MOTIVATION WITHIN THE OMANI EFL CONTEXT: TYPES, SOURCES AND CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS

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Given that in any context motivation drives action, reaction, transaction and interaction, it is not surprising that some researchers identify it as one of the most important factors in language acquisition. Although a number of models contribute to an understanding of L2 motivation, Alzayid (2012) and Bernard (2010) highlight the theories of motivation as they appear in Gardner’s (1985) socio-educational model, Deci and Ryan’s (1994, 2000) Self-Determination Theory, and Dörnyei’s (1994) three level framework of L2 motivation, as being highly influential. In these theories can be found, in addition to the concepts of integrative and instrumental motivation and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, a variety of individual, social, and cultural factors impacting upon L2 language learning. Because motivation is context-dependent, determined by socio-cultural settings, and because it is clearly so influential in language learning, it is vital for improved EFL teaching and curricula that its sources and types are investigated. The current research investigated both the types and sources of motivation of 100 Omani university students before and during their formal schooling, through a series of one-on-one open-ended oral and written interviews. Findings indicate that instrumental motivation is dominant among participants, while examples of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are almost equally apparent. In terms of motivation sources, results suggest that family members, teachers, and students’ own attitudes towards the language are major positive contributors to participants’ motivation, with these last two also appearing as potentially important sources of demotivation. Contextual factors, including socio-cultural and school contexts, parental involvement and peer pressure, were also found to have a significant effect on student motivation. The classroom implications of these types and sources of motivation in Omani classrooms are discussed.

Keywords: Motivation, EFL, Oman, Language learning

Introduction

Motivation is often posited as one of the most important factors contributing to successful L2 language learning (Ellis, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Ushida, 2005). Although a difficult concept to define, motivation has been described as an internal drive that pushes an individual to “do things in order to achieve something” (Harmer, 2001, p. 51). With specific reference to second language learning, Gardner (1985, p. 10) states that motivation can be conceived of as “the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity”. Combined, these definitions offer motivation as an energy or desire that drives a learner’s actions in order to direct achievement and generate self-satisfaction.
It is perhaps due to the emphasis placed on a language learner’s drive and direction that the concept of motivation has assumed such an important role in the research about successful language acquisition. Dadi (2011) states that, despite the many models, theories and dichotomies that have been employed to account for motivation, L2 research often tends to emphasise individual, social and cultural dimensions. Alzayid (2012) and Bernard (2010) highlight Gardner’s (1985) socio-education model, Deci and Ryan’s (1994, 2000) Self-Determination Theory, and Dörnyei’s (1994) three level framework of L2 motivation, as significantly contributing to awareness among language instructors of what Dörnyei (2001) describes as the “internal processes and social and cultural factors” (p. 9) contributing to learner motivation.

These social and cultural factors are perhaps most famously espoused by Gardner’s (1985, 2001) socio-educational model. In this model, Gardner conceives of motivation as taking either instrumental or integrative forms. Instrumental motivation is said to exist in those language learners who are motivated to learn an L2 due to the social and or material benefits that knowledge of the language can bring. Integrative motivation, on the other hand, is related to a learner’s admiration of the L2 culture, and may even result in a desire to integrate into the target language community. The socio-education model also encompasses a number of individual factors impacting upon learner motivation, although these tend to assume somewhat marginalised roles when compared to the model’s socio-cultural focus.

Of the internal processes Dadi (2011) highlights, intrinsic motivation is perhaps the most well-known. Intrinsic motivation is generated from within the individual, and is claimed to exist when someone performs an action due to the sense of satisfaction or achievement it generates, and not because of any external reward. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is concerned with the external rewards that are to be gained from performing an activity. Deci and Ryan (1994, 2000) expand upon these concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, in addition to amotivation, in their Self-Determination Theory, which premises the concept of motivation on the belief that people have innate tendencies towards growth that are affected by social and cultural factors. While the influence of social and cultural factors in Self-Determination Theory is also apparent in the socio-education model, this theory is perhaps most readily associated with the continuum of extrinsic motivation comprised of four self-regulatory styles, including external regulation, introjected regulation, identification and integrated regulation.

