

## ARAB STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN LEARNING ENGLISH: A STUDY OF PYP STUDENTS

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**ABSTRACT:** *Motivation is the driving force that puts a person in action to achieve his/her goal. Motivation determines the direction of the action. The present study attempts to interpret what important factors affect the motivation of Saudi students in English. The study also looks at the relationship between English language learning motivation of Saudi students and their achievement in English. The data were collected from preparatory year programme, Najran university students. The quantitative approach has been used for data. The major finding of the study is that students don't want to be looked down upon as ignorant. It has been found that students prefer to learn English due to its international hype and they want to look like English people because they are very impressed by the western culture. The findings also reveal that there is a positive correlation between Saudi students' motivation and their achievement in English. The study shows interesting effects of motivational factors in learning English.*

**KEYWORDS:** Attitude, Motivation, SLA, Arab Students, Preparatory Year

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### INTRODUCTION

It has been observed that all the teaching components play a role in academic achievement. It was felt that the effects of motivational factors on students' English proficiency should be studied to know what factors affect the learning process of Saudi students particularly. Motivation is basically the driving force which pushes a person to perform some action. For the last five or six decades the psychologists and linguists have been investigating this internal drive. The shift has turned over a past few decades from psychology to SLA and education. According to Oxford (1994), "language learning motivation is now in the spotlight as it has perhaps never been before". To study the intricacies of motivational factors, Dornyei (1994) thinks it necessary to examine the mutual relationship of social attitudes and second language learning motivation. English language teaching and learning is a mutual activity between the teachers and the taught, which facilitates the learners' English learning, improves and refines their abilities with a positive attitude towards target language and target language community.

### Language Learning Motivation in Arab Context

In Arab community where Arabic is the language of all the Gulf States, language attitudes play a vital and significant role in the being and doing of these people. English language in Saudi Arabia enjoys a highly significant status as the language of education and science and technology. Arab students are raised in such an environment as may affect their western exposure. Their particular religious and socio-political ideologies may fix them on two extremes i.e. either a disaffection of the western culture and target language or highly – motivated continuum with particular reference to English learning. Cultural differences of Arab and Western cultures may affect the language

learning motivation. A culture sensitive attitude needs to be used when approaching an Arab context in EFL classrooms as suggested by Lori & Al- Ansari (2001) in the Bahrain context.

Sivaraman et al. (2014) conducted a study on Omani students' English learning problems in an Engineering college in which they found that students were not comfortable in language classrooms where medium of instruction was English. The study revealed that language barrier, affected the performance of the students because of their lack of language proficiency in English. This also shows that learners have a great fear of English medium of instruction which seemed to be a major problem in learning English. Al-Issa (2014) conducted a study in Omani context regarding the factors that influenced English learning motivation. He used some triangulation techniques and semi structured interviews to conduct data. The discussion of the study showed that there were several motivating factors. The findings of the study had also their direct implications for other similar EFL context.

Aldosari (2014) has illustrated the mutual relationship between personality and FL learning of Saudi University students which pointed out that females were more diligent and more motivated in language learning than their male competitors and they were found to have more positive attitude toward language learning than boys. Elsheikh, F. et al. (2014) investigated the causes of demotivation among Saudi Arabian university students by using a questionnaire and the results of the study revealed some interesting results that the students were intrinsically, extrinsically and integratively demotivated. The study also revealed some positive results on instrumental motivation. Hagler (2014) analyzed Saudi university students' attitudes towards Western culture. The data was collected from 210 students with an open ended questionnaire. The results indicated a positive attitude and integrative motivation towards learning English. It also showed a correlation between instrumental motivation and science students. The study concluded, "these Saudi students are predisposed to interact favorably with the West".

Abu-Ghazaleh and Hijazi (2011 cf. Elsheikh, F. et al., 2014) conducted a study on the relationship between attitudes towards learning English and language proficiency of 200 university students in Jordan. The study reported entirely positive attitudes towards learning English. Moreover, no differences of gender, specialization, and academic level were found. An interesting finding of the study was that the science college students were found more motivated and having more positive attitude than those of Arts college students. Ali Bani-Khaled (2014) reported the results of (250) female students in Jordan. The results showed the positive towards the role of English in their daily lives. The study also found that "these attitudes can be related to a number of intrinsic as well as instrumental factors, i.e. job market, personal development, cultural interaction, social status, travel, media, technology, and educational experience". Yousef et al (2013) conducted a study on 184 Jordanian Undergraduate students. They used stratified random sampling of data collection by using the AMTB. They found that learners had a highly positive attitude in learning English and they were more instrumentally motivated because of English language's utilitarian and academic value. The study also indicated that learning English for integrative purposes had the least impact and poor influence in learner's language learning motivation.

