AFGHANISTAN STUDENTS' MOTIVATIONAL DISPOSITIONS IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract:

This aim of this study is to investigate the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations among the multidisciplinary Afghanistan postgraduate students in learning English as a foreign language. As postgraduate students sponsored by UNESCO, they are to complete their postgraduate studies in several faculties like Applied Sciences and Pharmacy in Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). Thirty-one postgraduate Afghanistan students responded the google form questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from Gardner's Attitudes/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). The results revealed that the students are extrinsically motivated rather than intrinsically motivated. The results also reflect that they are motivated by the teacher's personality and pedagogy. There is no difference among the male and female postgraduate Afghan students as far as extrinsic and intrinsic motivations are concerned. Hence, the teaching style and classroom activities are the major motivational factors in learning English. Intrinsically, they also do not believe that knowing English would be able to make them a better person. The results of the present study have echoed previous research studies that highlight the importance of further investigation in extrinsic and intrinsic motivations in Foreign Language Acquisition.

Keywords: extrinsic, intrinsic, motivation, Afghan, English as a foreign language acquisition

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Afghanistan is located in the Middle of Asia and a land mountainous country. The capital of Afghanistan is Kabul. The official languages of this country are Dari (Persian) and Pashto, making the Afghans bilingual. The Afghan culture is nomadic and tribal that has been around for over two millennia. The country has different regions and traditions, reflecting the multi-cultural and multi-lingual character of the nation. The major ethnic groups in Afghanistan are the Pushtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks. The country was known to be involved in decades of war. Therefore, this has made Afghanistan one of the world's largest producers of refugees and asylum seekers. Over 99% of the Afghan population is Muslim, approximately 80-85% follow the Sunni sect, 15-19% are Shiah, and 1% other beliefs. In addition to ethnic diversity, the Afghans are diverse linguistically; speaking Dari, Pashto, Tajiki, Uzbaki, Turkic, and other languages.

Generally, the literacy rate of Afghanistan is quite low, which is 28%. However, there are various efforts to improve literacy and education. For teaching at the tertiary level, the language policy under consideration as of 2009 is to shift all teaching in English. In practice, most lectures are done primarily in Dari, with most of the textbooks in English (Beebe, 2010). The World Bank (2005) reported that Afghanistan has made significant efforts to improve higher education. It is reported that 19 higher education institutions had an increase in enrolment from 4,000 students in 2001 to 37,000 (17 percent of whom were women) in 2004; with the lowest university enrolment at 500. The World Bank report also identified several issues plaguing the key higher education institutions in Afghanistan like physical facilities, outdated syllabus, financing, governance and shortage of qualified faculty members. It is only about 50% of the lecturers at Kabul University have a Master degree. Ghani and Lockhart (2008:76) mentioned that Kabul University students, more than anything else, wanted "*to connect to globalization and take advantage of information and opportunity and that students in the Islamic Law School wanted to learn English and be computer literate*" (p. 76).

Thus, Afghanistan students are driven or motivated to leave their country to seek more knowledge. They face challenges and primarily in terms of adapting to culture of a foreign country. Nonetheless, these students being independent in a foreign country rely on their determination and motivation to learn. Obviously, foreign language is a barrier to these Afghan students. They need to overcome this language barrier in order to succeed academically and even non-academically in a foreign country. Motivation has been accepted as one of the key factors that influence the success in learning a language. Motivation in acquiring a second language refers to the effort and strives to learn the language with positive attitudes (Dornyei, 1994). Motivation is known to be the main impetus in L2 learning and the rest of the factors involved in L2 acquisition. To many, 'motivation' is a term that is commonly used in both educational and research contexts. However, there is very little agreement in the literature on the exact meaning of this concept. There is an agreement among the many

researchers that motivation is "*responsible for determining human behaviour by energising it and giving it direction*" (Dornyei, 1998:117), but in many accounts stated in the literature of how this took place may shock even the experienced researcher. This diversity is, of course, not a misfortune; as Dornyei (1996:89) argued that, "*motivation theories in general seek to explain no less than the fundamental question of why humans behave as they do, and therefore it would be naive to assume any simple and straightforward answer; indeed, every different psychological perspective on human behaviour is associated with a different theory of motivation and, thus, in general psychology it is not the lack but rather the abundance of motivation theories which confuses the scene*". Additionally, even within motivational psychology, the functions and/or process of motivation to learn a second language can be a complex and unique situation. This is basically due to the multifaceted nature and roles of language itself.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Afghan students choose Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) as the higher learning institution that would provide them quality post-graduate programmes. Almost every year, 20 to 50 Afghan students will register as postgraduate students in UiTM. Most of them are sponsored by the Afghanistan Ministry of Education and they are teachers and lecturers in colleges and learning institutions in Afghanistan. The initial English proficiency test revealed that they are mostly basic to intermediate users of the language which is A1 to B1 CEFR Standard. As post graduate programmes in UiTM are conducted in English, it is paramount that they master the language in order to complete their studies within the stipulated time. These learners are given one to two-year scholarships to complete their Master degree. As foreign learners who originate from a country that is progressively developing after a war, their experiences, motivations and challenges are unique.