Dörnyei’s (1994) three level framework of L2 motivation draws together a number of motivating and demotivating components that appear in both the socio-educational model and Self-Determination Theory. For example, across the Language, Learner and Learning Situation levels, Dörnyei offers motivation components including the desire to integrate into the target language community and the nature of the learning context, both of which are closely associated with the socio-educational model. Other contextual factors influencing learner motivation that are shared with Gardner’s (1985, 2001) model include the teacher, the class and so on. Moreover, Dörnyei’s framework also places a specific focus on individual learner factors, including the learner’s need for achievement, their self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy, all of which appear in Self-Determination Theory.

Of the concepts shared between each of these models, integrative motivation is one that has received a great deal of attention in L2 learning contexts. Although debate about the value of integrative versus instrumental motivation in enhancing language learning outcomes has featured in the literature for at least the last twenty years (Dörnyei, 1990; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991; Oxford & Shearin, 1994), a number of authors nonetheless maintain integrative motivation is one of the most important factors for ensuring the success of L2 learners.

Similarly, intrinsic motivation is also often posited as being far more influential in L2 acquisition than extrinsic motivation, with a number of studies linking intrinsic motivation to language learning success, academic performance, long-term engagement with language learning, and higher levels of academic interest (see Moskovsky & Alrabai, 2009). Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier and Ryan (1991) also state that L2 learners with high levels of intrinsic motivation combined with more autonomous forms of extrinsic motivation will also be more academically successful than those students who are merely concerned with gaining external rewards.

However, the belief that integrative and intrinsic forms of motivation are associated with more successful language learning in L2 contexts may become problematic when applied to Oman. For
example, Dadi (2011) claims the combination of the high utility of the English language across a variety of domains both within Oman and across the Gulf States combines with the potential for Muslim Arab students of English to hold negative attitudes towards Inner Circle cultures based on political and/or religious concerns to create a situation in which extrinsic and instrumental forms of motivation are far more prevalent. If this is the case, then it becomes much more difficult to assume that Omani students of English with high levels of instrumental and extrinsic motivation will be less successful language learners than their integratively- and intrinsically-motivated peers.

The current study, therefore, explores both the sources and types of motivation experienced by Omani EFL students while studying English in their early school years. In doing so, it examines 100 EFL learner narratives collected through either oral or written interviews regarding participant motivation to study English. Framework analysis of the student narratives was employed to gain a clearer picture of the components of motivation experienced by these Omani L2 learners and of the nature of this motivation with special reference to Gardner’s (1985, 2001) socio-educational model, Deci and Ryan’s (1994, 2000) Self-Determination Theory and Dörnyei’s (1994) three level framework of L2 motivation. Finally, the classroom implications of the types and sources of motivation in Oman is discussed.

Literature Review

Alzayid (2012) and Madrid (2002) offer concise overviews of important theories and categorisations in L2 learner motivation that encompass more than 50 years of research interest. These theories begin with the pioneering work of Robert Gardner and associates (see Gardner & Lambert, 1959) and include Keller’s (1983) model of motivational design of instruction, Skehan’s (1989) four sources of motivation in an educational context, Williams and Burden’s (1997) social constructivist model, and Dörnyei and Otto’s (1998) process model. While each of these models has contributed to an understanding of the multiple constructs that contribute to L2 motivation, the current research, following the advice of Bernard (2010) and Alzayid, focuses on motivation as it appears in Gardner’s (1985, 2001) socio-educational model, Deci and Ryan’s (1994, 2000) Self-Determination Theory and Dörnyei’s (1994) three level framework of L2 motivation.

Gardner’s Socio-Educational Model

Gardner’s socio-educational model seeks to explain the relationship between social, educational, and individual factors in determining the effectiveness of L2 acquisition. It has been used by a large number of researchers, including the social psychologist Gardner himself, to account for a variety of phenomena including differing levels of language retention (Gardner & Lysynchuk, 1990) and rates of learning new vocabulary (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991). Despite undergoing some small changes since the influential version which emerged more than twenty-five years ago (Gardner, 1985), the socio-educational model has remained fairly consistent throughout its lifespan. Naturally, within that time period, a number of theorists have utilised, challenged and even expanded upon the original model (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Kruidenier & Clement, 1986; Skehan, 1989; Ushioda, 1993; Wen, 1997), with Gardner (2001) responding through the release of a revised version around the turn of the century.