Malallah (2000) conducted a research on the attitudes towards learning English of 409 undergraduate students in Kuwait. The study reported favourable and positive attitude towards EMI and English people. Findlow (2006) conducted a qualitative research in UAE context on 500 learners of English and reported mixed attitudes towards the use of English in Emirati universities. Moreover, the study revealed that the participants had an inclination to associate English with modernity, secularism and internationalism whereas Arabic was linked, more closely, to cultural authenticity and religion. Randall & Samimi. (2010) discussed the status of English in Dubai English which showed that English was used as lingua franca in Dubai and the use of English indicated modernization and new developments. The study didn't indicate any differences between the more educated less educated participants.

Al Othman & Shuqair (2013) analyzed the impact of motivation on English language learning by their observations in the field. They reported that there was a positive correlation between motivation and language learning and this study substantiated the theories of Gardner and Lambert (1972). The study recommended, "Teachers must use activities and employ a teaching ideology that encourages the growth of intrinsic motivation while boosting the integrative motivation of learners".

The learners themselves reflect their goal of learning English. The research needs to probe into the cultural confrontation, psychological, ethnic, cognitive modes and language learning motivation in the Arab context of learning English. The present study discusses the attitudinal and major motivational factors and influence of parental encouragement in learning English.

## **METHOD**

The researcher used a quantitative method to collect data from 186 PYP students, Najran University, Saudi Arabia. The participants of the study were aged between 17 – 21 years. The researcher used a revised questionnaire on AMTB adopted from Akram (2013). With the help of an Arab teacher the questionnaire was also read in Arabic language to facilitate the respondents so that they may respond properly and accurately. The Alpha reliability of the questionnaire was computed with help of SPSS (XX) and it was found to be .891. It was considered valuable to collect data from PYP students so that they may better express their desire and motivation to learn English. The PYP students have been selected as this is the base from where the students go to the university level and professional institutions.

## **RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

As the study aims to investigate the Arab students' attitudes and motivation in learning English, the researcher has analyzed the data through SPSS (version XX). The analysis of the study presents descriptive statistics, correlation of overall attitudes and motivation with test score. The results of the study have been presented as under.

Descriptive Statistics									
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Parental Encouragement	186	21	41	29.98	3.451	-.011	.178	.141	.355
Instrumental Motivation	186	20	40	33.61	3.600	-.869	.178	1.160	.355
Integrative Motivation	186	21	40	32.84	3.975	-.510	.178	.209	.355
Attitude towards English Language	186	23	42	32.08	3.486	.014	.178	.108	.355
Attitude towards English People	186	13	25	19.61	2.191	-.462	.178	.238	.355
Cultural Identity	186	5	15	8.78	2.143	.174	.178	-.018	.355
Interest in Foreign Languages	186	29	50	40.11	4.055	-.309	.178	.196	.355
Valid N (listwise)	186								

**Table 4.1: Mean Score of all Motivational Constructs**

Correlations			
		Attitude & Motivation	Test score
Attitude and Motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	.450**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	186	186
Test score	Pearson Correlation	.450**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	186	186
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

**Table 4.2: Correlation of Attitude & Motivation with Test Score**

The result of the above table indicates that there is a positive correlation between attitudinal and motivational constructs and text scores of the students. The coefficient value was found as .450\*\* and the p value of the correlation was found less than 0.01 level i.e. the correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed). This means that students in Saudi EFL context have been found to have a favorable and positive attitude and higher motivation in learning English quite in line with the results of other researchers (e.g. Al-Issa 2014; Aldosari 2014; Abu-Ghazaleh & Hijazi 2011; Al Othman & Shuqair 2013; Elsheikh, F. et al. 2014; Hagler 2014; Malallah 2000; Yousef et al. 2013).

