

Multiple Motivation as a Key Factor in English Language Teaching: a Case Study in Hambantota, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This paper attempts to examine the role of the ‘motivation factor’ in Language teaching in the context of teaching English language to rural students in Sri Lanka. Since English can be used as a *Lingua Franca* for communication among different ethnolinguistic groups, it is extremely important to look at the English language teaching methodologies adopted in different countries. In teaching English as a second language to students in Sri Lanka, initiatives have been taken by both private sector and government sector institutes. For this research, a case study has been selected from an English language training programme conducted with private and public partnership in a rural area; at Tissamaharama electorate in Hambantota district, Sri Lanka. The method of this research was participatory observation. The research was launched to examine current practices of English language teaching and identify successful methods of language teaching by paying special attention to motivation. The study is mainly concerned with problematizing as to why the rural student population was weaker in English language skills, and how can this be mitigated. Among several other variables that can have a greater impact on English language acquisition, the ‘motivation factor’ was recognized at the beginning and the research was designed in a manner to measure

its impact on language learning and successful teaching. The study established that the influences of several significant motivation factors such as environmental changes, humour, changing classroom settings, gender fact, diversifying activities, continuously appraising students and using voice skills can enhance language learning to a greater extent when they are applied as continuous and multiple processes.

Keywords: continuous-multiple-motivation, language learning, voice skills, second language, *lingua franca*.

Background

English language teaching was started in Sri Lanka by the British colonisers in the first quarter of the 19th century in a formal manner. After Sri Lanka was annexed to the British Empire, the entire education system underwent changes; particularly the medium of instruction became English in the missionary schools. Therefore, there was no particular requirement to make conscious efforts to teach English to the students by applying highly advanced methods. Also, the usage of English was only confined to the highest social class in those days. On the other hand, the patriotic movement worked against the British Empire, and they used native language, culture, religion etc., as national symbols. Because of these generally observed socio-political environments, language teaching and learning were not associated with technically developed methods, which nowadays have been a very influential fact.

Today, English is an essential requirement for all who interact in national and international environments since almost everything is communicated through English in important contexts. Particularly,

post-war Sri Lanka requires a *Lingua Franca* to build up social harmony among ethnicities. The process of building up social harmony in the country was a continuous failure due to the influences and decisions made by the majority. It has been started with several acts enacted in history with reference to the language policy. One of the important turning points was setting up the Official Language Commission in 1951 and its recommendations suggested using one language as the official language instead of English in 1953. This came to the utmost stage during the general election campaign in 1956 and S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike (The prime minister of Sri Lanka) promised to make the Sinhala language the only official language during the election campaign. It was realized by him on June 1956 by creating a critical dilemma in the official language discourse of the country (Gamage, 2022). With this historical background and current post-war conditions which seek ways to build up social harmony, we have been pushed to seek a *Lingua Franca*. In order to minimize the issues that might occur among ethnicities in communication, the identified *Lingua Franca* is English which should properly be taught to all Sri Lankans. To teach this *Lingua Franca*, the country has to have successful second language teaching methodologies.

Eminent linguist, David Crystal (2005) recognises ten domains in which English has become pre-eminent in this century, namely, politics, economics, the press, advertising, broadcasting, motion pictures, popular music, international travel and safety, education, communications (Crystal, 2005:11). Most of the international political establishments deal in English. The League of Nations was the first among many modern international alliances to allocate a special place to English in its proceedings. Now, this can be observed everywhere

including in the biggest setting in the world; the United Nations Organization.

The linguistic realisation of economic imperialism was English. As David Crystal points out ‘money talks’ was the chief metaphor: the language in which it was talking was chiefly English. In the current world, approximately, 2000 million people speak English in different capacities as their mother tongue, second language or foreign language (2005). In certain countries, this has become a *Lingua Franca*. The English language has become very influential due to all the above-mentioned reasons. The incompetence of the rural student population of the country manifests the failure of English language teaching in Sri Lanka (Shepherd and Ainsworth, 2018:49). Thus, we were inspired to research successful teaching methodologies of this language in the Sri Lankan context with special reference to motivation.

Research Questions

01. What is the role of motivation in second language teaching applicable in rural language education in Sri Lanka?
02. What is the effectiveness of motivation in second language teaching in rural Sri Lankan settings?