Within the revised model, Gardner (2001) conceives the process of second or foreign language acquisition as influenced by four important factors: external influences, individual differences, language acquisition contexts, and outcomes. The first, external influences (denoted in the 1985 model as “social milieu”), is concerned with any factors existing “outside” of the learner which may influence the process of language learning. This, naturally, is a broad area, and Gardner offers some clarification by dividing these external influences into the classes of “history” and “motivators”. Motivators, according to the model, include any external elements that may propel a student to willingly engage with the L2. Such motivators include a facilitative learning environment, teacher encouragement and so on. While such
elements partly contribute to a learner’s integrative motivation, of all the potential external influences, it is the learner’s “history”, Gardner states, that plays the most influential role.

Gardner (2001) defines learner history as being comprised of the social and personal variables individuals bring to their language studies. Examples include the social and cultural contexts in which the learner exists, individual and family backgrounds, and community attitudes towards the target language group and out-groups in general. For instance, Gardner maintains that in those situations in which a language is deemed effeminate, “masculine” learners may display a reluctance to engage with it. Similarly, in those contexts where a L2 is associated with membership of a social elite, gaining proficiency may be a commonly encountered societal goal.

However, it is not just attitudes towards specific cultural and linguistic groups that dominate learner history, but also a learner’s openness to foreign cultures. As Gardner (2001) states, learning another language involves both the internalisation of speech sounds and a familiarity with the behavioural patterns that are characteristic of the L2 group. As such, exposure to another language may involve the adoption of foreign elements into a learner’s concept of the “self”, with openness to foreign influences viewed in this model as essential to the process of language acquisition (Sinno, 2008).

In this way, learner history has a strong relationship with the individual difference concept of integrativeness, which is perhaps one of the most readily recognisable variable complexes associated with the socio-educational model. Integrativeness is defined by Gardner (2001) as a learner’s interest in acquiring a language to gain a closer psychological connection with the target language group. Clement, Dörnyei and Noels (1994) add that integrativeness is characterised by a positive interpersonal/affective disposition towards the second language group, the desire to interact, and even become similar to, members of that community, and an openness and respect for that group’s culture and way of life. In the extreme, those displaying a high level of integrativeness may even wish to achieve complete identification with the target language culture, with perhaps a subsequent withdrawal from their original cultural and/or linguistic group. On the other hand, those displaying low levels of integrativeness have little or no interest in being identified with the target language group.

Within the realm of individual differences, integrativeness has a strong two-way relationship with attitudes towards the learning situation, which includes learner attitudes towards their teachers, textbooks, classmates and so on. Taken together, these two variables of integrativeness and attitudes towards learning situation are what Gardner (2001) defines as the major correlating supports for learner motivation – the individual effort, desire, and positive affect which combine to produce the “driving force” of learner efforts (Gardner, 1985). All three of these elements of motivation must be present, according to the revised socio-educational model, for effective language learning to occur, although Gardner concedes other motivating and non-motivating factors, along the lines of those put forth in Self-Determination Theory, may also play a small part. It is important to reiterate that all three variables of motivation, attitude towards the learning situation, and integrativeness must be present for learner success for, as Gardner contends, a desire to integrate into the language community without related effort will yield few results, while high motivation with negative attitudes towards the learning context will be short-lived at best.

All three of these variables, therefore, combine to determine a learner’s level of integrative motivation, the “complex of attitudinal, goal-directed, and motivational attributes” (Gardner, 2001, p. 9) that denote a willing, positive learner who is open-minded enough to identify with the foreign language group. Integrative motivation, however, should not be confused with integrativeness or integrative orientation, for orientation in Gardner’s model is not a component of motivation but, rather, a reason or goal for studying a language which relates to motivation in different ways (Sinno, 2008). It is important to note that the concept of integrative motivation is deemed the key to successful language learning within the socio-educational model, while that of instrumental motivation, in which a learner studies another language due to the material and/or social benefits it may bring, is relegated to the marginalised variable of “other motivating factors”. However, as outlined above, a number of researchers have questioned whether integrative orientation is, indeed, a better predictor of language acquisition than instrumental orientation, especially within a foreign language context (Dörnyei, 1990; Oxford & Shearin, 1994), while
Gardner himself concedes instrumental orientation and/or motivation may be more important than the socio-educational model acknowledges (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991).

