



Motivation and Attitude of Islamic Azad University's Faculty Members toward Learning English

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Abstract

The study aimed at evaluating the Islamic Azad University's faculty members' attitude toward learning English, their motivation and its types and also some perceived barriers toward the goal of getting proficient in English as well as some possible suggestion to make them more motivated. To achieve the aim, some questionnaires were employed and the results revealed the high interest and motivation of faculty members to learn English. The results also indicated that the participants highly valued English as the international academic language. Regarding the inhibitory factors, they mentioned being busy as one of the most important factors. Improper need analysis and consequently lack of appropriate courses were also reported to be of primary significance. As far as suggestions are concerned, matching the course content with the needs of different departments was of a significant importance.

Keywords: Motivation, Attitude, Faculty Members

1. Introduction

Motivation to learn a second or foreign language has been given a notable attention, but it wasn't always this way. Before mid 1950s there was a common belief that learning a second language involved intelligence and verbal ability. Affective concepts including attitudes, motivation and anxiety were not of significance to the educators in the field at all. Nowadays, however, one sometimes thinks of affective variables as the only important ones. To date, a bulk of research has revolved around individual differences, and the learners' individual characteristics such as attitudes and motivation, anxiety, self-esteem, field independence, intelligence, language aptitude, and learning strategies, but some of these factors might play greater roles. Motivation and attitude can be cases in point. Without some kind of it, the learner might not deploy a learning strategy, use his intelligence or to put it simply, he will not take a step forward to learn the second language (Gardner, 2001).

Research indicates that the way motivation can influence language learning outcomes is different from that of language aptitude (Gardner, 1972; Wigfield & Wentzel, 2007). The other affective factor contributing to language learning is attitude. According to Latchanna and Dagnev (2009), attitude is an important concept in finding out the impetus for human behavior and is defined as a mental state that encompasses beliefs and feelings which can predict the success in language classes. As Lennartsson (2008) states, students' not believing their own capability of learning a new language can hinder their learning. He considers positive attitude towards learning a language as a good indicator of one's ability to learn a language.

The attitude toward learning a second language and the motives behind such an endeavor are not simple to be found since the people trying to learn the second language are different and that's why the results from one study is not generalizable to other context. Although a lot of studies have been done on the Iranian university students' motivation and attitude to/toward learning English, no such a study has ever been conducted on the faculty members as the higher education leaders. The aforementioned reasoning is the impetus for the current piece of research which aims at investigating the faculty members' attitude toward learning English as a foreign language, their motivation type and their present knowledge of English. The study's main focus however would be suggesting some possible solutions to encourage the faculty members to take English courses that can boost their academic knowledge.

2. Literature Review

As Moiiinvaziri (2008) claims to teachers and the researchers motivation is one of the factors that can determine the rate and success of second/foreign language learning. Motivation provides the essential incentive to start learning the second language and later the propelling force to continue the long and demanding learning process.

Lack of enough motivation can lead even the most capable to not achieve the long-term goals, and neither an appropriate curriculum nor the best teaching practices can be enough to guarantee achievement. However, high motivation can cover remarkable shortcomings both in the individual's language aptitude and learning environment.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) consider language aptitude as an important factor in explaining individual but they emphasize that motivation can nullify the aptitude effect. They support this by exemplifying bilingual social settings in which many people master a second, mostly official language, regardless of their aptitude differences.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) classify motivation into two types of integrative and instrumental. The integrative one implies learning the language with the aim of engaging the culture of its people. Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, suggests that a learner is acquiring the language not because of his love for the language, culture or native speakers of that language but for a purpose related to getting a job or a further useful motive. Cook (2000) believes that the integrative and instrumental motivations are the primary drives for someone learning a second language.

Crookes and Schmidt (1991) believe that the dominance of the social-psychological approach has caused the failure to distinguish between the concepts of attitude, especially attitude toward the target language culture and motivation. In their view, "much of the work on motivation in SL learning has not dealt with motivation at all;" instead, the authors offer a definition of motivation "in terms of choice, engagement, and persistence, as determined by interest, relevance, expectancy, and outcomes" (p. 502).