Literature Review

The study of language learning and motivation has a long history, dating back to the early pioneering work of Gardner and Lambert (1959) in Canada, and has generated a large body of literature. “On the whole, this literature has been driven by the pursuit of explanatory theoretical models of motivation and their empirical exploration in a variety of formal and informal learning contexts. This is reflected in

the current push towards new analyses of L2 motivation in terms of concepts of self and identity and of complexity theory” (as quoted in Ushioda, 2013:1).

Motivation is a noun from the bare verb “motivate” which is defined in the Concise Oxford American Dictionary (2006:578) as the fact of providing someone with a motive for doing something, stimulating someone’s interest in or enthusiasm for doing something. The term *motivation* according to Richards & Schmidt (2010:376) is (in general) the driving force in any situation that leads to action. According to Stockwell “motivation” is one of the most elusive concepts in applied linguistics and indeed in educational psychology in general (2013:156).

“Motivation is widely recognized as a significant factor influencing success in second or foreign language (L2) learning and is perhaps one of the key variables that distinguish first language acquisition from second language acquisition. After all, while motivation is not really an issue in the case of infants acquiring their mother tongues, being motivated (or not) can make all the difference to how willingly and successfully people learn other languages later in life (as quoted in Ushioda, 2013:1). Learning a second language has often been considered a complicated process because of various factors that may affect both the linguistic and nonlinguistic outcomes of learners” (as quoted in Liu, 2015:1165).

In the field of language learning, a distinction is sometimes made between an orientation, a class of reasons for learning a language, and motivation itself, which refers to a combination of the learner’s attitudes, desires, and willingness to expend effort in order to learn the second language (Richards & Schmidt, 2010:376).

Othman & Shuqair (2013:127) consider “Motivation” as one of the most essential aspects determining success in learning the English language. On the contrary, attitudes towards a specific language could be either favourable or unfavourable. It is also important to recognize aspects that foster internal motivation in English language learning; however, it is also important to take into consideration extrinsic motivation, even though this form of motivation is unstable. Othman & Shuqair (2013, p. 123) further think that English can be difficult when taught in a foreign language (FL) setting, where authentic language input may not be readily available outside the classroom. Often, with a character-based language, language learners’ motivation must be high since persistence and determination are needed to deal with the stress of a difficult language. Due to the adverse conditions, a learner has to have extraordinary motivation in order to succeed at learning English (Anjomshoa & Sadighi, 2015:126).

Liu (2015:1171) in his study, aimed to investigate the learner autonomy of EFL students in Taiwan and the role of motivation. The main findings indicate that first, the students appeared to have a satisfactory sense of responsibility for their own learning; however, they were insufficiently motivated to accomplish autonomous learning activities inside or outside the classroom. The situation tended to improve when students had higher language proficiency. Second, there were significant differences in all three dimensions of autonomy at different motivation levels. With greater motivation, students were able to achieve a higher level of autonomy. Furthermore, motivation and autonomy were highly, positively correlated. Motivation contributed to half of the variance in autonomy, serving as a strong predictor for and an indispensable factor influencing the degrees of learner autonomy.

Motivation is a desire to achieve a goal combined with the energy to work towards that goal. Many researchers consider motivation as one of the main elements that determine success in developing a second or foreign language; it determines the extent of active, personal involvement in L2 learning (as quoted in Youssef, 2012:367).

According to Carreira (2006:27), students who have practical reasons and intellectual satisfaction tend to have lower levels of foreign language anxiety. Although his study has not revealed strong correlations between motivation and foreign language anxiety, it would be unwise to conclude that motivation and foreign language anxiety do not interact with each other.

Carreira (2006:26) affirms that since his study was designed to probe the relationship between the type of motivation and strength of anxiety for only one population of students, it is necessary to consider the generalizability of the present findings to other types of language students. Especially, several motivational studies focused on gender differences in EFL have been done, most of which have shown that girls were more motivated to learn languages than boys.

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A multiple regression analysis was used to determine the unique contribution of motivation to foreign language anxiety. Multiple regression is a statistical method in which scores on one or more variables (independent variable) are used to predict scores on another variable (dependent variable). In Carreira's study, the English learning motivation factors were used as independent variables, and foreign language anxiety (total score) was used as the dependent variable (Carreira, 2006:22). Other theories of motivation accentuate the balance

between the value attached to some activity and one's expectation of success in doing it; goal setting, the learner's attributions of success and failure, the role of self-determination and learner autonomy, and the characteristics of effective motivational thinking. Motivation is generally considered to be one of the primary causes of success and failure in second language learning (Richards & Schmidt, 2010:376).