**Correlation of Motivational Constructs with Test Score**

<b>Motivational Constructs</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<b>Parental Encouragement</b>	<b>.029</b>	<b>P &gt; 0.05</b>
<b>Instrumental Motivation</b>	<b>.366**</b>	<b>P &lt; 0.01</b>
<b>Integrative Motivation</b>	<b>.405**</b>	<b>P &lt; 0.01</b>
<b>Attitude towards English Language</b>	<b>.299**</b>	<b>P &lt; 0.01</b>
<b>Attitude towards English People</b>	<b>.336**</b>	<b>P &lt; 0.01</b>
<b>Cultural Identity</b>	<b>-.033</b>	<b>P &gt; 0.05</b>
<b>Interest in Foreign Languages</b>	<b>.128</b>	<b>P &gt; 0.05</b>

**\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

**Table 4.3: Correlation of Motivational Constructs with Test Score**

The result of the above table clearly indicates that the coefficient of parental encouragement is .029 which means that parental encouragement does play a positive role though statistically not significant. The results show that students are highly motivated both instrumentally and integratively as the coefficient value for instrumental motivation is .366\*\* and for integrative motivation .405\*\* i.e. correlation is significant at 0.01 level (sig. 2-tailed). A high percentage was seen in students' responses regarding the utilitarian and instrumental aspect of English learning as was found in Al Othman & Shuqair (2013). The respondents were also found highly motivated integratively as they want to have acquaintance with the people in touch with the latest trends in the west. The respondents of the study were also found very keen to visit UK as they thought to keep in touch with the latest developments in the west because they don't want to be looked down upon by the western people. The table also shows that Saudi learners have a very positive attitude not only towards English language but towards English people also. The coefficient for attitude towards English language is .299 and for attitude towards English people .336 i.e. correlation is significant at 0.01 level (Sig. 2-tailed). The results of the present study strongly support Abu-Ghazaleh & Hijazi (2011) who found entirely positive attitude towards learning English. With regard to positive attitude towards learning English language and English people this study is in line with these research studies (e.g. Malallah 2000; Findlow 2006; and Yousef et al. 2013). As regards the cultural identity, it does not show any positive correlation which means the Arab learners are not afraid of looking like English speaking people. The correlation between interest in foreign languages and test score is also calculated that is statistically not significant. The possible cause of this is the fact that 'English is considered to be more elite class and prestigious language than other foreign languages'. According to Akram, 2013: "Though Arabic has a great pragmatic utility (most of the people from the poor world countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh etc. go to Middle East for earning livelihood or they can become prayer leaders) but English has more pragmatic utility than other foreign languages".

To investigate the effect of gender on learners' English learning motivation independent sample t-test and MANOVA analyses were made where the level of significance was 0.05. There was statistically no significant difference between language learning motivation and gender.

<b>Result of T-Test for Differences in Test Score by Gender</b>						
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Male (n = 100)</b>		<b>Female (n = 86)</b>		<b>T-test</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Test Score</b>	<b>38.23</b>	<b>7.696</b>	<b>40.57</b>	<b>9.078</b>	<b>-1.902</b>	<b>059</b>

**Table 4.4: T-Test for differences in Test Score by Gender**

To measure the difference of test score between male and female students, an independent sample t-test was calculated. The t- value was found as -1.902 and the p value was calculated as  $p > 0.05$ . This shows that statistically there is no significant difference between male and female students. The mean of test score for females is 40.57 whereas for males it is 38.23 which indicates that females' mean score is slightly higher which means girls are more diligent and efficient learners of English than boys. This may be due to the reason that Saudi women have to live under cultural and religious restrictions. 'Only 17% of the females comprise the job market even though almost 60 % of them are university graduate' (Watson, 2012 cf. Springsteen, 2014). This finding is also in line with Aldosari (2014) who also found that female learners were more hard working than male students.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Male (n = 100)</b>		<b>Female (n = 86)</b>	
	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Parental Encouragement</b>	<b>29.83</b>	<b>3.525</b>	<b>30.16</b>	<b>3.374</b>
<b>Instrumental Motivation</b>	<b>33.63</b>	<b>4.123</b>	<b>33.59</b>	<b>2.900</b>
<b>Integrative Motivation</b>	<b>33.20</b>	<b>4.273</b>	<b>32.42</b>	<b>3.576</b>
<b>Attitude towards English Language</b>	<b>32.56</b>	<b>3.710</b>	<b>31.52</b>	<b>3.135</b>
<b>Attitude towards English People</b>	<b>19.76</b>	<b>2.387</b>	<b>19.44</b>	<b>1.938</b>
<b>Cultural Identity</b>	<b>8.45</b>	<b>2.022</b>	<b>9.16</b>	<b>2.227</b>
<b>Interest in Foreign Languages</b>	<b>40.16</b>	<b>4.327</b>	<b>40.06</b>	<b>3.740</b>

**Table 4.5: Mean Score of Motivational constructs with Gender**

The above table clearly shows that there are no differences of motivational constructs related to gender. The present study supports Abu-Rabia (1997) who conducted a study on Arab students in the Canadian context. His study showed that gender had not affect the language learning motivation. This study is contrary to Suleiman (1993) who found some motivational differences related to gender with reference to EFL students of Arab ethnicities at Arizona state university.

