Motivation of Bangladeshi Higher Secondary Students in Learning English Language

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study is to find out the nature of motivation among the students of class XI-XII in Bangladesh. The research has been conducted in twenty colleges—ten are from urban area, and the other ten are from rural area of Bangladesh. The data was collected by using a questionnaire from a total of 402 students from the institutions under this study. The students were of similar age, and they were studying the same syllabus under Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Dhaka. This study found that the instrumental factors of motivation in language learning have serious impact on the aforementioned students. It further revealed that the lack of integrative motivation among the students is a prime reason of students' inability to become an efficient communicator in English despite studying English for twelve years as part of formal education.

Keywords: Motivation, Higher secondary level students, English language learning

Background of the Research

Bangladesh has a four-level—primary, secondary, higher secondary (intermediate), tertiary—education system where two languages are used as medium of instruction often referred as Bengali medium and English medium. The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) is responsible to prepare curriculum, design syllabus and publish textbooks for Bengali medium schools and colleges up to higher secondary level. In Bangladesh, many foreign languages are taught e.g. English, Arabic, French, German, Urdu, Farsi etc. while only English is compulsory across primary, secondary, higher secondary and tertiary

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education. Grammar-translation method was used to teach English for a long time; nevertheless, Communicative Approach has been introduced with the aim of giving students ample opportunities of practicing English to build students' communicative ability in late 1900s. Despite students are not capable of communicating in English, even unable to use basic sentence structure in oral and written communication, after studying it in their 12 years' education before starting tertiary education. This situation gives situation triggered the researcher to work in this area with an attempt of finding the problems, and motivation, being one of the crucial topics of language learning, is the first area to work on.

Researcher found that a higher level of motivation enhances language learning (Brown, 2002; Gilakjani, Leong & Saburi, 2012; Snowman, McCown & Biehler, 2009; Vengadasamy, 2002). "Without student motivation, there is no pulse; there is no life in the class" (Gilakjani, Leong & Sabouri, 2012, p. 9). As motivation is closely related to achievement in language learning, it is needed to explore the nature of motivation of the aforementioned students in order find out whether motivation is a factor behind the lack of communicative skills of students after getting done with their higher secondary education.

The Aims of this Research

This research seeks to investigate the nature of motivation of the students of class XI-XII in the higher secondary institutions of Bangladesh. By nature of motivation, I am trying to find out the type of motivation do students have, and the factors that have affect on their motivation. The syllabus of higher secondary level puts importance to teach and learn English communicatively, but unfortunately the students do not turn out to be competent in using English after completing their higher secondary education. It seems that the students are less motivated to learn English for communication purposes. This research is aimed to explore what type of motivation do students have and what are the factors that have impact on student's motivation in learning English.

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Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the nature of motivation of class XI-XII of Bangladeshi colleges. I have some precise research questions by answering which I will try to address the original issue of this study. The research questions of this study are:

1. What type of nature do students of class XI-XII have for learning English?
2. What are factors that have affect on their motivation?
3. What factors seem to carry most importance to the students in learning English?

Defining Motivation

Snowman, McCown and Biehler (2009) defined motivation as an individual's willingness "to expend a certain amount of effort to achieve a particular goal under a particular set of circumstances" (p. 406). Gardner (1985) opines that in foreign language learning, motivation is "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language" (p. 10). To him, motivation to learn a foreign language has three elements: aspiration, endeavor, and result that mean a motivated L2 learner will aim to learn the target language, and will achieve something as a result of the effort he put. In classroom teaching, motivation indicates to "the degree which students invest attention and effort in various pursuits….motivation is rooted in students' subjective experiences, especially those connected to their willingness to engage in learning activities and their reasons for doing so" (Brophy, 2010, p. 3).

> Motivation provides a source of energy that is responsible for why learners decide to make an effort, how long they are willing to sustain an activity, how hard they are going to pursue it, and how connected they feel to the activity (Rost, 2001 p. 1).

Motivation is an attribute of the individual describing the psychological qualities underlying behavior in relation to a particular task (MacIntyre, MacMaster & Baker, 2001). Spolsky (1989) has divided motivation into five broad areas:

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1) Enhancing language-related values and attitudes of learners
2) Increasing the learners' expectancy of success.
3) Making students more goal-oriented.
4) Making the teaching materials relevant for the learners.
5) Creating realistic learner beliefs.

Instrumental and Integrative Motivation

In the field of second language acquisition, one of the best known theories of motivation is Gardner's (1985) differentiation between instrumental and integrative motivation. To him, instrumental orientation to motivation refers to "the practical advantages of learning" a target language. Getting a good job, passing the examinations etc. are among examples instrumental motivation. On the other hand, "an integrative orientation is identified when learners state that they want to learn a foreign language because they are attracted to the target language culture or group or the language itself" (Schmidt, Boraie, & Kassabgy, 1996, p. 12). These two types of motivation are not always oppositional. There are many learners who are motivated by both instrumental and integrative factors. Both integrative and instrumental motivations are mutually inclusive. Most situations in learning language involve a mixture of each type of motivation. In fact, it is difficult to attribute learning language success to certain integrative or instrumental causes (Gilakjani, Leong & Sabouri, 2012, p. 10).

