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## Motivations for Arab People Living in Hull to Learn English as a Second Language

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### Abstract

This piece of work set to investigate the potential reasons behinds the trend towards learning English as a second language by Arabic speaking people living in Hull; a city in the United Kingdom. The tendency to acquire the language was attracting the attention of many English language researchers. There was a raising demand for Arabic in habitants wanting to understand and grasp this language. Therefore, several studies were engaged in this notion. This research aims to explore the original motives beyond the Arabic people desire to learn English language.

This study assumed that the motivation for those people was related to two basic stimuluses. That is some reasons are linked to academic purposes, career objective and workplace relation improving. While the second reason relays on the social needs and individual interests for long term relations across different speaking societies. These two hypotheses both tested by a survey. The data collected and analyzed respectively. There were evident findings to come with a clear understanding of what has been conducted.

*Keywords: English L2, motivations, Arab learners*

### Introduction:

This piece of work is intended to search the original motivations for Arabic learners who are living in Hull city in the United Kingdom to learn English as a second language. There have been a number of instances where people are forced to study a second language for a specific purpose. For instance, international students may be required to demonstrate substantial understanding of English language prior to obtaining admission into the desired faculty in a foreign university. On the other hand, some people may prefer studying foreign language so as to integrate into the native culture. Others may deem it for purposes of acquiring long-term interactive ability to seek employment in English speaking communities.

This study attempts to understand the reasons or motives behind learning English by Arabic people in one of the United Kingdom cities. This work will look into the motivation concept in second language acquisition based on the trend of this research. It is built on two basic hypotheses to the predicated motives for learning English and will be tested by carrying out an online survey. Research design and methodology will be introduced including data collection. Subsequently, there will be an analysis to the data collected and a presentation for the findings of this study.

According to Verspoor, De Bot and Lowie (2005) motivation implies the tendency underlying any undertaken action such as the reasons why a student may want to learn English as a second language. Another example can be seen in the case where a humanitarian volunteer may want to learn international languages like English or French. Nunan (1992) explained the concept of motivation as it governs every human intention to undertake a given task. For instance, institutions always prescribe the needful requirement for their members.

Lamb (2009) claimed that the need to obtain work easily and become appreciated among people from different cultural backgrounds can motive studying multicultural norms. Recently, there are some studies conducted to determine the type of motivation to learn English as a second language (L2) among Arab people who want to learn English. The results indicated that most of them centralized on social integration and academic performance. Dornyei (1990) confirmed such studies found in the theory of instrumental and integrative motivational factors in L2 studies. Hence, this paper provides a conceptual understanding of motivation in learning English as second language among people who want to learn English in Hull.

## Literature Review

Motivation is very hard to define. As Gardner (2006, p.242) states "motivation is a very complex phenomenon with many facets...Thus, it is not possible to give a simple definition". This is because the term motivation has been viewed differently by different schools of thought. From the behavioristic perspective, motivation is "quite simply the anticipation of reward" (Brown, 2000, p. 160). However, the cognitivists view the term motivation as being more related to the learner's decisions as Keller (1983, p.389), quoted by Brown (ibid, p.160), stated, "the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they exert in that respect". However, in the constructivists' definition of motivation, they place "further emphasis on social contexts as well as the individual's decisions" (ibid). Despite the differences, in all the definitions of motivation given by the three schools of thought the concept of "needs" is emphasized, that is, "the fulfilment of needs is rewarding, requires choices, and in many cases must be interpreted in a social context" (ibid, p.161).

The importance of motivation in enhancing second/foreign language learning is undeniable. Lifrieri (2005, p. 4) points out that "when asked about the factors which influence individual levels of success in any activity – such as language learning –, most people would certainly mention motivation among them". Brown (2000, p.160) states that "it is easy in second language learning to claim that a learner will be successful with the proper motivation". With similar views, Gardner (2006, p. 241) posits that "students with higher levels of motivation will do better than students with lower levels". He further adds that "if one is motivated, he/she has reasons (motives) for engaging in the relevant activities, expends effort, persists in the activities, attends to the tasks, shows desire to achieve the goal, enjoys the activities, etc" (Gardner, 2006, p. 243).