**Self-Determination Theory**

A number of theorists have sought to define motivation in terms of the intrinsic-extrinsic dichotomy. Early representations of this dichotomy defined intrinsic motivation as being present when an individual performs an action without the expectation of external reward or for the enjoyment or satisfaction gained from engaging in the activity. According to Deci and Ryan (1994), when this type of motivation intercepts with learner autonomy and interesting tasks, results include high levels of cognitive and emotional capacities.

Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is present when an action is performed to avoid punishment or to gain an external reward, whether that reward is tangible, like a prize, or intangible, such as a teacher’s praise. Nakata (2006) states that while intrinsic motivation has been traditionally viewed by researchers as a positive influence on learning, extrinsic motivation is often posited as negatively impacting upon L2 learning. Despite this contention, however, Deci and Ryan (1994) maintain that extrinsic motivation can, in fact, exert a powerful positive influence on language learning. To better understand the nature of this influence, Deci et al. (1991) examine extrinsic motivation in terms of a continuum consisting of external regulation, introjected regulation, identification and integrated regulation.

At one end of the continuum, external regulation, according to Deci et al. (1991), occurs when a behaviour is performed because of an external contingency, such as a student completing homework to gain a teacher’s praise or to avoid conflict with parents. Introjected regulation is present when an individual is motivated to perform an action due to internalised rules or demands which are followed due to a sense of internal coercion (Tanaka, 2013). Here, Deci et al. give the example of a student who arrives at class on time in order to avoid feeling like a bad person, even though they do not identify with the regulation urging them to punctuality. Next, identified regulation occurs when a behaviour is valued by an individual and when that person comes to identify and accept the regulatory process. As this behaviour, Deci et al. state, can be deemed more autonomous or self-determined, it allows the person to feel a sense of choice about their actions. Finally, integrated regulation is when the valued behaviours in identified regulation are fully assimilated into an individual’s sense of self. Tanaka states that, although integrated regulation is a theoretical possibility, the concept is yet to be employed in empirical research.

According to Dadi (2011), it is the conceptualisation of extrinsic motivation in this manner that allowed Deci and Ryan (1994, 2000) to “transcend the intrinsic/extrinsic dichotomy and establish Self-Determination Theory” (p. 33). Hill (2011) describes Self-Determination Theory as a humanistic theory of motivation premised on the belief that individuals have innate tendencies towards personal growth that are either assisted or hindered by their environment. The theory maintains that motivation, rather than forming a dichotomy as early theories tended to assume, varies along a continuum from intrinsic to external regulation as outlined above. Moreover, Self-Determination Theory, according to Tanaka (2013), encompasses three broad categories of motivation which are intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and amotivation.

Hill (2001) states intrinsic motivation can perhaps be best conceived as being present when a learner is “energised by the pleasure derived from engaging in the activity” (p. 2). Behaviour that is extrinsically motivation, on the other hand, can be energised by both internal and external contingencies. Finally, amotivation, as the name suggests, describes a state in which the individual lacks the intent to act (Madrid, 2002), and is often associated with impaired cognitive performance, negative affect and even low levels of self-esteem (Vallerand, 1992). It is necessary to note that Dörnyei (2001) draws a distinction between amotivation and demotivation, which is related to the effect of negative influences that have decreased a learner’s desire to engage with an activity.
Deci et al. (1991) suggest that those students with high levels of intrinsic motivation and more autonomous forms of extrinsic motivation (such as identified or, at least theoretically, integrated regulation) tend to achieve more positive academic results. In support of this, Deci et al. cite studies from Benware and Deci (1984), Grolnick and Ryan (1987), and Gottfried (1990), which all claim some form of link between intrinsic motivation and academic achievement and/or student interest. Deci et al. conclude by stating that those learners who are intrinsically motivated in their studies and who also have more autonomous regulatory styles tend to be higher achievers, to demonstrate higher levels of conceptual understanding and to be better-adjusted than those with less self-determined motivation types.