This article, therefore, reports the findings of Afghanistan post graduate students' motivational disposition in English language learning. There are 31 Afghan students who volunteered to respond to the online survey. The aim of the article is to identify the role of motivation among the Afghan post-graduates in learning English focusing on their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Thus, this study has the following objective and research question.

1.3 Research Objectives
- To identify the types of motivation (extrinsic or intrinsic) present in a group of Afghan post-graduates who are learning English as a foreign language.
- To determine the difference between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation of the Afghanistan post-graduates who are learning English as a foreign language. Describe how they are motivated to learn English.

1.4 Research Questions
- What are the types of motivation (extrinsic or intrinsic) present in a group of Afghanistan post-graduates who are learning English as a foreign language?

- Is there a difference between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation of the Afghanistan post-graduates who are learning English as a foreign language?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Related Theories
2.1.1 Gardner's Motivation Theory
Gardner's Motivation Theory has been significant and influential in describing learners of second language (L2) for decades. The theory posits that motivation consists of three elements: effort, desire and positive effect. According to this theory, effort refers to the effort to learn the language, desire refers to wanting to achieve a goal, while positive effect refers to enjoying the task of learning the language. Many studies have relied on or adapted this model to analyze learners' motivation in learning L2.

Hence, the present research is based on Gardner's improved Socio-educational Model (Lai, 2013) that claims a strong link between two variables – Motivation and Ability – and individuals' achievement in language learning (see Figure 1).
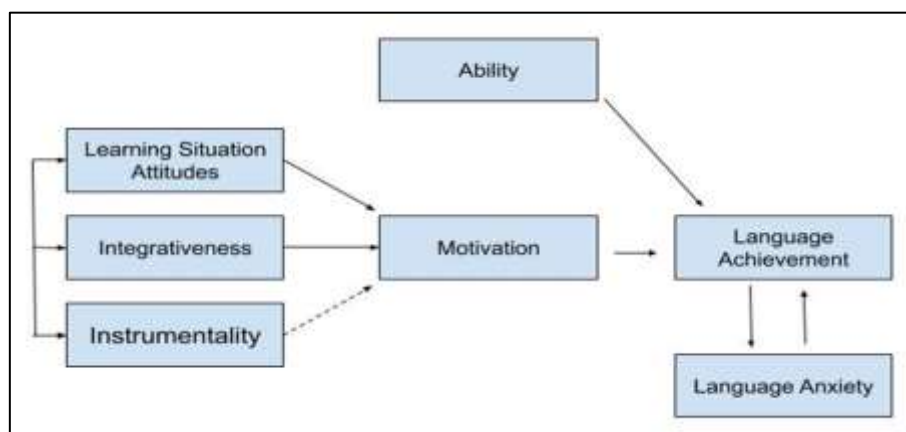
Figure 1: Gardner's socio-educational model (adopted from Lai, 2013)

Furthermore, the model proposes that individuals' motivation to learn an L2 is related to three important variables – Integrativeness, Instrumentality and Attitudes to learning situation. According to Gardner (cited in Lai, 2013) Integrativeness in this model refers to the learner's positive attitude towards the L2 community and willingness to accept the characteristics of the target linguistic group. Instrumentality, on the other hand, involves the learning of L2 for practical reasons such as getting a job promotion. Attitudes to the learning situation may include aspects such as the instructors teaching, instructions, curriculum, lesson plans and evaluation methods. These three elements are positively correlated with one another. The present study investigates how these three constructs affect the motivation of Afghan students in learning English as a foreign language.

2.1.2 Self-determination Theory

The discourse on the functions and/or processes of motivation leads the question of autonomy. Deci and Ryan (1985, 1991) formulated self-determination theory which is linked to one's motivation in learning. Deci and Ryan (1985) stated that there is a need for autonomy which is an innate human need. This refers to one wanting to initiate and carry out the actions by oneself or independently. Therefore, to be self-determination, that is, engaging in an activity "*with a full sense of wanting, choosing, and personal endorsement*" (Deci, 1992: 44), is perceived as a requirement for any behaviour to be intrinsically rewarding. Many other researchers concur to this notion. One assertion made by Paris and Turner (1994) clearly deliberates this perception,

> The essence of motivated action is the ability to choose among alternative courses of action, or at least, to choose to expend varying degrees of effort for a particular purpose (Paris and Turner 1994:222).