Attitudes toward learning a second language the second language community have received considerable investigation. Direct measures of attitudes can take different forms involving diaries, questionnaires, and interviews; however, Gardner's Attitude and Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) which is a self-report consisting of a series of statements to which the learners respond on a five-point Likert scale (from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree") is the most frequently-used direct measure of attitudes

With such a background, this study aimed at answering the following question:

1. What are the faculty members' attitudes towards learning English?
2. What are the motivation levels of the faculty members' towards learning English ?
3. What are some inhibitory factors toward leaning English?
4. What are some practical solutions to increase the faculty members motivation toward learning English?

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The research participants for the present study included 50 male and female faculty members in Islamic Azad University of Kermanshah. The age range of the participants was between 31 to 45 and they had been faculty members for more than 2 years. They were either PhD holders or PhD candidates in different fields who had passed the comprehensive exam which requires passing a standard English proficiency test.

3.2 Instruments

The data collection instruments used in this study included a translated version of a questionnaire developed by Gardner to investigate motivation and attitude. The instrument was believed to be valid and reliable. It took about an hour for a participant to answer the questionnaires. The questionnaire had a likert scale and the data were analyzed based on the participants' answers in each item.

The other instrument used was a semi structured interview the questions of which were developed by the researcher after piloting interviews with three faculty members who were not included in the study. The interview took up to twenty minutes depending on the interviews responses.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

The study was quantitative and one shot in design since there was no intervention on the part of the study. The first step was asking the participants to take the questionnaires. The participants were teaching at the university so the researcher provide the questionnaires in their free time and gave the questionnaires in different time sections that is the motivation section of the questionnaire on one day and the attitude one on the other. Sometimes it was possible to hold the interview following the attitude questionnaire and sometimes on another occasion

4. Results and Discussion

In order to answer the first research question, the translated and modified version of the questionnaire was administered. The investigation was done on attitude and motivation. To collect the data, the researchers employed a questionnaire adopted from Gardner's (1985). Integrative and instrumental orientation scales of the original 6-point Likert Scale format of Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) were used, ranging from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree'. the questionnaire covered the following 7 domains representing motivation orientations (instrumental and integrative) and the attitudes of faculty members regarding the language, speech community and its culture:

- 1-Interest in Foreign languages
2. Degree of Integrativeness
3. Degree of Instrumentality

The results of the items on the first domain are as follows:

Domain 1: Interest in Foreign Languages

The following table is a summary of the participants' interest in different aspects of English language learning.

Table 1. Frequencies, Percentages and mean scores for Items of Domain

Item #	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
11	50	4	5	4.55	.96
12	50	3	5	4.3	1.05
14	50	3	5	4.72	1.08
15	50	4	5	4.65	.73
20	50	3	5	4.30	.95
22	50	4	5	4.32	.65
27	50	2	5	3.89	1.36
33	50	3	5	4.21	1.03
36	50	3	5	3.89	1.27
43	50	4	5	4.65	.65

This table shows the interest of faculty members in foreign languages. As can be seen in the table the mean score of the participants is 4.35 implying that they have a strong desire in foreign languages. In accordance with the figures, the majority of respondents stated that they wish they could speak many foreign languages perfectly (item 14). Looking at item 27 with the lowest mean score, it can be discerned that studying foreign language is enjoyable for them as well, however, with a lower mean as compared with other items.

In contrast, as can be inferred from item 36, contributors prefer to see a TV program dubbed into our language than in its own language with subtitles. To summarize, on the basis of the data gathered in relation to the faculty members' interest in foreign languages, most, if not all, of them showed interest in foreign languages.

Domain 2: Degree of Integrativeness

This section of the questionnaire sought to identify the subjects' degree of integrativeness in foreign languages.