Relationship between Motivation and Language Learning

Researchers found that a higher level of motivation enhances language learning (Brown, 2002; Gilakjani, Leong & Saburi, 2012; Snowman, McCown & Biehler, 2009; Vengadasamy, 2002). "Without student's motivation, there is no pulse; there is no life in the class" (Gilakjani, Leong & Sabouri, 2012, p. 9). Choosri and Intharaksa (2011) found a strong relationship between students' level of motivation and their achievement. Oxford and Shearin (1994), and Dornyei (2001a) found a similar result that reveals that students' motivation level decide their achievement.

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In learning a second language, according to Gardner (2001), motivation has three elements: desire, effort, and affect. A motivated learner shows a strong desire to achieve his/her goal by learning the target language. S/he also uses all possible efforts with determination and consistency to learn the target language. Finally, s/he enjoys activities needed to be carried out in order to learn the target language with a positive attitude that boosts him to achieve his goal of learning the desired language.

Motivation "energizes" human psychology and "gives it direction" (Domyei, 1990, p. 117). Masgoret and Gardner (2003) have shown a significant relationship between motivation and L2 achievement, and conclude that high motivation results successful learning of the target language. If students are motivated, they are unlikely to display work avoidance behaviors (Engin, 2009) that make it easier to facilitate language learning activities for teachers (Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Ushioda, 2011).

Methodology of this Research

I adapted quantitative approach while collecting and analyzing data. Quantitative research generates numerical data or data that can be converted into numbers for a statistical review.

I used a questionnaire consists of a number of questions related to motivational factors. The reason of choosing questionnaire is that "the knowledge needed is controlled by the questions; therefore, it affords a good deal of precision and clarity" (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 171). The students of class XI-XII are mostly in their late teenage; therefore, a written "Yes/No" type of questions seems to be better for them than other forms e.g. interview. They felt easy to give answers in simple forms. All of the questions are MCQ that required them only to tick the right option. However, the researcher often had to play the role of a translator to enhance students' understanding of the questionnaire.

I selected twenty colleges for our investigation—ten are from urban area, and the other ten are from rural area of Bangladesh. I took necessary permission before my field-

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work. The authority of respective institutions was very helpful and cooperative. Around twenty students from each college volunteered in this study.

Results

Participants were asked to tell whether they think some statements reveal their purpose of learning English language. The result is presented in the table 1.

From this table, it is clear that students' motivational factors are instrumental that means they are learning the language for some practical reasons. However, some integrative factors seem to be appreciated by around half of the students which is obviously not convincing as instrumental factors have significantly more impact on them. Students were mostly motivated by the chance of securing a good result that will secure their opportunity in both professional and academic fields. Factors like knowing the target culture, appreciating the literature, likings for the English speaking people has the least impact on the students. Most of the students also believe that using up-to-date with modern communication tools i.e. using Email, browsing Internet, communicate with people from different cultures etc. are also motivational factors.

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Table 1

Reasons of learning English Language

Statement	Students answered "Yes"	Students answered "No"
It will enhance my prestige among my peers and friend.	402	0
To know about the western culture.	31	371
For my personal development.	322	80
It will help me to get a good job easily.	400	0
It is a mandatory subject and I have to pass it.	400	0
I can connect with more people around the world.	220	182
I can read English literature e.g. poems, novels, short stores etc.	91	311
I keep trace of the happening across the world.	369	43
I can understand English films, songs, TV programs.	48	354
I need a good grade in this subject.	402	0
It will help me in obtaining higher education.	402	0
I like the English speaking countries e.g. England, USA, Canada, Australia and so on.	49	353
I can enrich my knowledge as most of the books are in English.	260	142
To browse the Internet and get information easily.	334	68
To build a network across the world by using e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Skype, IM, Email and so on.	203	199

Question number 2-9 was about the environmental factors—e.g. the appreciation from teachers, availability of English speaking environment and so on. Students had to answers simply my telling whether it is right or not by choosing an option among 'yes' and 'no'. The result is demonstrated in table 2.

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Table 2

Students' use of English language

Question	Students answered 'Yes'	Students answered 'No'
Will you continue to learn English once you are done with your study?	315	87
Do you read anything e.g. Newspaper, magazine, blog etc. in English other than your textbook?	50	352
Are you determined to know English as much as possible by you?	400	0
Does teacher encourage you to use English in classroom regularly?	298	104
Does your teacher encourage you to use English outside the classroom?	67	335
Do your family members e.g. parents, siblings; encourage you to use English outside the classroom?	131	271
Do your family members e.g. parents, siblings; encourage you to use English inside the classroom?	160	242
Do you like to participate in classroom activities e.g. role play, reading aloud and so on?	233	169

This section revealed the interest of students in learning English language. Regardless of the type of motivation, they have interest in learning the language as they will continue to learn English after completing their education and will continue to better their English language. The students are centered to their books as only 20% students reported to read newspaper, magazine etc. outside the textbooks. They are highly motivated by their teachers and parents to use English in the classroom while using English outside the classroom is not much encouraged. Most of the students like to carry on class activities e.g. role-play.