The self-determination theory examines learners' natural wants or intrinsic processes that mould the behaviour towards success, a strong and powerful reason to achieve a goal. The bigger picture shows that the theory differentiates three points related to motivation and listed in a continuum order: amotivation, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier & Ryan, 1991) (see Figure 2). Amotivation is attributed to the behaviour of when a language learner does not see the existence of any relationship between what they are learning and the result to be obtained from that learning. The source of extrinsic motivation comes fully from external sources such as rewards or threats. Miltiadou and Savenye (2003) state that extrinsically motivated learners tend to work on tasks because they believe that participating actively in the tasks will result in desirable outcomes such as grades, a diploma, teacher praise or avoidance of punishment.

Van Lier (1996:101) describes extrinsic motivation as "borrowed money", an investment which may finally pay off. Intrinsic Motivation, on the other hand, pertains to the goal orientation of the learner, or, in other words, to the learner's perception of the reasons why he or she is engaged with the tasks. According to Miltiadou and Savenye (2003), intrinsic motivation originates from factors that are related to interests or curiosity. Pintrich and Schunk (1996) claim that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, are useful in their own ways, however, one should be caution of the negative implications related to the external rewards which may affect learners' self-efficacy when rewards are unavailable.
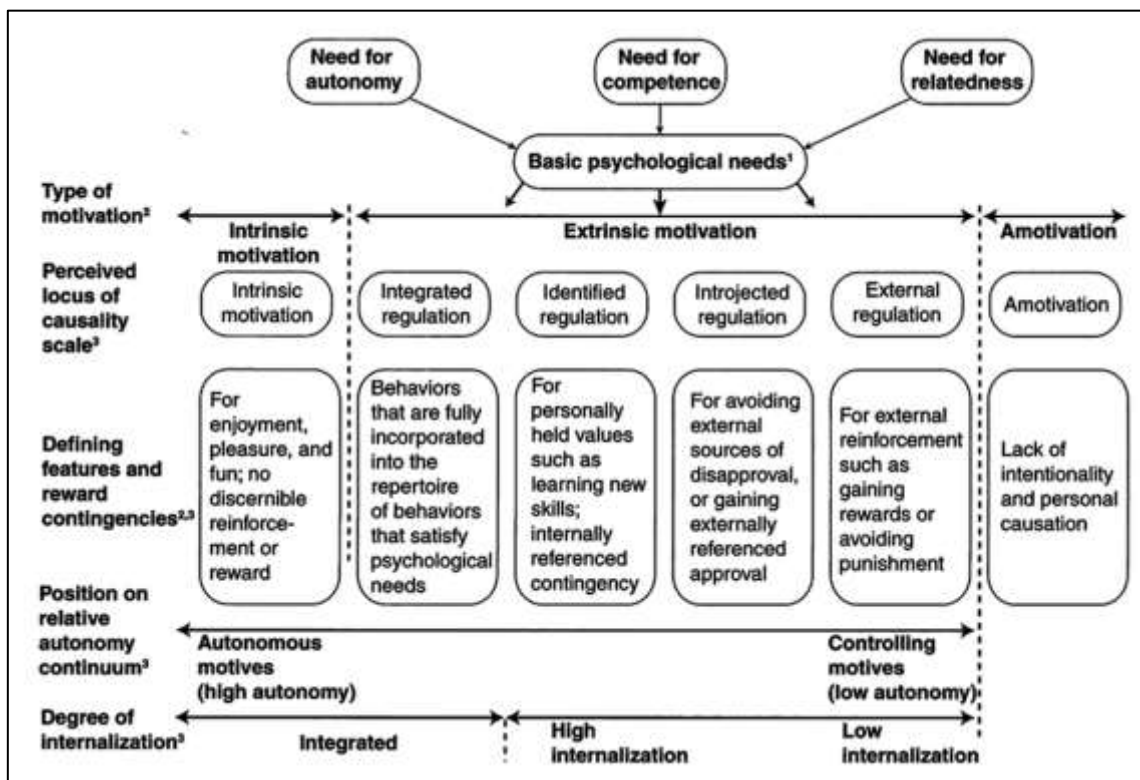
Figure 2: Taxonomy of Human Motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2007)

The Taxonomy of Human Motivation describes that there are several types of human motivations. Firstly, Amotivation portrays an individual's lack of intention to act when doing an activity. Secondly, Extrinsic motivation consists of four sub-categories: Integrated regulation, Identified regulation, Introjected regulation and External regulation. Finally, Intrinsic motivation, however, has one sub-category which is Intrinsic regulation. Furthermore, Ryan and Deci (2007) asserts that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation scale in the taxonomy displays a dynamic change in the motivation process that involves going back and forth between constructs. For example, a student may be motivated to carry out an activity due to a reward (which is an extrinsic motivation) but during the process, he develops an interest in the activity resulting him to do well (which is an intrinsic motivation).

