



Impediments to Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation in Learning English as a Foreign Language among Primary Libyan School Students

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معوقات الدافعية الذاتية والخارجية في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لدى طلاب المدارس الابتدائية الليبية

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Abstract

This study investigates the impediments to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) among Libyan primary school students. Particularly, language learning and language acquisition at early stages are influenced by motivational aspects. Using a descriptive survey-based research design, the study identifies psychological, pedagogical, and contextual factors that hinder learners' motivation. The data were collected through questionnaires administered to English language teachers and upper-grade primary students. The survey reveals that a lack of engaging instructional activities, limited resources, low learner autonomy, and unpredictable reward systems significantly affect both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The study concludes with pedagogical recommendations targeted at improving motivational aspects in Libyan primary EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Intrinsic motivation, Extrinsic motivation, Learning, Primary school.

المخلص:

تتقصى هذه الدراسة معوقات الدافعية الداخلية والخارجية في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية (EFL) لدى طلاب المدارس الابتدائية الليبية. وتتأثر عملية تعلم اللغة واكتسابها في المراحل المبكرة بشكل كبير بالجوانب التحفيزية. وباعتماد منهج بحثي وصفي قائم على المسح، تحدد الدراسة العوامل النفسية والتربوية والسياقية التي تعيق دافعية المتعلمين. وقد جُمعت البيانات الإحصائية من خلال استبيانات وُزعت على معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية وطلاب الصفوف العليا بالمرحلة الابتدائية. وكشف المسح أن نقص الأنشطة التعليمية التفاعلية، ومحدودية الموارد، وضعف استقلالية المتعلم، ونظم المكافآت غير المتوقعة؛ تؤثر بشكل جوهري على كل من الدافعية الداخلية والخارجية. وتخلص الدراسة إلى تقديم توصيات تربوية تهدف إلى تحسين الجوانب التحفيزية في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية بالمرحلة الابتدائية في ليبيا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الدافعية الداخلية، الدافعية الخارجية، التعلم، المدرسة الابتدائية.

Introduction

Motivation plays a critical impact on second language acquisition and language learning. Language acquisition is opposed to learning and is a subconscious process similar to that by which children acquire their first language (Kramina, 2000: 27). Despite that, (Ushioda, 2008; Ellis, 2008; Zidan, 2025)

established that motivated learners are the most successful students in learning and acquiring a second language.

Learning English language has become increasingly important in Libya fundamentally at early stages of learning due to the development of education and the growing need for international communication. English is taught at the primary school level; however, low achievement and limited engagement are detected. Motivation dictates to the inclusion of learner's participation with language input, perseveres in learning tasks, and develops communicative competence. It is essential for educationalists understand the impediments that barriers motivation at the primary level.

Research Issue

Despite the curriculum development of English in the Libyan primary schools, students often show low interest and weak performance. Teachers notice learners' struggling in attention and active participation. The present study reports the problem by distinguishing the obstacles to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in EFL learning at the primary level.

Research Questions

1. What are the main impediments to intrinsic motivation in learning English among Libyan primary school students?
2. What are the main impediments to extrinsic motivation in learning English among Libyan primary school students?
3. How do educational and contextual aspects subscribe motivational problems in EFL classrooms?

Significance of the Study

The present study contributes to the limited form of research on motivation in primary EFL education in Libya. Its results may support instructors, curriculum designers, and educational institutions in developing effective motivational strategies shaped to young learners.

Literature Review

Motivation in Language Learning

In terms of motivation, (Johnstone 1999) viewed motivation as a stimulus for achieving a particular purpose on an abstract level. Similarly, motivation is the cause of the people's actions, achievements and failures (Elliot and Covington, 2001 cited in Hashemi, et al.,2025). Motivation in learning might be intrinsic or extrinsic influenced by the instructional situation. Seven (2020) stressed that motivation is an effective method in language learning development. According to (Dörnyei, 2009), young learners can be motivated by teacher's enthusiasm, classroom atmosphere, and rewards from parents and teachers. Thus, it simply defined that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation moves learners to perform the actions and engagements.