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The last question was how the students regard learning English language. The result is shown in figure 1.
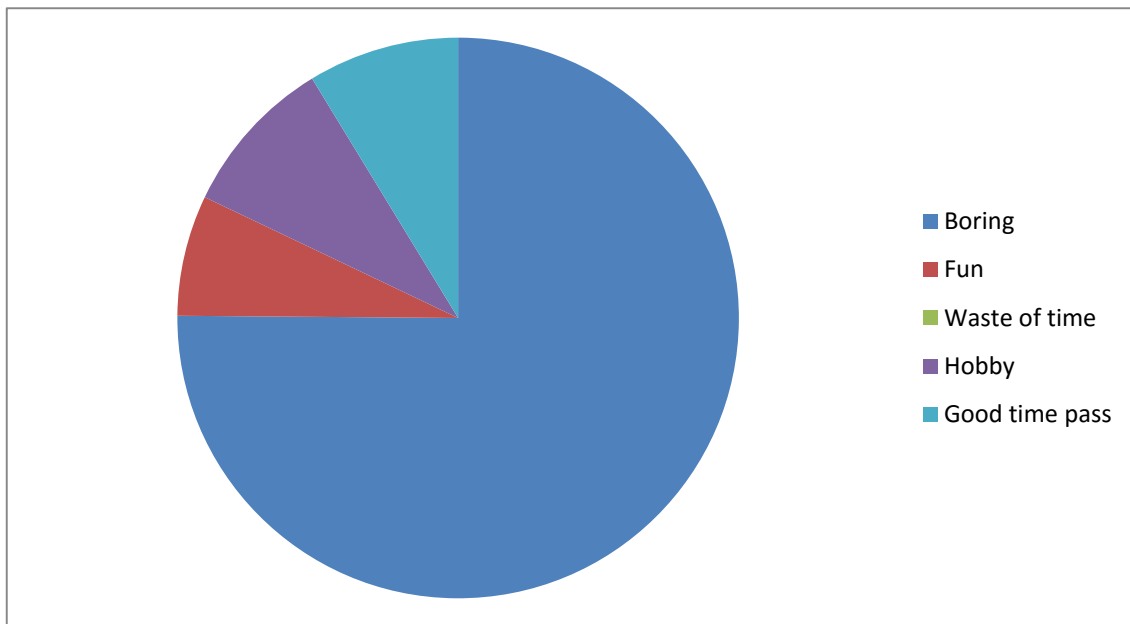

Figure 1. How students view English language learning.

Students don't seem to have positive perception towards learning English learning as 75% of the students regard it as a boring thing. Only 37 out of 402 students think it can be a good hobby. However, none of the students thinks that learning English language is a 'waste of time', and this is what strengthen the role of instrumental motivation in learning English that students are learning it, despite boring, because it is useful for their future career, social, academic and professional settings.

Implications

This study reveals that the students of class XI-XII are instrumentally motivated— they learn English language for practical reason i.e. get a good score in public exams, securing a good job, getting opportunities for higher education and so on. Although many of them feel the need of communication, it is not the prime focus of their learning. Students are motivated by their parents and teachers to use English in classroom while it rarely happens in case of using English language outside the classroom. Students do not take language learning

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as fun rather a boring activity. All of the above findings are contributing a lot in making students unable to communicate in English after completing 12 years' of formal education. Teachers need to be very motivating for the students and encourage them to use English as much as possible not only in the classroom but everywhere. Encouragement from parents and peers is also very crucial in developing students' communicative ability. The focus on getting a good result is strong enough to lead students to forget that English is not like other subjects but a language. Teachers have a crucial job here to do by presenting English not like other academic subjects i.e. History, Mathematics etc. but as a language to be learned for communicative purposes. Teachers also should bring variety in teaching techniques and find innovative ideas to make the English lessons enjoyable.

Conclusion

This study explored that the students of Bangladeshi colleges are motivated by instrumental factors that is leading the way to make students incapable of communicating in English language despite of studying English as an academic subject for 12 years. Too much emphasis on academic result and teachers' lack of variation in teaching technique are among the prime reasons behind this. However, the study was conducted in only twenty colleges— ten from urban side and ten from the rural side of Bangladesh; therefore, the result might not be definite representative of the situation of Bangladeshi institutions. A further study including a large sample would make the study more valid and reliable. For short time-frame, the only method of data collection was by using questionnaire. Use of some other methods i.e. class observation, scrutinizing their academic achievement in relation to the motivation, interactive interview and so on would give more valid and reliable data.

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