Table 2. Frequencies, Percentages and mean scores for Items of Domain

Item #	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
4	50	3	5	4.25	.99
5	50	3	5	4.31	1.12
9	50	4	5	4.62	1.01
26	50	4	5	4.53	.93
				Overall mean	4.43

The overall computed mean score of 4.43 clearly implies that respondents have a high degree of integrativeness in English. Based on the faculty members' response to item 9 with highest mean score, almost all of them agreed that studying English is important because it will allow them to meet and converse with more and varied people. On the contrary, item 4, asking whether there would be a great loss if Iran had no contact with English-speaking countries has the least mean score, compared with other items of the table.

Domain 3: Degree of Instrumentality

Table 3. Frequencies, Percentages and mean scores for Items of Domain

Item #	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
3	50	3	5	4.01	1.15
8	50	3	5	3.95	1.27
10	50	3	5	4.21	1.14
16	50	2	5	3.27	1.32
				Overall mean	3.86

The third domain, regarding the first research question, dealt with the degree of instrumentality of English to faculty members. Looking at the total mean score, 3.86, it can be inferred that they have an integrative orientation in English rather than merely considering it as an instrument. Item 16, with the lowest mean, which was based on their perception of English as an instrument to further their education clearly elaborates on why English doesn't enjoy instrumentality

for faculty members. As all the faculty members are PhD holders or candidates, English is not useful for them furthermore to continue their education. In general, in all the eight questions surveyed, the number of respondents with an integrative orientation toward a foreign language is higher than that of subjects in favor of instrumental orientation.

The second research question dealt with the faculty members' attitude toward learning English. The attitude was investigated from three different perspectives namely; attitudes towards learning English, attitudes toward English-speaking people and desire to learn English.

Domain 1: Attitudes towards Learning English

Considering the question, the following results were observed.

Table 4. Attitudes towards Learning English

Item #	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
7	50	4	5	4.55	.96
28	50	3	5	4.30	1.05
31	50	3	5	4.72	1.08
38	50	4	5	4.32	.65
39	50	3	5	4.30	.95
41	50	2	5	3.89	1.36
42	50	4	5	4.65	.65
44	50	4	5	4.65	.73
45	50	3	5	4.21	1.03
46	50	3	5	3.89	1.27

This table demonstrates the respondents' attitude towards learning English. The overall computed mean of 4.45 can be interpreted as the positive attitude of faculty members toward learning English. On one hand, according to the item 31, the majority of respondents strongly believed that the development of their country is possible mainly by educated people who know English well proving their positive attitude towards learning English. On the other hand, responses to the item 46 with the lowest mean score reflects that they don't think English is an essential part of school curriculum. Likewise, base on the item 41, they agreed that teaching of English should start at the very first grade in the Iranians schools. Moreover, as can be inferred from item 7, subjects asserted that learning English is not a waste of time. Therefore, the results in the table are a clear indication that the participants assume learning English as a valuable goal.

Domain 2: Attitudes toward English-speaking People

This table represents faculty members' attitudes toward English-speaking people. As depicted in the table, it is obvious that the respondents mostly do not have positive views on English-speaking people.

Table 5. Attitudes toward English-speaking People

Item #	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
6	50	2	5	3.56	1.28
1	50	2	5	3.55	1.21
13	50	2	5	3.25	1.36
25	50	2	5	3.20	1.25
32	50	3	5	4.20	1.12
34	50	3	5	3.82	1.46
37	50	2	5	4.32	1.27
40	50	3	5	4.30	1.12

In all the seven items investigated subjects' attitude, with total mean score of 3.7, four items have lower means. With regard to items 6, it can be deduced that most of them do not consider native English speakers as kind and very sociable. Nonetheless, based on item 37, most respondents were reported that they wish they could have many native English speaking friends; overall results of the table did not reveal favorable attitudes toward English-speaking people.

Domain 3: Desire to Learn English

Information regarding faculty members' desire to learn English can be obtained in table.6.