Richards & Schmidt (2010:39) emphasise the attribution theory which gives more explanation on the cause of motivation, which is the theory that causes people to attribute to perceived successes and failures in their lives play a significant role in their subsequent level of motivation and behaviour. For example, learners may attribute their relative success or failure in language learning to such factors as ability, the classroom environment, good or poor teaching, interest, strategy use, support from others, etc. Attributions can be classified based on locus of control (internal factors such as effort vs. external factors such as the textbook or teaching method), stability (stable factors such as personality vs. unstable factors such as mood), and controllability (controllable factors such as effort vs. uncontrollable factors such as language aptitude). Although there may be a self-serving bias that leads to ascribing success to internal factors and failures to external ones, it is generally believed that learners who attribute both success and failure to internal factors such as efforts are most likely to maintain their motivation at a high level.

The self-determination theory of motivation conceptualised motivation on a continuum from the lowest to the highest levels of self-determination, with motivation and intrinsic motivation at opposite ends. Furthermore, from the lower end to the higher end, four more

extrinsic motivation levels can be distinguished, namely, external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation (as quoted in Liu, 2015:1166), while “Expectancy-value theory” refers to a variety of theories of motivation that assume that people are motivated to do things that they perceive to have value and at which they expect to succeed (Richards & Schmidt, 2010:209). However, the “Socio-educational model” is a model of second and foreign language learning in school settings developed by Gardner. This theory emphasises the role of integrative motivation (Richards & Schmidt, 2010:536).

There are so many scholarly works on this subject area in the universal context as discussed above, but when it comes to Sri Lanka, we do not have that much of studies on this particular topic. Particularly, this study draws attention to the fact that whether the motivational factors are successful or not in this sample with special reference to motivation. “*How Languages are learned*” (2013) by M. Lighbown and N. Spada is a considerable study in teaching and learning languages with special reference to motivation. The authors of this study explain clearly how motivation interferes with English language teaching and four important other factors have also been discussed. Even certain micro factors have been discussed: for instance, they have discussed the alcoholic influences on the English speaking tendency in people. In addition to the motivation factor, they also have taken into serious consideration of four more factors viz; aptitude, personality, intelligence and learner preferences which are very important in language teaching and learning.

C. J. Dodson's (1974) "*Language Teaching and the bilingual method*" contributes a lot to our study but the issue is, that his study had been done in 1974 which is very old compared to the current research works. Nevertheless, the findings of this research still contain considerable value. The most important finding of this study is applying a new teaching method which is based on all the positive points of the known methods. His study does not put the teaching methods into a particular corner. It suggests applying an eclectic method rather than using only one unique method.

Motivation has been taken into serious consideration by many other researchers in the process of English language teaching to a greater extent. "*Motivation: What Teachers Need to Know*" (1990) by A. Carole Ames, "*Intrinsic Motivation and the Process of Learning*" by J. Condry and J. Chambers, (1978) "*Motivational Considerations in the Study of Instruction*" by R. Mark (1988), "*Enhancing Student Motivation*" by L. Martin and Midgley Carol (1991) are among the major contributors in this field. Out of all the other factors effective on the English language teaching and learning process, motivation has been given a prominent place by most of the researchers.

"*Methods of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts*" is a piece of research work which was compiled by James Flood, Diane Lapp, James R. Squire, Julie Jensen (2005) and contains the most modern methodologies. This is an undergraduate and graduate level guidance to research works in English language teaching, but this research work cannot be bounded by a particular language even though it concerns English language teaching. This is the study which contributes a lot to the theoretical concerns of the present research in

search of successful applications of English language teaching with a special focus on the fact of motivation.

