

Developing Communication Skills Through Motivation Among Acharya Nagarjuna University Students

Tulluri Venkateswarlu

Department of English

Acharya Nagarjuna University

Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India

Professor M Suresh Kumar

Supervisor, Department of English

Acharya Nagarjuna University

Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India

prabhu.eflu@gmail.com

Abstract

The present study analyses and determines various orientations of Acharya Nagarjuna University students for learning English. The descriptive and correlational approaches were used to investigate the participants' motivations. The researcher adapted questionnaires available from the literature to quantitatively collect data. The results show that university students are highly motivated to learn English and therefore, it suggests that motivation is an important variable that shapes learners' idea about English language learning. The results also show that students of different gender and majors had different perspectives about English learning. The conclusions and recommendations of the present study provide platform for future investigations into EFL learners' motivation in other areas of India with regional medium students or in similar settings in ESL speaking countries to find out differences in students' orientations.

Keywords: Motivation, EFL, ESL, Language learning, and Skills development.

Introduction

In some countries, English is the sole or dominant language. It has that role in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland. In other countries, English is widely used as a means of communication between people who have different native languages, even though it is the needed and dominant language of the country.

English is studied as a foreign language in countries where it is not generally used as a medium of communication, whereas in India, English is a second language. It is usually the first or most commonly taught foreign language in many countries, and people understand it a little at least. Nayk (2019) indicates that English is usually studied for several reasons such as to fulfil school/university requirements; to function and compete effectively in the global economy of today and the future; to increase employment opportunities and salary potential; to develop intercultural sensitivity, to increase global understanding; to improve English vocabulary and language proficiency in order to communicate with members of that language community; to improve critical and creative thinking skills; to improve one's education; to enhance travel and study opportunities; to enjoy great literary and musical masterpieces and films in English language; to gain social power (prestige); to please one's parents and many more.

In India today, there has been a prominent shift in attitudes towards learning English within the field of English language learning and teaching over the last ten years with greater emphasis being put on learners and learning rather than on teachers and teaching, Sengkey, V. (2018). Learners' needs, interests, attitudes and motivation have become important factors to be considered in educational policies. Students have become the focus of attention in any curriculum planning, design, and development. The emphasis is overwhelmingly on the side of learner-centered practices that honour individual learner

perspectives and needs for competence. The voices of the students themselves provide even more support for this perspective. Listening to the voices of students is increasingly being advocated by researchers concerned with enhancing student motivation (Sengkey, 2018 and Loganathan et al., 2016).

Gallego, M. T. (2012), argues that motivation is the 'neglected heart' of our understanding of how to design instruction. Many teachers believe that by sticking to the language materials and trying to discipline their refractory students, they will manage to create a classroom environment that will be conducive to learning. Nevertheless, these teachers seem to lose sight of the fact that, unless they understand their students' goals for learning and work hard to meet these goals, they will fail to improve their English proficiency. What is more, they will not be able to form a cohesive and coherent group; unless they succeed in turning most "curriculum goals" into "group goals" (goals accepted by the group members, that is, students). According to Coskun, L. (2014) education must focus on the learner whose motivation should be considered as an integral part of learning. The concept of language learning motivation has become central to language learning for it is an important factor affecting language proficiency and it helps learners achieve their goals.

Research problem:

It is the researcher's belief that a better understanding of language learners' motivation can have a beneficial effect on the process of attempting to help language learners in learning English as a second language/foreign language. Researcher found that students at many universities often fail to reach their full potential as English language learners due to low motivation. Some of the factors that affect their motivation relate to the country's education system in general. Others reflect a lack of understanding of learners' motivation and institutional and cultural views of language learning in particular. Thus, students' motivation

should be investigated so that their goals can be adequately identified, developed, met and satisfied. These goals should be based on the actual needs of the learners and should also be stated clearly for both learners and teachers.

A considerable amount of research has been undertaken to examine motivation in second/foreign language learning. The motivation studies carried out by researcher have suggested that different goals for learning have an impact on the level of achievement in a second/foreign language. However, few studies appear to have been done on students of different majors in the same social, geographical and cultural context. Those studies are carried out in Acharya Nagarjuna University. Researcher suggested the importance of studying students' motivation at higher levels to find out communication skills development in students' orientations.

The present study, therefore, intends to examine the impact of students' gender and academic background on motivational orientations to develop communication skills.

Research Questions:

On the basis of the considerations mentioned above, the present study addresses the following research questions:

- 1- What are the goals of the Acharya Nagarjuna University students for learning English in terms of integrative, instrumental and coercive motivation?
- 2- To what extent are those students motivated for studying English?
- 3- What is the impact of students' majors and gender on their motivation?

Hypotheses:

- 1- Acharya Nagarjuna University students are significantly motivated to learn English.
- 2- There are significant statistical differences in motivation between male and

female computer students.

3- There are significant statistical differences within each of the five groups' responses to items measuring integrative, instrumental and coercive orientation in favour of instrumental orientation.

4- There are significant statistical differences among university students, of different majors and gender, in their orientations for English language in favour of computer science students.