2.2 Past Studies on Motivation

A number of past studies on motivation among learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have shown interesting findings with regards to the role of motivation in the learners' learning. A survey on 267 Taiwanese university students revealed that there is no significant difference in motivation between day and night students (Lai, 2013). However, majority of the respondents learnt English for instrumental reasons, such as for travel, as well as integrative reasons, for instance becoming part of the community. Lai (2013) further denotes that the respondents may have developed a bicultural identity, which consists of local and global identities, due to globalisation. Many of the respondents like to identify themselves as part of the international

community besides the local one that they are already representing. According to Arnett (2002), since globalisation has become a trend, many learners are under pressure to develop two identities: a local identity that represents him as part of his local community, and another is a global identity that connects him to the international community.

On the other hand, Nazar (2012) conducted interviews among Afghan youths studying English in schools in Canada. From the interviews the youths stated that factors that helped them are learning the language in informal settings, such as with friends, sports activities, the workplace, and the internet. The challenges mainly involved formal programs in schools, for example, short time period spent in ESL classes, the facilitation of after-school help by other students who did not know the material well, and the embarrassment of participating in class discussions. The youths also expressed strong motivation in their effort to learn the English language. The youths identified two factors: (1) personal motivation; and (2) parental encouragement. The students were motivated by their parents as well as by their personal goals. The parents seemed to strongly encourage their children to learn English in order to do well in school, pursue higher education, and subsequently enter a good career in the competitive labour market. Another study that echoes Nazar's (2010) is by Meranai (2013). The study found that learning achievement in Afghan context factors has a role in determining learning achievement among English language learners. It is reported that the role of parents and teachers are vital in encouraging both male and female Afghan language learners. Furthermore, Miri and Joia (2018) in a recent study revealed that the majority of EFL students, particularly Afghan English language learners, experience writing anxiety. The findings also showed that participants' little exposure to writing activities was the major reason behind their writing anxiety. The study highlighted that receiving feedback from teachers was among the factors that could decrease anxiety as well as increase motivation to overcome the challenges.

Another study by Pourfeiz (2016) investigates the relationship between attitude and academic motivation among pre-service English teachers. The study used two types of questionnaire: Attitude towards Foreign Language Learning (A-FLL) scale and the Academic Motivation scale (AMS). It was found that the respondents' attitude towards English language was positively and significantly correlated with academic motivation. Findings also show that there was a significant correlation between cognitive and affective components of A-FLL, and extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. It can be concluded that learners' academic motivation is influenced by their attitudes towards English language learning and that these two variables can help promote their learning process.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design
The present research was a descriptive study using a survey. The study aimed to describe the kinds of motivation present in a group of Afghanistan students learning

English as a foreign language. The data would give an overall description on how the students are motivated to learn English. Data collection was carried out through an online survey for easy access for the respondents and researchers.

3.2 Sample

This number of students from Afghanistan is inconsistent each year because it depends on the policy of their country. Thus, for this particular study, 31 postgraduate Afghan students were involved. The majority of the respondents (71%) were male and the rest were female. 96.8% of them are of Afghan origin which means both parents are Afghans.

They are bilingual or multilingual speakers since 54.8% of them are able to speak 2 languages while 38.7% can speak 3 languages. The languages that they speak are English, Dari, Pashto, Urdu and Arabic. 21 of the respondents were between the age of 20-29 years old. 9 were in the range between 30-39 and one was in the range between 40-49 years old. In terms of the time spent using English language, 45.2% of the respondents indicated that they spend 2-5 hours per week while 16.1% spend less than one hour.

3.3 Research Instrument

A questionnaire which was adapted from Saheb (2014), based on Gardner's Attitudes/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), was used in this study. Saheb (2014) has included only 27 items instead of the 104 items in AMTB. These 27 items were categorised into 9 groups with each consisting of three statements (Table 1). A five-point Likert scale was used to represent each statement.

Table 1: Sections in the Questionnaire

No.	Section of questionnaire	Number of questions
1.0	Demographic data	5
2.0	Instrumental motivation (social factor)	3
3.0	Integrative motivation (social factor)	3
4.0	Extrinsic motivation - instrumental orientation (attitudinal factor)	3
5.0	Intrinsic motivation : self- confidence- (attitudinal factor)	3
6.0	External encouragement (impact of social factor on attitudinal factor)	3
7.0	Intrinsic motivation - integrative orientation (attitudinal factor)	3
8.0	Extrinsic motivation (teacher and peer students)	3
9.0	Recapitulation of instrumental/integrative motivation	3
10.0	Self- assessment of the use of English outside the class, motivation and the English class	3

However, for this paper, in order to answer the first research question, the findings of 4 sections of the questionnaire are presented and discussed. The four sections focus on extrinsic and intrinsic motivation of the Afghan learners learning English. The sections are as follows:

Table 2: Sections analysed and discussed

Type of motivation	
4.0	Extrinsic motivation - instrumental orientation (attitudinal factor)
8.0	Extrinsic motivation (teacher and peer students)
5.0	Intrinsic motivation: self- confidence- (attitudinal factor)
7.0	Intrinsic motivation –integrative orientation (attitudinal factor)