Brown (2000) asserts that studies of motivation of second/foreign language learners often refer to a distinction between two types of motivation namely, instrumental versus integrative motivation. Gardner (1983, p. 203) defines instrumental motivation as "learning a language because of someone or less clearly perceived utility it might have for the learner". More specifically, a learner is instrumentally motivated when he/she wants to learn a language "to pass an examination, to use it in one's job, to use it in holiday in the country, as a change from watching television, because the educational system requires it" (Wilkins, 1972, p.184).

On the other hand, integrative motivation was defined as "learning a language because the learner wishes to identify himself with or become integrated into the society" of the target language (Gardner, 1983, p.203). Therefore, a learner is integratively motivated when he/she learns a language because he/she wants to "know more of the culture and values of the foreign language group... to make contact with the speakers of the languages... to live in the country concerned" (Wilkins, 1972, p.184).

Motivation has been a point of focus in examining the principles and grounds applied by L2 learners. In particular, English language learners are inspired by several factors especially where the native country maintains the language as the national identity. In this concept, Gass and Selinker (2008) stressed that, in English speaking countries, the spoken and written skills of that language must be acquired by international students wanting to join colleges and universities. Otherwise, those students might not worthy or qualified to take college examinations or even interacting with their peer students.

Among different types of motives, the instrumental motivation is widely associated with L2 study of English according to Hopkins (2002) who explained that many foreign learners of English language are motivated by future career objectives. Other scholars accounted another important factor related with the study of L2 English

which is inherent in cultural differences. For instance, Gardner (1985) affirmed that many students take interest in L2 English in order to minimize socio-cultural differences between them and native English speaking society.

Ellis (2008) assumed that to explore and may adopt different cultural habits outside one's native country, it is essential to have basic knowledge of English as this language is spoken in several western countries and widely across Europe. In addition, the language plays an important role to influence the lifestyle and cultural trends of the learner towards accepting other socio-cultural dynamics of the world.

## Related Studies

There is a plethora of research that has been carried out internationally to investigate learners' motivation and attitudes towards the English language. In Malaysia, for example, Vijchulata and Lee (1985) reported on a study that investigated the students' motivation for learning English in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). Based on Gardner and Lambert's research (1972), the researchers developed a questionnaire to elicit the data required. The questionnaire was administered on approximately a thousand students from all the different faculties in UPM. The findings revealed that UPM students are both integratively and instrumentally oriented towards learning the English language.

Another study by Sarjit (1993) attempted to explore the language needs of consultants at a company. The name of the organization was not mentioned as the consultants did not allow the researcher to expose their identities. Learners' motivation was of concern in the study. The research sample consisted of 26 consultants, 4 directors and one instructor. In her study, Sarjit (1993) employed different techniques to gather information, such as questionnaire, interviews and field observation. For the subjects' motivation, the study found that instrumental motivation was the main reason for learning the language followed by personal motivation.

In Japan, learners' motivation and attitudes towards the English language were also of concern for many researchers. One of the most relevant studies was that of Benson (1991) who surveyed over 300 freshmen to assess their motivation towards learning English. The results demonstrated the importance of integrative and personal goals as factors in motivation among Japanese college students as he stated, "integrative and personal reasons for learning English were preferred over instrumental ones" (Benson, 1991, p. 34).

In Papua New Guinea (PNG), a related study was undertaken by Buschenhofen (1998). He sought to assess the attitudes towards English among year 12 and final-year university students. To collect the data, he administered a questionnaire on approximately 50 % of year 12 and first-year university students in PNG. Both groups were contrasted in terms of their tolerance towards the use of English in a variety of contexts. The results indicated

(1) a generally positive attitude by both groups towards English and (2) some significant attitudinal differences in relation to specific English language contexts. Buschenhofen attributed such differences to the changing social, educational, and linguistic conditions which characterize the transition from year 12 to university education.

Arani (2004) investigated in Iran the language learning needs of medical students at Kashan University of Medical Sciences. One of the primary objectives of the study was to identify the students' attitudes towards learning English as a school subject i.e. prior entering the university. The research sample consisted of 45 medical students who enrolled in the first and second year of study. To collect the data, different types of questionnaires were administered to the sample at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the English for Medical Purposes (EMP) courses. The results showed that most of the subjects had positive attitudes towards both learning English and the English language teacher.