Objectives of the Study:

This study aims at:

- 1- Surveying a sample of Acharya Nagarjuna University students with the aim of obtaining information regarding their motivation for learning English.
- 2- Identifying gender differences in motivation for learning English.
- 3- Investigating differences in motivations among university students of different majors (inter-group differences).
- 4- Investigating differences in motivations within each of the five groups of the participants (intra-group differences).

Literature Review:

There is a wide variety of factors affecting Foreign Language acquisition or English as a second language such as: age, attitude, motivation, and aptitude, amount of exposure, and anxiety. These are also responsible for individual differences in learning a foreign language. CS Prabhu et al. (2019), venkat et al., (2009) and Sandra (2015), state that individual differences have a significant impact on overall foreign language acquisition and that motivation is concerned with foreign language enhancement. Motivation has been found to be

correlated with a number of factors, such as perseverance, classroom behaviours and L2 achievement. Therefore, having a deeper understanding of students' motivation in Acharya Nagarjuna University allows teachers, curriculum planners and policy makers to improve teaching practices and policies and consequently improve achievement in English.

Investigating EFL learner's motivation is also emphasized by Researcher, who remarks that motivation is one of the keys to successful language learning. Maintaining a high level of motivation during a period of language learning is one of the best ways to make the whole process more successful. As each individual is motivated in different ways, we have to find the right balance of incentives to succeed and disincentives to fail, encouragement, and the right environment in which to learn. Researcher argues that motivation is one variable, which, combined with other factors, influences a learner's success in foreign language learning. Support to this research has been demonstrated by Akhil Nayak who found that differences in motivation were responsible for differences in achievement. Researcher believes that understanding learners' motivation helps us to rethink our models of learners and learning. It means a relatively dramatic transformation in what we think, as well as what we know about ourselves from experience with our capacities for accessing natural learning and motivation to learn. Most importantly, however, it involves a willingness to entertain alternative perspectives of motivation and what schools and classrooms, teachers and teaching processes need to look like for students to love to learn in school and in life. It means inspiring a thirst for knowledge that leads to competent performance as a natural outcome of learning and schooling. Researcher, highlighting the importance of analysing students' motivation, believes that unless teachers increase their learners' 'goal-orientedness'; make curriculum relevant for them, and create realistic learner beliefs, they will come up against a classroom environment fraught with lack of cohesiveness and rebellion.

In an identical view, Mat & Yunus (2014) explain that motivation is the key to all

learning and that lack of motivation is perhaps the biggest obstacle faced by teachers, counsellors, school administrators and parents. They indicate that behaviour problems in the classroom often, or always, seem to be linked to the lack of motivation. Fontecha & Gallego (2012) argue that academic achievement is more a product of appropriate placement of priorities and responsible behavior than it is of intelligence. They go on to emphasize that intelligent students are often out-performed by less bright students with high motivation. Similarly, Sengkey (2018) confirms that motivation is the backbone of any classroom. When the students are motivated, the teacher can perform his/her job the best. A teacher can do a lot to improve the students' motivation, and the effort involved is an essential part of the teaching profession. In conclusion, the literature on the role of motivation in second language acquisition has shown that differences in motivation were responsible for differences in achievement. Motivation to learn a foreign language was found to be related to the needs of language learners and that motivation influences second/foreign language achievement.

Definition of Motivation

Motivation has been identified as the learner's goal of learning. It is a major part that determines success in foreign language learning/English as a second language learning. Motivation is also defined as the incentive to on-going goal-seeking endeavours. It is important since it decides learner's active contribution to learning (Shams, 2008). Motivation is an internal drive that makes an individual run, the best he can to satisfy his learning desires.

Intrinsic Motivation

The key element of motivation is to attract the learners' attention and direct their energy for learning. Intrinsic motivation comes from inside learners, Smari & Javid (2011). An intrinsic motivated learner studies because he likes learning. Prabhu CS (2014) claims that

intrinsic motivated learners are usually successful since they are concerned with learning responsibilities for the sake of learning rather than for certificates or job opportunities (extrinsic). More precisely, intrinsic motivation refers to motivation to involve in a task because it is pleasant and sustaining to do. David crystal (2017) claims that performance in foreign language is positively influenced by motivation when learners are interested in learning goals, that is, intrinsically oriented. According to Loganathan (2016), intrinsic motivation is usually higher if learners are internally willing to learn.

Extrinsic Motivation

An extrinsically motivated learner usually studies in order to receive a reward, like an academic certificate or a good job, Crystal (2005). A learner is extrinsically motivated when he seeks a tangible goal. David crystal (2014), however, claims that many activities are both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. Students study hard because they are both thrilled by learning and understanding of a particular phenomenon (e.g., foreign language) and because they are motivated to succeed in the exams following the language course. Researcher believes that extrinsic rewards and other external events that are perceived by individuals as controlling their behavior will undermine intrinsic motivation. When they are informative and positive, they will satisfy the need for competence and efficacy, and hence increase the intrinsic motivation.

