89	66%	14	Medium
6-	English is my favorite lesson.	4.16	0.79	83%	6	High
7-	I like to learn English because I want to live abroad.	4.13	0.69	83%	8	High
8-	I like to learn English because it is one way to get a good job.	4.24	0.80	85%	4	Very high
9-	During English classes, I would like to have as much English as possible.	4.12	0.82	82%	9	High
10-	I wish that no subjects were taught in English in the college.	3.12	0.68	62%	15	Medium
11-	I wish I could speak English perfectly.	4.23	0.66	85%	5	Very high
12-	I feel confused when I am speaking in my English class.	4.10	0.67	82%	10	High
13-	I don't think English is very important in my career.	3.33	0.85	67%	13	Medium
14-	I don't have any idea about how to improve my English.	4.02	0.60	80%	11	High
15-	I think I'm a pretty good language learner.	4.15	0.76	83%	7	High
	Total	3.94	0.75	79%	-	High

Figure 4. *The values of mean and deviation of students' answers*

The total value of the mean was (3.94) and deviation (0.75) and the materiality was high. The average value ranged between (3.12) with deviation (0.68) and (4.35) with deviation (0.81), and the materiality in some of them was moderate, in some it was great, and in others it was very great. The question "I enjoy English classes because I believe they are very necessary" with a mean (4.35) and deviation (0.81) was the first question, while, the question "I have a desire to improve my English level constantly" (4.28) and deviation (0.73) was the second one.

The question "English helps us communicate easily with people from different cultures" with a mean (4.26) and deviation (0.83) was the third question, and "I like to learn English because it is one way to get a good job" with a mean (4.24) and deviation (0.80) was the fourth question, while, the question "I wish I could speak English perfectly" with a mean(4.23) and deviation (0.66) was the fifth one.

The question "English is a complicated language" with a mean (3.36) and deviation (0.72) was the twelfth question, followed by the question "I don't think English is very important in my career" with a mean (3.33) and deviation (0.85), and then the question "I believe that learning English is not required for my major" with a mean (3.28) and deviation (0.89).The last question was "I wish that no subjects were taught in English in the college" with a mean (3.12) and deviation (0.68).

A t-test was also conducted to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the mean of the sample members' answers for both gender and age.

Gender	Frequency	Mean	Deviation	t	Indication
Male	25	4.12	0.83	1.33	0.22
Female	25	4.09	0.87	1.42	0.13

Table 4. *T-test results for the gender variable*

The previous table shows that there are no statistically significant differences at the level α≤0.05 between the mean of the sample members' answers regarding gender.

Age	Frequency	Mean	Deviation	t	Indication
20 years ago	18	4.11	0.78	2.12	0.03
21 years ago	15	4.17	0.89	2.22	0.02
22 years ago	10	4.22	0.67	2.32	0.014
23 years agoand above	7	4.24	0.87	2.34	0.017

Table 5. *T-test results for the age variable*

The previous table shows that there are statistically significant differences at the level α≤0.05 between the mean of the sample members' answers regarding age.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the analysis of the questionnaire. Fifty students filled the questionnaire. The analysis was conducted on the 15 items for the questionnaire. Appendix (1) reveals that there were two choices for each question: agree or disagree.

The first question has a high percentage 96% for the agreement but 4% for the disagreement. Question No.2 also has a high agree percentage 90% but a low disagree percentage 10%. This indicates the overwhelming majority of students enjoy English classes and recognize their necessity. Consequently, this suggests a positive attitude and a perceived importance of English education and a significant number of students express a constant desire to

improve their English proficiency, indicating a proactive approach towards language learning.

In question No. 3, both agree and disagree choices have the same percentage 50%. It illustrates that learning English language is difficult for some of them. The responses are evenly split on whether students perceive English as a complicated language. This divergence reflects varying perspectives on the language's complexity. Question No. 4 gets a very high percentage 90% for agreement and 10% for disagreement. This point shows that the students are aware of the importance of English for their communication. The majority recognizes the role of English in facilitating communication with people from different cultures, highlighting the language's global utility.

In question No. 5 : 32% percentage goes to agree but 68% for the disagree choice. A significant portion disagrees with the idea that learning English is not required for their major, indicating recognition of the language's relevance across disciplines. Question No. 6 has 80% percentage of agree that English language is favored but 20% disagree. A substantial majority considers English to be their favorite lesson, suggesting a positive engagement with the subject.

Question No.7 indicates that 74% a notable number of students express motivation to learn English with the goal of living abroad, indicating an aspiration for international experiences. but 26% of them disagree. The answers to question No.8 were 86% agree but 14% disagree. In question No. 9, 74% of the students agree but 26% of them disagree to presenting more details in English class, many students express a desire for more English content in their classes, suggesting an appetite for increased language immersion. In brief, the majority sees learning English as a means to secure good job opportunities, highlighting the practical and career-oriented motivation behind language learning.

In Question No. 10, The majority disagrees 74% with the preference for no subjects to be taught in English, indicating an overall acceptance of English as a medium of instruction. In question No.11, A significant majority 86% aspires to speak English perfectly, reflecting a high level of ambition and commitment to language proficiency. In question No.12, A considerable portion 72% of the students admits to feeling confused during English classes,

suggesting potential challenges in comprehension or communication and a great desire to be confident when they speak English but 28% disagree.

Regarding question No.13, a significant number 38% disagrees with the idea that English is very important in their career, indicating a diversity of opinions on the language's professional significance. In question No.14, a notable portion 62% indicates a lack of ideas about improving English. This could suggest a need for enhanced strategies or support in language enhancement. In question No. 15, the majority 76% perceives themselves as good language learners, indicating a positive

self-assessment in language acquisition, they claim a good experience of using English language.

In summary, the results provide a comprehensive view of students' attitudes and motivations towards learning English. The majority expresses a positive inclination towards English education, recognizing its importance for communication, career advancement, and personal development. However, variations in opinions regarding the complexity of the language, its relevance to majors, and feelings of confusion during classes highlight the diversity of perspectives and potential areas for targeted support and improvement.

Conclusion

This study explored the concept of motivation within the English Language Teaching (ELT) context, by employing a questionnaire consisting of 15 items administered to a sample of

50 students. Focused on the challenges of teaching English in the Iraqi academic environment, the research revealed the complexity of achieving this task.

Teaching English in the Iraqi context proves to be a formidable challenge, given its status as a mandatory subject for university students across diverse fields of study. The primary aim of this study was to enhance the ease of English language learning by fostering motivation among learners.

The study targets the comprehensive improvement of students' language skills—Listening, Speaking, Writing, and Reading. While many students exhibit a foundational understanding of the language, a significant portion encounters difficulties in effectively expressing their thoughts. What sets this research apart from previous studies is its concentrated emphasis on student-directed instruction, aiming to devise innovative and effective teaching approaches specifically inspired to the challenges of the English language curriculum.

Additionally, it will consider the motivation of students learning English as a foreign language in non-English major classes at the University of Al-Farahidi.

The responses, varying between agreement and disagreement, painted a nuanced picture. Notably, a majority of students acknowledged the essential benefits of learning English for career opportunities, travel, and communication. However, a substantial number also expressed the perceived complexity of the English language. Despite these challenges, the overwhelming trend in responses indicates a genuine desire among students to acquire proficiency in English

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