A study has been carried out by Karahan (2007) in the Turkish EFL context. The motive of his study arose from the complaints raised by learners, teachers, administrators, and parents about why most of Turkish EFL students cannot attain the desired level of proficiency in English. Therefore, he conducted a study to find out the relation between language attitudes and language learning which is a missing point of discussions on the problems of teaching English in Turkey. More specifically, Karahan tried to identify the interlaced relationship among language attitudes, the starting age of language learning, and the place where the individual started to learn language within Turkey EFL context. The only method of inquiry used was a questionnaire adapted from previous studies on language attitudes. The sample included 190 (94 females and 96 males) eighth grade students of a private primary school in Adana, Turkey, where English was intensively taught. The findings indicated that although the students were exposed to English in a school environment more frequently than other students at public schools, they had only mildly positive attitudes; especially female students had higher rates. In addition, the subjects recognized the importance of the English language but interestingly did not reveal high level orientation towards learning the language. On the other hand, the results revealed that the subjects had mildly positive attitudes towards the English based culture but they were not tolerant to Turkish people speaking English among themselves.

With regard to Arab EFL learners, some studies have been undertaken to investigate learners' motivation and attitudes towards the English language. For instance, Qashoa (2006) conducted a study among secondary school students in Dubai. The study aimed at 1) examining the students' instrumental and integrative motivation for learning English, and 2) recognizing the factors affecting learners' motivation. Two research tools were used: questionnaire and interviews. The sample, for the questionnaire, consisted of 100 students. For the interviews, on the other hand, the sample included 20 students, 10 Arab

English teachers and 3 supervisors. The results revealed that students have a higher degree of instrumentality than integrativeness. In addition, the findings indicated that difficulties with the subject (English) aspects such as vocabulary, structures and spelling were found to be the most demotivating factors for the students.

In the Yemeni Arabic EFL context, Al-Quyadi (2002) carried out a comprehensive study to investigate the psycho-sociological variables in the learning of English in the faculties of Sana'a in Yemen. One of the main objectives of his study was to study the nature of the psychological variables of learning English by Yemeni EFL learners in terms of attitudes and motivation as measured by English majors at the Department of English, Faculties of Education at Sana'a University. The only research tool used was a questionnaire. The study sample consisted of 518 students representing seven Faculties of Education. Generally, the results showed that the students had a high level of both instrumental and integrative motivation toward the English language. With regard to their attitudes, the findings indicated that the students had positive attitudes towards the English language and the use of English in the Yemeni social and educational contexts.

To sum up, the following may be said about the past studies discussed in this section:

- All the above-mentioned studies reconfirmed the importance of identifying learners' motivation and attitudes towards the English language.
- Some studies have been carried out to investigate second/foreign language learners' motivation. These studies help the researcher to understand the how to identify learners' motivation. As a result, to assess the Arab learners' motivation.
- The issues of learners' motivation and attitudes have not been sufficiently discussed with regard to Arabic community learners. In other words, very few studies have been conducted to explore the types of motivation and attitudes that Arabic learners might have toward learning the English language in the city of Hull. Therefore, this study would help understand these important issues in the Arabic context.

## Methodology

A primary collection of data through a questionnaire which was set online and designed by the researcher; is placed to test the actual motivations to learn English language as a second language. This survey is conducted in Hull for Arab people regardless of whether they are students, employees or any other categories. There were a total of 10 questions answered by a total of 46 Arab participants involved in the survey (see appendix 1&2). The survey questions were composed using the website: [www.freeonlinesurveys.com](http://www.freeonlinesurveys.com), and was sent to most Arab people living in Hull, through the author personal mail.



## Research Design and Implementation

The research used a primary data collection survey. The survey questions were composed on the website [www.freeonlinesurvey.com](http://www.freeonlinesurvey.com) and it was sent via personal emails and followed all the rules and regulations related to research work. For example, it respected the participants' privacy, conducted the research in a free and fair manner and came up with the results as collected from the field. That was done without any alteration and it was not biased either. Due to the diversity in linguistic and cultural dynamics, this research assumes that there are two types of motivation associated with L2 learning often overlaps; that is instrumental and integrative motivations.

The main goal of conducting this research is to find out whether Arab learners in the city of Hull are motivated, to learn English as their second language, by any of these kinds of motivation or not. The research is based on the following hypotheses:

1. The Arab people (living in Hull) will have instrument motivation to learn English as a second language.
2. The Arab people (living in Hull) will have integrative motivation to learn English as a second language.