Integrative Motivation

It has been concluded that successful EFL learners are those who are interactively motivated to learn about the English speaking-people community and their way of life. When someone moves to a new community that uses the target language in its social interactions, integrative motivation is a key factor in determining the learner's proficiency level in the

language. In such a case integrative motivation is necessary to maintain an appreciation for cultural diversity and for successful communication.

Instrumental Motivation

Instrumental motivation emphasizes a desire to obtain something tangible as a result of studying the foreign language or second language (Coskun 2014). Learners with an instrumental oriented view view language learning as a means of getting a good job or as a financial reward (Yeung 2011).

Coercive Motivation

Sometimes, students are pressurized to study to please their parents, relatives or friends. This type of motivation is called Coercive Motivation. Learners who are coercively oriented for learning don't like the foreign language and are usually under pressure and feel obliged to learn it. Therefore, learners with coercive orientation have to study to please their families or to fulfil curricula obligations and so forth.

Research Methodology

Participants

The participants were 60 male and 60 female Acharya Nagarjuna University students. These 120 students were selected randomly from different classes at the School of Social Science and Life Sciences graduates at Acharya Nagarjuna University. Their academic backgrounds were chemistry, biology, and microbiology and computer science.

The Questionnaire

It is the researchers' belief that university students' gender and academic background affect their motivation for studying English in Andhra Pradesh. A questionnaire was developed and administered in English. It was adapted by the researcher. It included 19 items categorized under six domains (Family, Friendship, Education, Employment, Internet and Enjoyment). The items deal with the views of the respondents regarding the reasons for wanting to learn English. Items 4, 5, 14, 17, 18 and 19 have been classified as measuring integrative orientation.

Items 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15 and 16 were subsumed under instrumental orientation. Finally, items 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7 were categorized as "coercive orientation".

Researcher taught classes 3 weeks, to develop their communicational skills. Materials were designed by the researcher; 19 tasks were designed based on 6 topics, to implement the tasks researcher spent 3 weeks, finally learners reached target level.

Results and Discussion

The purpose of the motivation questionnaire was to reveal the extent Acharya Nagarjuna University students are motivated to learn English and to detect the reasons underlying language learning. The quantitative data gathered from the motivation questionnaire was tabulated and analysed statistically using frequency of responses; weighted percentages, rank order and the percentage distribution of responses from Acharya Nagarjuna University students in Andhra Pradesh.

Conclusions and Implications

Owing to the limited scope of the present study, the results of the motivation questionnaire cannot be used obviously make a sweeping generalization about the motivation of Acharya Nagarjuna University students for learning English. The findings revealed significant

differences in students' motivation due to differences in academic backgrounds. Also, gender differences in overall motivation were also found between male and female computer science students. The female students seem to make more effort and have a higher perception of the valency of learning EFL/ESL than male students. These differences require course planners to put a great deal of thought into developing EFL/ESL programmes which have obtainable, clear and specific short/long term goals to maintain students' interests.

This study corroborates several findings on motivation from previous studies in Andhra Pradesh, which stressed the importance of identifying learners' goals for learning English. On the contrary to the findings of research, which revealed no significant gender differences in overall motivation, the findings of this study showed highly significant motivation differences between male and female students. Further, female students were also proved to be more integratively and instrumentally oriented for learning English than male students. This result is emphasized, Sengkey (2018), Akram & Ghani (2013) and Demir (2003) who confirmed that female students have more motivation in learning English as a foreign language /second language.

One of the important results gleaned in this research is the significant impact of majors on their motivation for learning English. This result is in line with different majors who had different perspectives about English learning. This result proves the inappropriateness of teaching the same course book to students of different academic backgrounds.

Results of the present study show that university students are oriented for integrative, instrumental and coercive goals and that none of the orientations was seen to be significantly important than the other. However, the mean of the students' responses to these orientations shows slight differences. While both integrative and instrumental motivations are essential elements of success, it is instrumental motivation which has been found better for ANU students' orientations for learning English at different levels. In some of the early studies,

integrative motivation was viewed as being of more important in a formal learning environment than instrumental motivation. They found that those who do support an integrative approach to language study are usually more highly motivated and overall more successful in language learning. However, now the importance of instrumental motivation is also stressed. Instrumental orientation, in this research, is seen to be more important than integrative orientation.

On the other hand, the strong impact of the integrative orientation suggests that language teachers should include a socio-cultural component in foreign language syllabus. In this study, students of different majors and gender at various levels were seen to be significantly integratively oriented for learning English. The findings reveal students' awareness of the importance of learning about the target culture. The students expressed their interest to learn about the English-speaking people and their way of life. This is because they want to get tangible benefits out of learning English. Therefore, the integration of language and culture could function as a positive motivation to study a foreign language/English as a second language.

Recommendations

In spite of the limited scope of the study, at least a few pedagogical implications could be traced. The study has proved that Acharya Nagarjuna University students showed positive motivation to learn English as a second language/ foreign language and highlighted the value of studying English for both instrumental and integrative goals. It is therefore recommended that EFL courses, methods of teaching, teachers' roles and assessment tools should be adapted to encourage learners to perceive English as an essential instrument for achieving their goals. It is also recommended that educationists, in the light of the results of the present study, should put students' goals into considerations when designing EFL/ESL courses.

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