The data were collected and analysed using descriptive statistics. The following sections present the findings of the online survey.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Types of motivation (extrinsic or intrinsic) present in a group of Afghanistan post-graduates who are learning English as a foreign language

The Afghan students were asked on their extrinsic and intrinsic motivations in the context of their attitudes in learning English. The survey yielded the following results

Table 3: Overall results

8.0 Extrinsic motivation (teacher and peer students)		
8.1	In an English class, the teacher´s personality is important.	41.9 Strongly Agree 35.5 Agree 16.1 Not sure 3.2 Disagree 3.2 Strongly Disagree
8.2	In an English class, the teacher´s method (= way of teaching, the activities) is important	**51.6 Strongly Agree** 35.5 Agree 3.2 Not sure 9.7 Disagree 0 Strongly Disagree
8.3	In an English class, the group is important.	22.6 Strongly Agree 41.9 Agree 25.8 Not sure 9.7 Disagree 0 Strongly Disagree

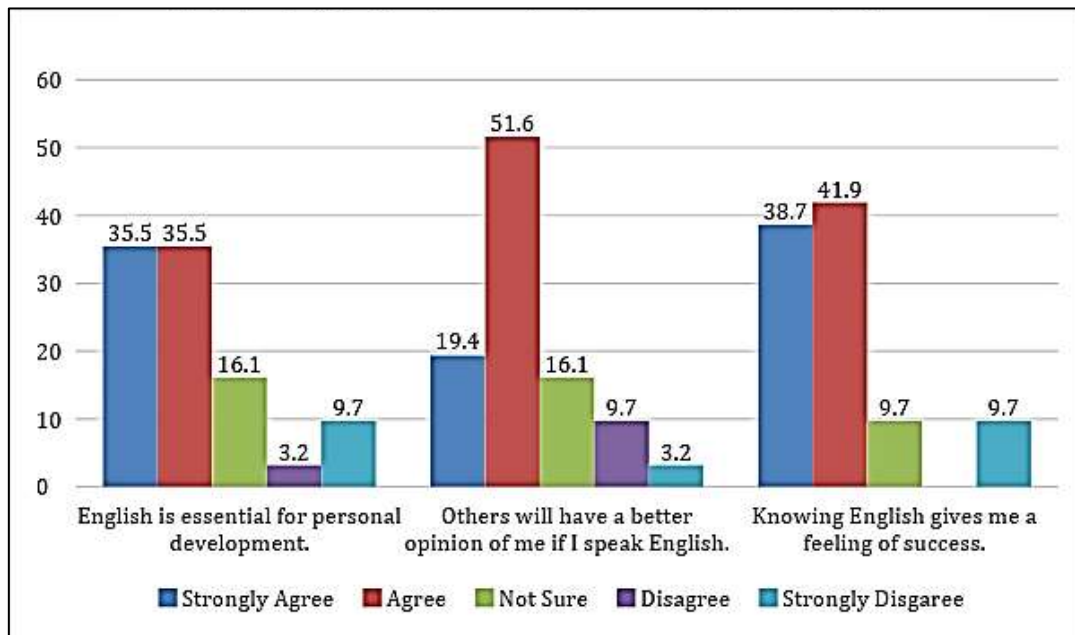| 4.0 Extrinsic motivation - instrumental orientation (attitudinal factor)		
4.1	English is essential for personal development.	35.5 Strongly Agree 35.5 Agree 16.1 Not sure 3.2 Disagree 9.7 Strongly Disagree
4.2	Others will have a better opinion of me if I speak English.	19.4 Strongly Agree 51.6 Agree 16.1 Not sure 9.7 Disagree 3.2 Strongly Disagree
4.3	Knowing English gives me a feeling of success.	**38.7 Strongly Agree** 41.9 Agree

		9.7 Not sure
		0 Disagree
		9.7 Strongly Disagree

5.0 Intrinsic motivation: self- confidence- (attitudinal factor)		
5.1	When I speak English, I don't mind making mistakes.	22.6 Strongly Agree 29 Agree 32.3 Not sure 16.1 Disagree 0 Strongly Disagree
5.2	When someone speaks to me in English, I tend to be nervous.	**6.5 Strongly Agree** 12.9 Agree 35.5 Not sure 19.4 Disagree 25.8 Strongly Disagree
5.3	Knowing English helps me become a better person.	19.4 Strongly Agree 32.2 Agree 35.5 Not sure 9.7 Disagree 3.2 Strongly Disagree

7.0 Intrinsic motivation –integrative orientation (attitudinal factor)		
7.1	I study English because I like it.	**38.7 Strongly Agree** 38.7 Agree 16.1 Not sure 3.2 Disagree 3.2 Strongly Disagree
7.2	If I could not go to a learning centre, I would learn English by myself.	22.6 Strongly Agree 35.5 Agree 19.4 Not sure 22.6 Disagree 3.2 Strongly Disagree
7.3	Learning English is easy.	19.4 Strongly Agree 32.2 Agree 12.9 Not sure 22.6 Disagree 12.9 Strongly Disagree