## CONCLUSION

As the aim and objective of the present study was to find the attitudinal and major motivational factors and influence of parental encouragement in learning English, the study has achieved this objective. It has been clearly shown by the results that Arab students do have a positive attitude and higher level of motivation both instrumental and integrative to learn English language. Parental encouragement is also there to motivate the students to learn English. The study also shows that gender does not affect the motivational constructs i.e. both male and female students are almost equally motivated to learn English. It can be concluded in words of Sulaiman (2006), 'The social, religious and political affiliation works together to shape or at least affect the L2 learners' motivation'.

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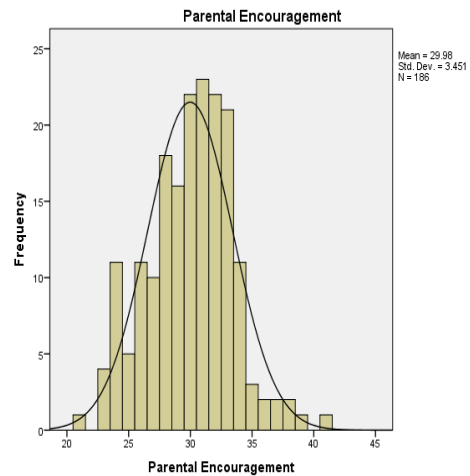
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**Appendix-I: Mean Score, Standard Deviation and Bar charts of All Subscales of the Questionnaire**

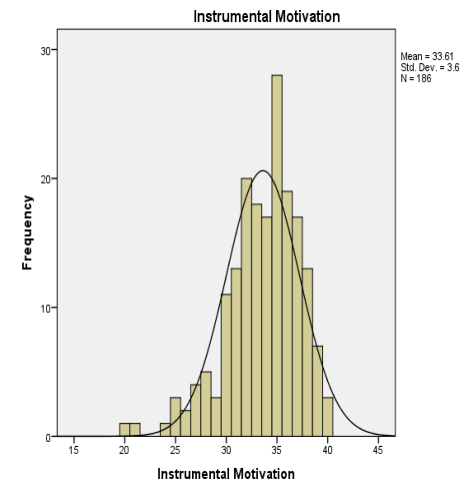
**Parental Encouragement Mean Score and Standard Deviation**

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean Score	St.Dev.
1	My parents / guardians want me to learn English language.	4.32	.736
2	My parents / guardians would be pleased with me if I could speak English fluently.	4.36	.753
3	My parents / guardians give me gifts when I get good marks in the subject of English.	3.97	.876
4	My parents / guardians help me in doing English homework.	1.72	.930
5	My parents / guardians communicate with me in English.	1.90	.889
6	My parents / guardians urge me to seek help from my teacher if I am having problems with my English.	4.26	.811
7	My parents / guardians consider the learning of Eng As a waste of time.	1.61	.765
8	My parents / guardians have stressed the importance English will have for me when I leave college.	4.02	.967
9	My parents / guardians think that English is the language of our British rulers.	1.94	.874
10	My parents / guardians get me English language and short story books.	1.90	.998



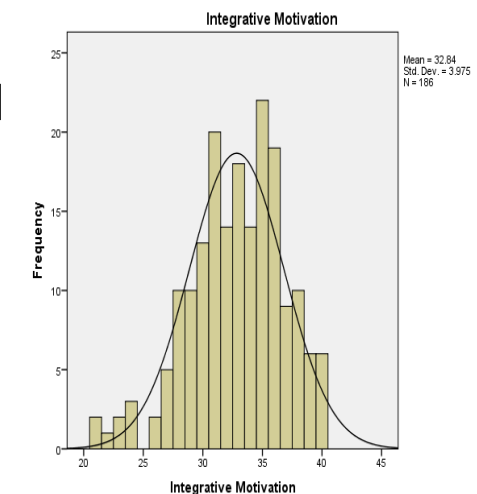
**Instrumental Motivation**

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean Score	St. Dev.
1	Getting a good job	4.35	.730
2	English would help me in coping with college/university classes	4.56	.704
3	English is important to reading advanced literature	4.45	.743
4	Travelling abroad	4.10	.967
5	To pass my English exams	4.33	.762
6	It is the working language of my future career	4.19	.854
7	To be a civil officer	3.81	1.032
8	It is the working language of Saudi Arabia.	3.81	.933