Research Methodology

This empirical research was conducted at the *Tissamaharama* electorate in Hambantota (Sri Lanka) with the participation of 60 students; 30 males and 30 females in a month-long English boot camp. They had joined the English language programme at the completion of either the O/L or A/L examination. This particular language programme was initiated with the public and private partnership as a pilot project to test the feasibility of training students in an artificial English-speaking environment with a month-long program. The researcher participated as a participant-observer of the programme and interacted with them on several occasions. Also, special attention was given to the teaching methodology which had given much space to motivate them to use the language freely. The age of the participants of this program was between 17-25 years and the number constituted both males and females. The researcher was totally engaged during the period with necessary observations, and information was recorded by research assistants. Data collection was done through daily observations through formal and informal methods. At the first meeting, participants were given an oral proficiency test in order to understand their oral proficiency upon the programme entry and then during 32 days, they were tested in four continuous assessments to understand the gradual progress. As the whole sample was in a particular setting, this was considered a case study.

Discussion

Among several factors, motivation was the key to successful language acquisition and speech according to the findings of this research. As a percentage, 90% of the sample was able to freely communicate after completion of this boot camp and it was found that they made grammar errors when they speak but the level of self-confidence and using the language even with mistakes were notable.

As the data speak, for the success of the methodology with much emphasis on motivation, let us explore the nature of motivation and its key result areas that had been applied in the training here onwards as our major findings.

Motivation has been taken into serious consideration by researchers in the process of English language teaching to a greater extent. In *Intrinsic Motivation and the Process of Learning*” by J. Condry and J. Chambers, “*Motivational Considerations in the Study of Instruction*” by R. Mark, “*Enhancing Student Motivation*” by L. Martin and Midgley Carol explore the theoretical foundations and the empirical success of the motivation factor in language teaching comprehensively.

This research found that there were several motives which made a huge impact on the teaching and learning process in this specific context. The prominent pattern of the motivation of this research was *exogenous*, but it does not convey that *endogenous* motivation was not important and worked on the project. The following major areas of students’ motivation were deployed and had become successful as identified in the research.

1. Environmental changes: This is not a new application of language teaching since this has been employed by teachers who practised a communicative approach for years, but it is difficult to see this practice in the Sri Lankan English teaching convention as a genuine practice. This research-based English Camp was executed in a free, unruffled and solitary environment in the dry zone in Sri Lanka. The environment had been changed totally in order to create an artificial English environment where students can interact throughout the day with English. For instance, the whole learning premises had been covered with English statements, sentences, songs, and other language-relevant stuff. As participants had positively commented and reacted to the environment this has become a major motive for them to cope with the language. Some of the pictorial evidence are as follows :



2. Humour: “*Humour*” has been defined in many ways in different subject areas but we prefer to introduce and use the definition metaphorically as “*Humour is surprise without threat or promise.*” This is a very critical way of motivating students which should be

applied consciously. In our study, it had been proved that, since the participants were very young and energetic, humour was a must to keep them enthusiastically with undivided attention throughout the programme and it had absolutely accomplished set goals as a factor of motivation.

Also, humour had been applied as a gradual and continuous practice in this boot camp, among these humour practices, English stories (particularly English humour stories such as Udurawana's jokes) played a major role in learning while enjoying. Gamage & Kodowe (2019) have concluded the utility value of humour in second language teaching. As they asserted, "language teachers can employ humour as a language teaching tool which can help captivate the learners, motivate them and get them glued to the lesson" (Gamage & Kodowe, 2019:767). This has been proved again in this experimental project.

3. Avoidance of boredom and monotony: The other important factor which had made the learning process a success was diversifying the lessons by avoiding boredom and monotony. Culturally, everything had been adapted into the context of Sri Lanka as a motive which was found as a factor of success, and success stories of learners of the English language at different levels stimulated as a gradual practice. It was identified through initial ground observations of Hambantota; the fear of language is immense, thus simplifications of the language in this project had been a very successful application. Some sort of locally adopted activities such as translations from English to Sinhala and vice versa in activities had helped a lot to avoid boredom and monotony. In addition, there had been several other ways to avoid boredom and monotony in learning English in this project as given below.

4. Student appraisal: Among the other findings, understanding students' personal characteristics, strengths and weaknesses by the lecturers, striving strength towards success and addressing weaknesses with positive notes had become important motivational factors for students. Appraising students' each and every individual and team effort by empathising with them using the most common techniques for praising them with a phrase such as good, very good, well-done, excellent, superb, etc. had created a huge impact. Identifying team leaders and motivating them to share their strengths with others and identifying backward students and popularizing them among the other students are unique practices. Understanding cultural aspects and dealing with them while treating them equally without marginalising any student was the next significant concern which has been identified through observation. This is also some kind of appraisal.