Tanaka (2013) agrees that intrinsic motivation is related to motivational intensity, perceived competence, L2 achievement and so on, while identified regulation is closely associated with the achievement of long-term goals and persistence in language learning. These studies are complemented by research suggesting that externally regulated motivation in L2 learning may be short-lived at best, with Ushioda (2008) claiming the goal of educators should necessarily be to “foster learners’ own motivation from within” (p. 22).

Dörnyei’s Three Level Framework of L2 Motivation

Like the socio-education model and Self-Determination Theory, Dörnyei’s (1994) three level framework of L2 motivation also highlights a variety of social, cultural and individual factors influencing L2 learner motivation. The first and most general of these is the Language Level, which focuses on the orientations and motives associated with learning the L2. Dörnyei states these include components such as the culture that the L2 conveys, the communities in which the L2 is spoken, and how useful gaining proficiency in the L2 will be for the language learner. Here Dörnyei refers to Gardner’s (1985, 2001) concepts of integrative and instrumental motivation as subsystems. The Language Level, according to Madrid (2002), is therefore associated with the reasons why learners are interested in the language, why they study it, and why they make an effort to learn it.

The second level Dörnyei (1994) offers is the Learner Level. Dörnyei describes this level as encompassing a complex of “affects and cognitions” (p. 279) that constitutes the L2 learner’s personality traits. Motivation at this level is, along the lines of Self-Determination Theory, associated with the L2 learner’s need for achievement and self-confidence and, as such, incorporates factors including language use anxiety and self-efficacy. Other important factors at this level include the learner’s self-esteem, self-efficacy and sense of security in their language studies.

The Learning Situation Level is the third level of L2 motivation according to Dörnyei (1994), and consists of intrinsic and extrinsic motives in relation to the three areas of course-, teacher- and group-specific motivational components. Each of these areas, moreover, has its own sets of components. For example, course-specific motivational components include interest, relevance, expectancy and satisfaction; teacher-specific components include affiliative drive, teacher’s type of authority, their personality and behaviour; finally, group-specific motivational components include goal-orientedness, group cohesion, classroom goal structure, class structure and so on.

Methodology

Research Questions

The current research sought to investigate the concept of motivation as it relates to the formal schooling experiences of Omani EFL students at a public university in the Sultanate of Oman. The study focused on two key areas. The first was gaining a greater understanding of the types of motivation that exist among participants. Following Bernard (2010), motivation types were drawn from Gardner’s (1985, 2001) socio-educational model and Deci et al.’s (1991) Self-Determination Theory and, as such, are
defined here as integrative and instrumental motivation and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The second focal point of the research was on the sources of motivation and demotivation that affect participants’ drive to study English. The theoretical framework for these sources was based on the motivation components highlighted both within and across each of the three models and frameworks featured above.

The two research questions addressed by the study are:

1. What types of motivation exist among Omani EFL students before and during formal schooling?
2. What are the sources of motivation and demotivation for these Omani EFL students?

Data Collection Techniques

In order to address these two questions, data was collected through a series of 50 oral and 50 written interviews. All interviews were open-ended in nature, with each participant asked to recount their experiences of English with a particular focus on their attitudes towards the language and how they went about studying it before and during formal schooling. All interviews were conducted in English, with oral interviews being recorded by MP3 player before being transcribed. In the current research, no distinction was made in the analysis process between oral and written interview data.

Participants

Participants were Omani EFL students of various majors studying at Oman’s only public university. They were recruited through snowball sampling, with each participant identifying one or more new students who might be interested in participating. All students identified as potential respondents were approached either in-person or via email and asked if they were interested in participating. Those who assented were asked to take part in a one-on-one oral interview which typically lasted around 15-20 minutes. Those participants who could not attend the oral interview due to logistical or other reasons were asked to elaborate upon the same themes as the oral interview participants though in written form. In total, 100 respondents volunteered to take part in the research, with 50 respondents each participating in the oral and written interviews.