## Data Analysis and Findings

The answers to the questions were categorized as follows as presented in Table 1: strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree in order to test not only the reasons to learn English, but also the degree of this reason (motive). Each of the ten questions will have respective answers to it. After conducting the survey, the following results were achieved.

Table 1: Survey questions and participants' responses (%)

No.	Reason for learning English	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Obtain better professional career	65.2	23.9	6.5	4.3
2.	Overcome barrier in specific work environment	50.0	39.1	6.5	4.3
3.	Achieve academic goal	56.5	34.8	6.5	2.2
4.	Perform related duties at work	39.1	43.5	15.2	2.2
5.	Interact with co-workers and customers	41.3	37.0	19.6	2.2

6.	Social life in English speaking society	60.9	28.3	8.7	2.2
7.	Minimize cultural differences	56.5	26.1	15.2	2.2
8.	Improve Interpersonal communication skills	50.0	34.8	13.0	2.2
9.	Greater opportunity to explore other cultures	60.9	28.3	8.7	2.2
10.	Affects cultural values and norms	41.3	28.3	23.9	6.5

The instrumental motivation is that one which is pushed by career objectives, professional aspiration and market demands. Learners with this type of motivation give reason such as to perform related duties at work and interact with co-workers. On the other hand, Learners with integrative motivation who search for interpersonal relationship have an interest in other cultures and have personal interest in acquiring a foreign language. Therefore, the survey was designed as follows: question one to five related to instrumental motivation while questions six to ten set for integrative motivation.

The questions that are inclined to instrumental motivation were responded to as follows: all the responses related to instrumental motivated are analyzed together; 50.43% strongly agreed, 35.65% agreed that is 86.08% of the respondents were driven by instrumental motivation. On the other hand, 12.7 % of responses disagreed, while 3.04 % strongly disagreed. A total of 15.77% disagreed that what motivated them to pursue English was instrumental. Accordingly, the first hypothesis that Arab learners (in Hull) will have their instrument motivation to learn English as a second language is positive.

In relation to integrative motivation questions, responses were: 53.91% strongly agreed, 29.13% agreed making it a total of 83.04 % agreed that English language would help them interact freely with people from other cultures and this would make them feel better. The total percentage of those who disagreed was 13.91 % while those who strongly disagreed were 3.04%. Generally, 16.95 % of the total responses did not agree that they were driven by integrative motivation to learn English. Thus the second hypothesis that Arab people (in Hull) have integrative motivation to learn English as a second language is positive too.

Both the hypotheses tested positive, however, those who agreed that instrumental motivation drove them were 86.08 % against 15.77 % disagreed. On the other hand, 83.04% were driven by integrative motivation while 16.95% disagreed that integrative motivation played a role in their quest for leaning the English language. When compared instrumental motivation is much stronger than integrative motivation among Arab people in learning the English Language.

With reference to previous research, it was noted that while the present findings were consistent with some studies, they are at variance with others. For example, the present study showed that instrumental reasons for learning English were preferred over integrative ones. This is in harmony with those results of Sarjit Kaur (1993), AlQuyadi (2002) and Qashoa (2006). On the other hand, the findings of this study were different from those of researchers in other countries (Vijchulata & Lee, 1985; Benson, 1991) as the findings of the latter studies showed that integrative reasons were preferred over instrumental ones.

The findings show the learners' demonstrated greater emphasis on integrative reasons for learning the English language and academic reasons. This apparently reinforces the idea that the learners see English as playing a vital role in their lives, either currently or in the future. Personal reasons were also regarded as important motives by the students. However, for the last motivational construct namely, integrative motivation, the learners' results provide evidence that learning English was part of the culture of its people had the least impact on their English language motivation. This might be caused by the general negative attitudes that Arab, in general, have regarded the British and Americans as colonizers of some parts of the Arab World.

Additionally, a growing feeling of national confidence may well be another cause of the learners' rejection of any other culture except their own. All in all, the results indicate that those learners would like to be bilingual but not bicultural. This accords with Badaroos's (1988) argumentation that the apprehensive attitude toward English as the language associated with the occupation and westernization has been replaced by a positive attitude that looks at English as a tool for modernization and a prerequisite for finding jobs, particularly in the private sector, and for entering some English-medium faculties in the Arabic context.