Intrinsic Motivation in EFL Contexts

Intrinsic motivation arises from learners' inner feelings satisfaction. Previous studies by (Dörnyei, 2001, and Ozgur & Griffiths 2013) indicate that successful test results correlated to intrinsically motivated students who benefit from interactive activities, games, and meaningful communication. Low intrinsic motivated learners suffer from disengaged such activities. Specifically, intrinsic motivation (inner feelings) tends to be more supportable in children's education than extrinsic motivation (external feelings).

Extrinsic Motivation in EFL Contexts

Extrinsic motivation is a key element at the primary stage of learning. Extrinsic motivation can be associated with external rewards from outside such as grades, praise, and parental approval. (Harmer, 2007; Slavin, 2014) established that primary school learners are often encouraged by external factors from teachers and parents, such factors powered by rewards or praise. Additionally, extrinsic motivators may be driven to avoid punishment from teachers and parents (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Motivation Studies in Libya

Primary educational learners in the Libyan context have mainly focused on extrinsic motivation than intrinsic motivation due to the traditional teaching method. Libyan students as EFL learners receive English input only from English lessons in classes. Moreover, EFL Libyan teachers face challenges to motivate learners effectively. These challenges may relate to the pressure of teaching time to finish the lesson, teaching environment, learners' anxiety and lack of teachers' experience to communicate with young learners. Despite that, Libyan teachers attempt to offer the appropriate technique to explain the lessons. Additionally, few studies consider focusing on impediments of motivation, specifically on Libyan primary schools.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive quantitative design by employing questionnaires to collect data in order to answer the research question. Questionnaires can describe what people think (Dörnyei&

Taguchi, 2010). However, questionnaires minimize the opportunity to provide real answers from what teachers actually believe, but instead of that, teachers express what the researchers want to hear (ibid).

Participants

The participants were from primary school English teachers and students at grades 4 to 6 in public Libyan schools in Tripoli.

Instruments

Two questionnaires were ordered: A teacher questionnaire focusing on instructional practices and observed motivational impediments.

A student questionnaire evaluating intrinsic and extrinsic motivation impediments using a Likert-scale format.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was obtained through experts having strong backgrounds of either English language teaching or quantitative research. Lewis & Lalla (2007) highlighted that validity is ensured when any measuring instrument measures what is prepared to measure.

Data Analysis

This systematic process analyzed the data using descriptive statistics (means and percentages).

Results and Discussion

Impediments to Intrinsic Motivation

The results of this study were obtained from 10 English teachers of Libyan primary schools who participate in the questionnaire and 80 learners in the same intended schools. The following table will show the percentages and rates of intrinsic factors of motivation that impeded learners' motivation.

Table 1: Impediments to Intrinsic Motivation.

Item	Impediments to intrinsic motivation	Mean	Interpretation
1	Low confidence and learner's autonomy	3.5	Moderate
2	Lack of using activities	4.0	High
3	Fear of making mistakes	4.3	Very high
4	Real-life language context	3.9	High

The interpreted results as shown in table 1 indicate that learners' fear of making mistakes is the most impediment to intrinsic motivation, followed by limited use of interesting activities and then functioned language context. Low confidence in learning and learners' autonomy was ascertained to be the least impediments. The findings indicate that major intrinsic impediments include:

Anxiety

Anxious students who fear of making mistakes as insufficient confidence may reduce willingness to participate in language learning. The study found that anxious students show unwillingness to learn a language which impeded intrinsic motivation even with motivation from teachers. A complex relationship between successful language learning and anxiety level impacts on intrinsic motivations of learners (Dörnyei, 1990; Dörnyei & Otto, 1998; Hashwani, 2008). Wu (2023:371) confirmed that Language instruction and learning have identified anxiety and motivation as key elements influencing students' capacity to learn a foreign language.