To further describe the results, the data are depicted into the following graphs:

4.1.1 Extrinsic Motivation

Figure 3: Extrinsic Motivation – instrumental orientation

The respondents were asked about their extrinsic motivation that affects their attitudes in learning English. The results show that the learners regard other people's opinion seriously when they speak English (Figure 3). 51.6% agree to this notion. In addition, 38.7% strongly agree that knowing English gives them a sense of accomplishment. As Dornyei (1994) explains that the strive and effort are the motivation to learn. These students were from a country in turmoil, thus, acquiring a language that they believe will open more doors of opportunities gives them a sense of success and encourages them to pursue further.
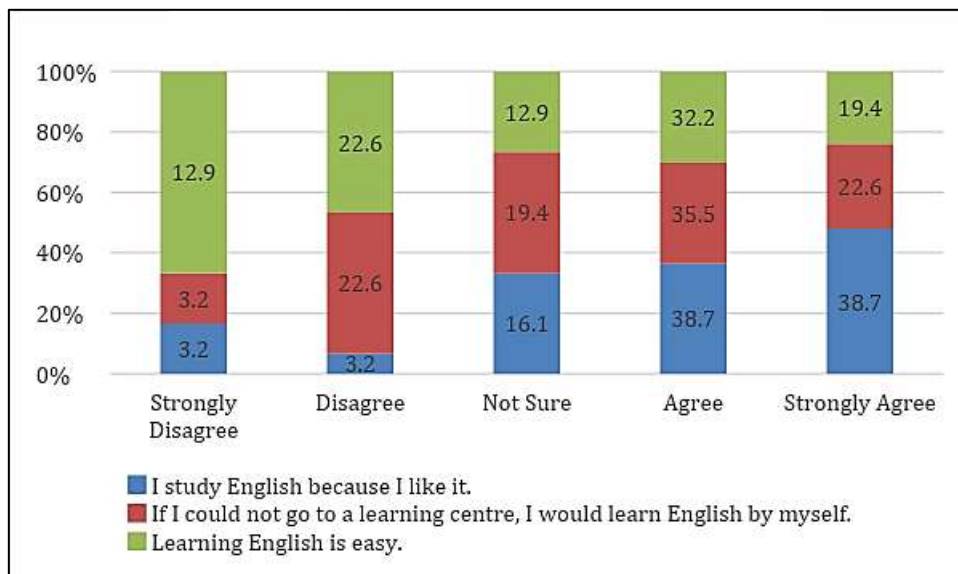
Figure 4: Extrinsic Motivation (Teacher and peer students)

From the results of the survey (Figure 4), it is found that the students are more extrinsically motivated by the teachers' personality (41.9%) and the teachers' method of

teaching (51.6%). This is present in Gardner's socio-educational model, where this concerns with the students' attitude. Their attitude towards the pedagogy, curriculum and learning environment are amongst the motivational factors. However, interestingly, they do not find peer support in class as important (22.6%).

4.1.2 Intrinsic Motivation
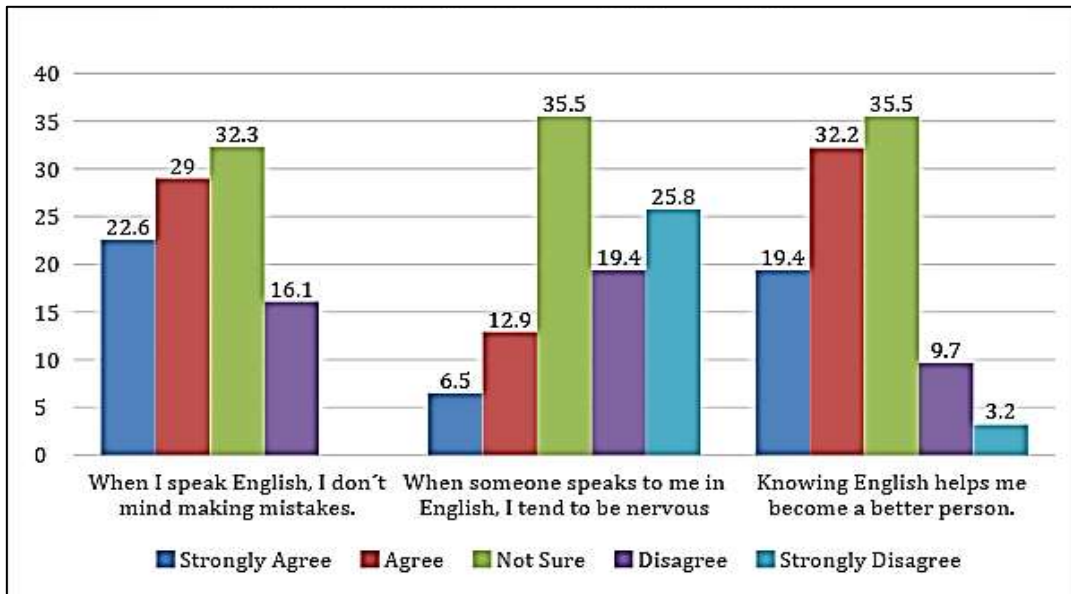
Figure 5: Intrinsic Motivation: self- confidence

It is common that language learners seek a non-threatening environment when learning a new language. However, this is not the case for the Afghan learners. They are intrinsically motivated and this shows in their self-confidence. The results show that 22.6% strongly agree and 29% agree that they do not mind making mistakes. In fact, they strongly disagree (25.8%) that they are uncomfortable when someone speaks English with them. Moreover, they strongly believe that knowing English helps them to become better.