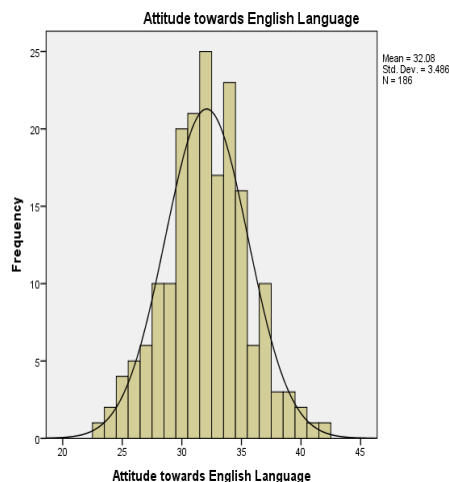
**Integrative Motivation**

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean Score	St. Dev.
1	Acquaintance with people in touch with the latest trends in the west.	4.18	.809
2	Thinking and behaving like English speaking Britons.	4.04	.915
3	Acquiring new ideas and broadening one's outlook.	4.24	.911
4	To improve my social status.	4.06	.913
5	To become more modern.	4.01	.973
6	Becoming friendly with English speaking people.	3.98	.927
7	To get to know English people better.	4.10	.967
8	With a hope that I will visit UK someday.	4.24	.777



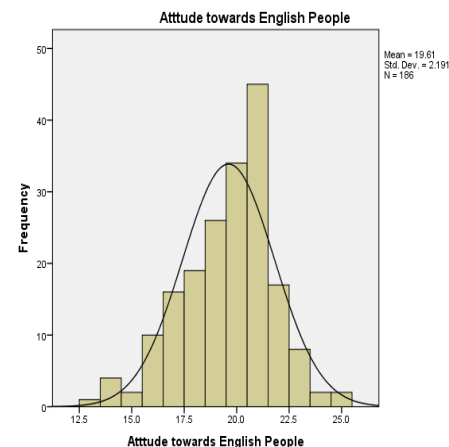
**Attitude towards English Language**

Sr. No.	Statement	Mean Score	St. Dev.
1	Learning English is really great.	4.11	.847
2	English is an important part of master's programme.	4.40	.788
3	I think that learning English is boring.	1.72	.912
4	I want to learn as much English as possible.	4.25	.794
5	I love learning English.	4.22	.941
6	When I leave university, I will leave the study of English.	2.04	1.160
7	I really enjoy learning English.	3.88	.934
8	Learning English is a waste of time.	1.59	.645
9	Arabic Language is superior to English.	4.18	.986
10	English should not be used as a medium of instruction in the Saudi Arabian classrooms.	1.69	.825



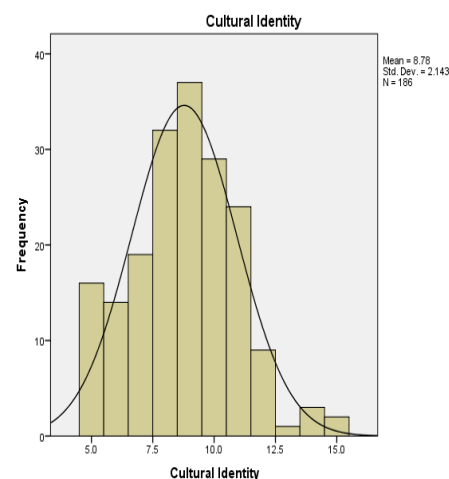
**Attitude towards English People**

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean Score	St. Dev.
1	I have a favorable attitude towards English People.	3.54	.942
2	Most English People are honest and sincere.	4.06	.954
3	English People are cheerful, pleasant and good humored.	4.50	.807
4	The more I get to know the English People, the more I want to be like English people.	3.66	.857
5	English People are hard-working.	3.86	.993



**Cultural Identity**

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean Score	St. Dev.
1	I feel uncomfortable when I hear one Saudi person speaking to another.	1.77	.853
2	When I use English, I don't feel that I'm Saudi anymore.	1.80	.831
3	I feel uneasy when hearing Saudi People speaking English.	1.80	.729
4	At times I fear that by using English I'll become like a foreigner.	1.62	.770
5	My friends would think me less truly Saudi if I used English in classroom.	1.78	.849



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