## Conclusion

This paper attempted to highlight one of the factors that may influence and shape the individuals' differences in learning English as a second language. It centralized on the motivation factor that may lay behind the Arabic learners' orientation towards learning while they are living in Hull. This involved searching the possible and predicable reasons underlying their choices and tendencies for learning English. Therefore, this research tried to provide a picture on this topic by exposing to the nature of motivation and studies conducted around as well as to an online survey aimed to test two hypotheses assuming the actual reasons to learn English.

Those hypotheses presumed that learning of a second language among Arabic learners who are living in Hull are motivated by both instrumental and integrative motivation. The findings indicated that, instrumental motivation which focuses on the

student's goal to excel at the work place and in their professional careers override the integrative motivation that focuses on the student's interest in other cultures and interpersonal development. In this context, Arabic learners (in Hull) are inspired by different factors like career prospects, academic goals and socio-cultural integration in their efforts to acquire English proficiency as an L2.

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## Appendix 1 The online survey

- (1) It is very important to learn English Language to obtain a better professional career.  
 Strongly agree       Agree       Disagree       Strongly Disagree
- (2) English language will help to overcome the barriers occur in specific work environment.  
 Strongly agree       Agree       Disagree       Strongly Disagree
- (3) English language can aid you to achieve your academic goal.  
 Strongly agree       Agree       Disagree       Strongly Disagree
- (4) English is very important for you to perform related duties and responsibilities at work.  
 Strongly agree       Agree       Disagree       Strongly Disagree
- (5) Learning English will allow you to interact with customers and co-workers more easily.  
 Strongly agree       Agree       Disagree       Strongly Disagree
- (6) The English Language will play a role in improving your social life in an English speaking society.  
 Strongly agree       Agree       Disagree       Strongly Disagree
- (7) The English language will help you to minimize the cultural differences in an English speaking society.  
 Strongly agree       Agree       Disagree       Strongly Disagree
- (8) The English language will improve your interpersonal communication skills.  
 Strongly agree       Agree       Disagree       Strongly Disagree
- (9) learning the English language will give you a greater opportunity to explore different cultures and adopt cultural habits.  
 Strongly agree       Agree       Disagree       Strongly Disagree
- (10) The English language affects your own social and cultural values and norms.  
 Strongly agree       Agree       Disagree       Strongly Disagree

## Appendix 2

### Responses by the Arabic people in Hull to the survey

1) It is very important to learn English Language to obtain a better professional career.		Percentage	Responses
Strongly agree		65.2	30
Agree		23.9	11
Disagree		6.5	3
Strongly disagree		4.3	2
2) English language will help to overcome the barriers occur in specific work environment.		Percentage	Responses
Strongly agree		50.0	23
Agree		39.1	18
Disagree		6.5	3
Strongly disagree		4.3	2
3) English language can aid you to achieve your academic goal.		Percentage	Responses
Strongly agree		56.5	26
Agree		34.8	16
Disagree		6.5	3
Strongly disagree		2.2	1
4) English is very important for you to perform related duties and responsibilities at work.		Percentage	Responses
Strongly agree		39.1	18
Agree		43.5	20
Disagree		15.2	7
Strongly disagree		2.2	1
5) Learning English will allow you to interact with customers and co-workers more easily.		Percentage	Responses
Strongly agree		41.3	19
Agree		37.0	17
Disagree		19.6	9
Strongly disagree		2.2	1

<b>6) The English Language will play a role in improving your social life in an English speaking society.</b>		Percentage	Responses
Strongly agree		60.9	28
Agree		28.3	13
Disagree		8.7	4
Strongly disagree		2.2	1
<b>7) The English language will help you to minimize the cultural differences in an English speaking society.</b>		Percentage	Responses
Strongly agree		56.5	26
Agree		26.1	12
Disagree		15.2	7
Strongly disagree		2.2	1
<b>8) The English language will improve your interpersonal communication skills.</b>		Percentage	Responses
Strongly agree		50.0	23
Agree		34.8	16
Disagree		13.0	6
Strongly disagree		2.2	1
<b>9) Learning the English language will give you a greater opportunity to explore different cultures and adopt cultural habits.</b>		Percentage	Responses
Strongly agree		60.9	28
Agree		28.3	13
Disagree		8.7	4
Strongly disagree		2.2	1
<b>10) The English language affects your own social and cultural values and norms.</b>		Percentage	Responses
Strongly agree		41.3	19
Agree		28.3	13
Disagree		23.9	11
Strongly disagree		6.5	3
Total responses:			46





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