The results of the study show that the Afghan students have positive attitude in learning English (Figure 6). The majority of them are intrinsically motivated because they simply like to study English and they would make an effort to learn on their own.
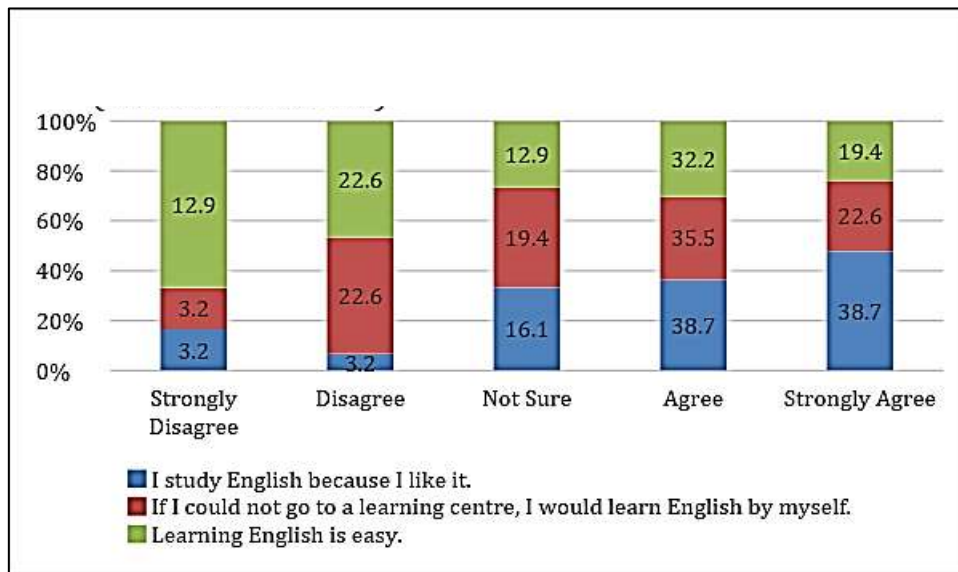
Figure 6: Intrinsic motivation –integrative orientation (attitudinal factor)

4.2 Difference between Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation among the Afghanistan Students

The overall extrinsic and intrinsic motivations of Afghan students are also compared. The comparison is discussed in the following section.
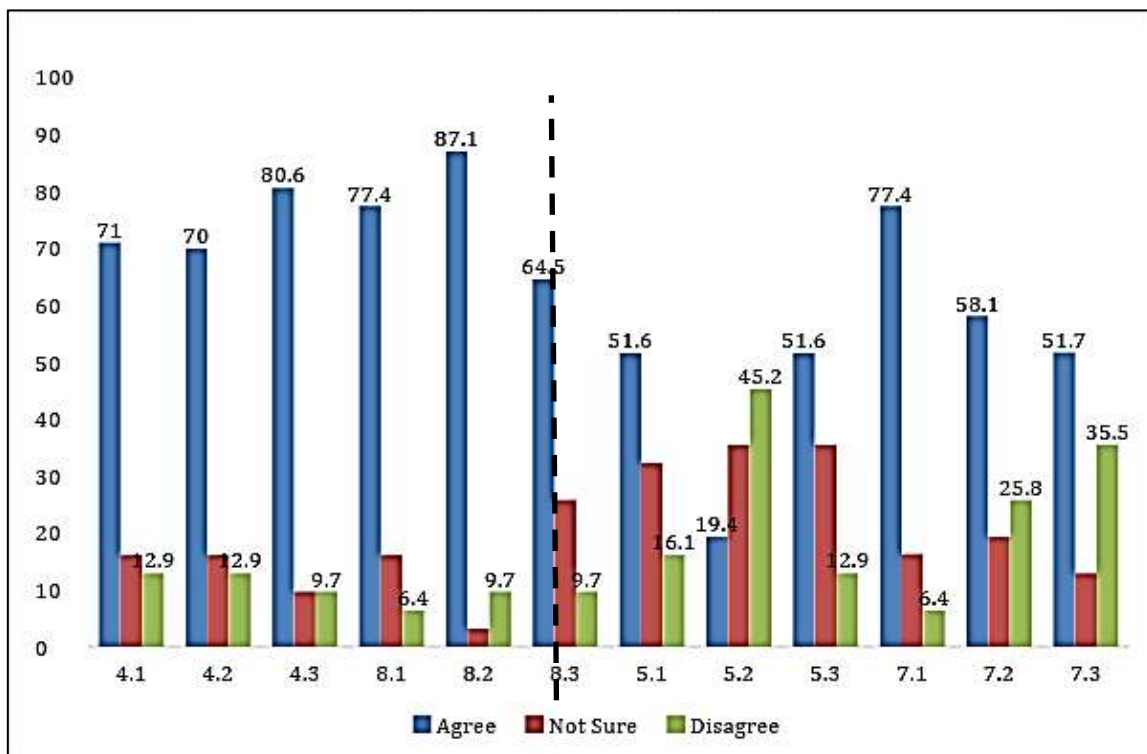