5. Teaching in a mixed group (boys and girls): Using gender differences as a driven motivational fact to learn languages had never been used in the history of English language teaching in Sri Lanka in this sense as far as our knowledge is concerned. However, it had become a more prominent motive in this research project. Students had placed in the class in mixed rows respectively girl and boy and also their positions had been changed every three days as they requested and looking at the knowledge level and cognitive skills which had become a very successful practice. This can also be designated as gender motivation in second language teaching.

6. Changing the classroom settings: Changing the classroom settings including students' seat arrangements taking into consideration cognitive abilities and personality traits, and motivating students towards punctuality by examples are strategic moves. Understanding

boredom and changing the techniques of teaching with continuous undivided attention without sticking to one particular teaching technique and promoting learners' initiative and involvement are successful psychological approaches which had played a major role in the process of motivation while changing the classroom setting regularly.

7. Use of voice skills: Use of voice skills (pitch, pace, articulation, clarity, stress, and intonation - here the most influential fact is intonation which is considered the music of language – Diane, 2020) to retain the attention of students and enthusiasm are linguistic motivational approaches which had been consciously applied by the teachers in this training programme. On the other way, this conscious effort helped to avoid monotony as well by further motivating participants.

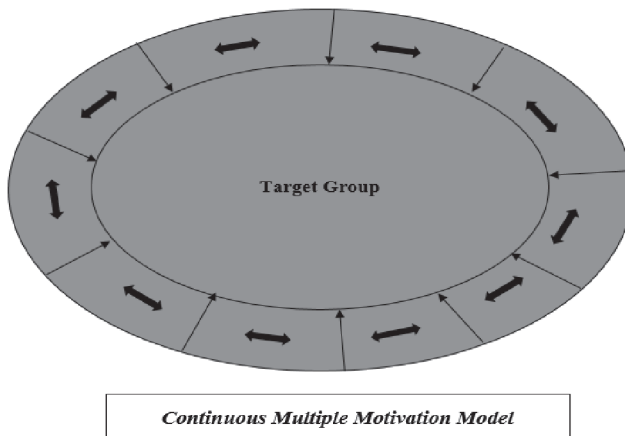
8. Ad-hoc planning for some activities: time management and student management have been highly important to retain students' trust towards the ultimate goal and they also obtain a considerable portion in the total process of motivation. These two efforts are challenging in an environment where ad-hoc planning is applied. Participants of this English boot camp never knew what comes next and what the activities are for the next day. Thus, every day was curious and a new experience with some ad-hoc activities. This curiosity itself has played a gigantic role to keep them continuously motivated.

9. Applying second-order application theories: to develop the curriculum with a logical and methodical relationship of lessons has helped immensely to understand and develop students' language developmental sequences and to feed them as an additional motivational technique. This is not a visible motivational technique for participants.

10. Outbound activities: Eventually, among other several minor factors which contributed as helpful motives; understanding traditional classroom drudgery and taking students to outdoor gears had been a very successful way to keep students with their contentment and also it had become a matter of diversification of the steadiness of traditional classroom settings.

Theorisation

After critically analysing gathered empirical data and cross-checking them further, I have formulated a new theory as an extended application of motivation theory. This is designated as CMM in second language learning and teaching which stands for *Continuous Multiple Motivation*. In this model, inward arrows indicate different motivational strategies explained above and bi-directional arrows show the multiple continuous connectivity and nature of those motivations.



¹ This model is explored in detail in a separate paper that dedicated to this model itself.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research recognises *continuous multiple motivation* as a key factor of second language teaching for students in non-native language speaking communities such as rural areas and recommends for future teachers to employ motivation in a considerable manner with the motivational strategies to achieve their teaching objectives of oral proficiency in students English as a foreign or second language.

We further recommend specifically applying motivational strategies which were recognised through this research work such as environmental changes, humour, avoidance of boredom and monotony, student appraisal, teaching in a mixed group, changing the classroom settings, use of voice skills, ad - hoc planning for required activities, applying second-order application theories to develop the curriculum with a logical and methodical relationship, understanding traditional classroom drudgery and taking students to outdoor gears to have a successful second language teaching experience. Thus, this can be introduced and designated as continuous multiple motivation theory.

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