Lack of activities

Dörnyei, 2001 and Benson, 2011) announced that lack of participating learners in classroom activities may result in learner's boredom and that will decrease intrinsic motivation. In this study, significant passivity of participation in learning recognized, and this leads to learner demotivation. Additionally, using limited classroom activities and traditional teaching methods decline learners' enjoyment in learning. Insufficient opportunities for interactive or meaningful tasks affect learners' intrinsic motivation (Brown, 2007). In contrast, motivation is increased when learners have opportunities for active involvement in classroom activities (Harmer, 2007).

learners' autonomy

This issue has been considerably more controversial. Autonomy provides learners a sense of control to enhance motivation. Deci & Ryan (2000) demonstrated that when teachers and parents are more autonomy supportive, learners show more mastery in learning English than who are to be controlled. In addition, Dörnyei (2001) explained that autonomy in classroom practices produce more motivation in learning the language. This study discovered that controlling teachers impeded intrinsic motivation in learning the English language, and teachers do not catalyze the desire of challenge in learners to learn and explore themselves. Primary learners often show little control over learning tasks leads to unwillingness in learning participation.

Language context

Little opportunity to use of a real-life language context produces demotivated learners. Language learning motivation is strongly influenced by social, culture and political language context of learners (Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, 2009). This study admitted that young learners perform limited use of the target language for real communication purposes. Learning context shapes inner learning motivation when classroom context provides meaningful reasons and authentic opportunity for language use.

Impediments to Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation reflects students' external incentives to learn English such as rewards, degrees, and praise. The following table will show the percentages and the rates of extrinsic factors of motivation that impeded learners' motivation.

Table 2: Impediments to Extrinsic Motivation.

Item	Impediments to Extrinsic Motivation	Mean	Interpretation
5	Rewards and praise from teachers	4.3	Very high
6	Rewards and praise from parents	3.9	Very high
7	Limited resources	3.6	High
8	Convenient classroom environment	3.5	High

The interpretation of results shows that rewards and praise from teachers are the highly impediment to intrinsic motivation followed by rewards from parents. Limited resources and convenient classroom environment are regarded to be as the least ones. Identified extrinsic impediments in the Libyan primary context include:

Reward system

Primary school learners are more responsive to external encouragements than internal interest. This highlights the importance of examining extrinsic motivation in the present study according to inconsistent reward systems. Salvin (2014) argued that rewards and reinforcement are promoted effectively among young learners. Therefore, the appropriate rewards can play a meaningful role in learning English, especially during the early stages of language acquisition. The present study reported that learners are highly motivated to learn the language by praise and rewards from teachers, which helped maintain students' engagements and participation in learning. However, the study observed learning with limited inconsistent reward, which diminished the interest to learn or participate in learning.

Class size

According to Roshan et. al., (2022) large class size declined students' outcomes because of the interaction between teachers and learners, which are not developed easily. Teachers in the present study are challenged to boost good teaching and learning because of large size and limited resources to cover the educational needs. Smaller class size produces positive interaction and less distraction environment. According to (Kawinganesh, 2024:2) The smaller class sizes ensure a more inclusive and collaborative environment concerning the classroom dynamics. Teachers can handle the misbehaviors much more effectively, and fewer instances of class disturbance occur.

Conclusion

To sum up, the above content shows that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are two of the most essential factors in the field of foreign language learning. English language learning in Libyan primary schools is significant affected by intrinsic and extrinsic motivational impediments. Language teachers and instructors should sustain students' learning of English at convenient circumstances for primary school learners.

Recommendations for further studies

The study can be more beneficial if it is conducted by using interviews and observations to know more about barriers to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in learning English among primary school learners. In addition, it would be more valuable to conduct the study with more than 10 teachers and 80 students, to build a more comprehensive picture in impediments to motivation in primary school learners. More studies and analysis should be useful about the topic to support the results.

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