Figure 7: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation of Afghan Postgrads in Learning English

Figure 7 depicts the comparison between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of Afghan postgraduates in learning English. The values of Strongly Agree and Agree are combined. Similarly, for Disagree and Strongly disagree, the values are combined to

produce the above graph. The overall results indicate that the highest motivation is item 8.2 (87.1%) (Extrinsic Motivation): *In an English class, the teacher´s method (= way of teaching, the activities) is important.* The lowest motivation is item 5.2 (19.4%) (Intrinsic Motivation: Self- confidence- attitudinal factor): *When someone speaks to me in English, I tend to be nervous.* Thus, it can be concluded that these learners depend on their teacher to encourage or support them in learning. They need an outside push or encouragement in order for them to acquire a new language. In the case of this study, the outside encouragement is the teachers themselves.

To further analyse the data, the average of the two sections of extrinsic and two sections of intrinsic motivations were calculated and compared. This is shown in the table below (Table 4).

Table 4: Average Scores of the Types of Motivation

Type of Motivation	Average (%)	Overall Average (%)
4.0 Extrinsic Motivation - instrumental orientation (attitudinal factor)	73.9	75.1
8.0 Extrinsic Motivation (Teacher and peer students)	76.3	
5.0 Intrinsic Motivation : self- confidence- (attitudinal factor)	40.9	51.7
7.0 Intrinsic motivation – integrative orientation (attitudinal factor)	62.4	

Findings in Table 4 show the overall average of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The average for extrinsic is 75.1% and intrinsic is 51.7%. It can be concluded that Afghan postgraduates are more extrinsically motivated and that teachers and peers contributed the highest motivation for them (76.3%). This suggests the crucial role of individuals in the students' learning environment such as lecturers, supervisors and friends. Table 4 also shows that the Afghan learners are least motivated in terms of their self-confidence in using English (40.9%). Self-confidence and anxiety in speaking are two important variables associated to learners' motivation. The higher the learners' motivation, the lower are the levels of their anxiety in speaking (Liu & Cheng, 2014).

This finding is consistent with Nazar's (2012) study on Afghan youths' motivation in learning English. The study highlights the importance parental encouragement as one of the main motivational factors. This shows Afghan learners depend on other people to motivate them to learn English. In addition, the results show that they generally not nervous when someone speaks to them in English. This means they are open-minded and confident when interacting with other English speakers.

5. Recommendations

Results of the study have brought about several pedagogical implications and recommendations. First, there should be a conducive learning environment for EFL post-graduate students which not only provides physical support, but also gives emphasis on strong language support by lecturers, supervisors and peers. Feedback from lecturers and supervisors also play an important role to motivate students.

Therefore, especially for writing skills, these students should be introduced to available online automated essay scoring. This will not only sustain their motivation but also to encourage learner autonomy. This is because delayed feedback may present a backlash to these students who are extrinsically motivated. Second, EFL post-graduates should find opportunities to develop their self-confidence in the target language in and outside classroom. Mixing with other international post-graduate students and assimilating themselves with the target community may help to reduce their anxiety in using the language, thus indirectly enhancing their self-esteem. Moreover, they should be encouraged to present in conferences or write journal papers periodically. In the classroom, there should be a lot of avenues to speak formally and informally. In addition, further investigations on how other variables, such as learning environment or the ideal-self attributes, affect EFL learners' motivation would be interesting studies to embark on.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study suggests the important role of learners' emotions and self-perception in language learning. The Afghan students have developed a positive outlook of their own capability in English learning thus indirectly forming a belief that being able to speak English makes them successful (Item 4.3). This is supported by Mega, Ronconi and De Beni (2013) who found that learners' positive emotions enhance their beliefs and confidence in intelligence and make them feel that they are capable to pursue mastery in their goals. According to them, these emotions were also found to be relevant to self-regulatory strategies and motivation to learn. Similar notion was also verified by Dornyei and Chan (2013) who found a strong relationship between their respondents' self-image and actual course grades. Thus, given their unique background, lecturers should give appropriate feedback to nurture their self confidence in language leaning.

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