Table 6. Desire to Learn English

Item #	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
2	50	2	5	3.21	1.32
17	50	2	5	3.25	1.37
18	50	2	5	3.21	1.22
19	50	2	5	3.85	1.56
21	50	2	5	3.26	1.09
23	50	2	5	3.12	1.10
24	50	2	5	3.12	1.41
29	50	2	5	3.65	1.49
30	50	2	5	3.19	1.23
35	50	3	5	3.92	1.63

From total mean score, 3.38, it can be deduced that respondents did not express keen desire to learn English as a foreign language. It is worthy to note that, of a total of 10 questions, merely three items, 19, 29 and 35, have higher mean than total mean score. Considering item 35, with the highest mean, 3.92, participants stated that they wish they were fluent in English. It is inferable from items 23 and 24 that subjects are losing their desire to know English compared to the past and thinking about quitting English. Summing up the results, it can be concluded that faculty members' desire to learn English is fairly poor or, at least, used to have strong desire than the present time.

The study showed that the faculty members were highly motivated both integratively and instrumentally to learn English. Results revealed a high instrumental but a moderate integrative motivation. Although there has been no study to consider faculty members as the participants but the results of the study is in line with many studies conducted in Iranian context; Ali Akbari and Ahmadi (2014) is a case in point. Their study investigate female English students' integrative and instrumental motivation in intermediate level in Ilam, Iran. The results indicated a high instrumental as well as a moderate integrative motivation.

In another study, Mehrpour and Vojdani (2012) found that the technological, sociological and scientific changes in the globalization process had a great impact on Iranian EFL learners' who were mainly instrumentally motivated to learn the second language. Challak and Kassaian (2010) investigated the various socio-psychological orientations of Iranian undergraduate students to learn English. They studied the motivation orientations of the students and their attitudes towards the target language and its related community. The study indicated that the Iranian undergraduates learn the English for both 'instrumental' and 'integrative' reasons and their attitudes towards the target language community and its members were highly positive.

Regarding the attitude toward learning English, it was found that the faculty members think highly of the target language community and its members. Mahdavi-Zafarghandi and Jodai (2012) studies the attitudes toward English and English learning at an Iranian military university. They found that the participants had a positive attitude toward learning English and the English community.

5. Conclusions and Implications

Knowing English as the most used language in the academic world is an essential skill for everyone in every field. The essentiality is even more evident for faculty members as people more involved in academic work. Since motivation is the primary trigger for people to start something, the study aimed at investigating faculty members' motivation and also their attitude toward learning English. It also aimed at finding the barriers to learn English and also providing some suggestions to overcome the barriers. The results indicated the high motivation and also the positive attitude of the faculty members toward the English speaking people and also the societies they live in them. Regarding the barriers, time and the appropriateness of the courses were the most effective ones. Most of the faculty members consider language learning as a time consuming and boring process, an opinion which lies in the English teaching system in Iranian context. Accurate need analysis seems to be the key to motivate the faculty members to devote some time to learning English. As found based on the questionnaire most of the participants were interested in short term survival courses rather than long term but more rewarding courses.

The results of the study have some implications for university deans. The results suggest that the deans should run some short term courses, of course based on need analysis, to make the faculty members more proficient in English. It is recommended that the ability to speak and write in English should be a prerequisite to learning English since no international conference can be attended without the ability to speak in English and no article can be written without mastering writing skill.

The fact that the participants had a positive attitude toward English and are highly motivated to learn it is in contrast with the data acquired based on the personal information questionnaire since despite their high motivation, the faculty members didn't want to attend an English course. Most of them reported themselves to be weak in English especially in writing and speaking English while they were highly motivated to learn the skills but this motivation seemed to be of a kind that cannot trigger any action on their part.

The results of the study can be inspiring to the Islamic Azad University policy makers in that they have to find ways to motivate the faculty members to learn English as the most widely used language in all the academic fields. It can also be fruitful to syllabus designers to devise a course plan that works best for such a target population.

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