Of the 100 students to participate, 27 were male and 73 were female. They were drawn from a range of academic specialisations, with the vast majority (around 65%) being English specialists. The remaining 35 represented various other specialisations including medicine, engineering, commerce, science, nursing, law, and agriculture. The final two specialisations are associated at the research site with content instruction that takes place primarily in the Arabic language, though students of the other specialisations usually study in English. The data collection took place in five consecutive semesters beginning with the summer semester of 2010 and ending with the fall semester of 2012.

Data Analysis Techniques

Framework analysis was employed to examine the oral and written interview transcripts. The analysis process followed the three steps of coding, categorisation and analysing. The codes initially applied to the data were, in line with Blee and Taylor (2002), based on the theoretical positions espoused in the literature. Here, theories were drawn from the socio-educational model, Self-Determination Theory, and the three level framework of L2 motivation. Words and phrases associated with either different types of motivation or different factors contributing to motivation and demotivation were highlighted and collated with similar occurrences. In addition, every time an example of a word, phrase or event associated with a specific theme was encountered, it was tallied so as to contribute to a frequency count for that particular theme. In this way, analysis focused on both the number and kind of instances of integrative,
instrumental, extrinsic and intrinsic forms of motivation, in addition to examples of motivating or demotivating components reported by participants. All analysis was done by hand and without the assistance of qualitative software analysis programmes.

**Results**

**Types of Motivation**

Of the 100 participants, 49% were deemed to be motivated in their engagement with their English-language studies before and during formal schooling, while the remaining 51% were classified as either largely demotivated or amotivated. Gender differences indicate that male learners were less likely to be motivated to learn English than their female counterparts. In fact, only 40% of male participants were categorized as motivated in their L2 studies, compared to 52% of females. Similarly, 60% of male participants displayed characteristics typical of demotivated learners, contrasted with the 48% of demotivated female learners.

Of the 49 participants that were motivated to learn English, 25 were characterized as reporting attitudes or activities more in line with intrinsic motivation, while 24 displayed more extrinsic types. Of this latter group, the vast majority displayed forms of extrinsic motivation that are associated with Self-Determination Theory’s concepts of external regulation or introjected regulation. For example, one participant, Zawana, claimed, “I find language learning dreadfully frustrating. Anyone who has studied a language seriously probably knows what I mean. Yes, I’m learning English not because I love learning languages but because I have to do so”.

While these participants tended to focus on the imposed condition of learning English, others highlighted more intangible extrinsic factors including parental and teacher praise and the status derived from success earned in English-language competitions. For instance, Dhaneea recalled how after winning one such competition, “The school principal was very grateful to the participants as they had exerted huge efforts to achieve success and, as a reward, she praised them publicly in the assembly”, with the participant finding this praise “hugely motivating” to engage further with her studies. Instances of more independent forms of regulation, where the learner identifies and accepts the regulatory processes, however, were rare, with almost all accounts of extrinsic motivation involving either adhering to the rules imposed on the participant from an external force or to a set of internalised rules.

Examples of intrinsic motivation appeared with almost the same frequency as those of extrinsic motivation, and are perhaps best encapsulated by Mira, who spoke of developing an internal drive to learn the language despite the environmental challenges encountered:

I started challenging myself to do my best at it. And, eventually, I succeeded. Moreover, I felt a sense of enjoyment as I studied it... As time passed, my love of English increased, despite the fact that people in the environment surrounding me disliked English. For instance, I started reading any words written on sandals and on cans of soft drinks.

While another, Fatma, described her enjoyment of learning the language in even stronger terms:

I will surely continue my journey with learning English, and my love and passion for the language will guide me through. Until I perfectly master the language, I will continue the process of learning it and write my own story about loving it.

As anticipated by much of the existing Gulf research, instrumental forms of motivation were widely reported across the sample while examples of integrative motivation were far rarer. Those participants who were deemed to be instrumentally motivated tended to focus on the position of English as a global language and the language of private enterprise in the Gulf, in addition to its dominance across a wide range of domains both within the country and abroad. These responses include Buthaina’s belief that:
Nowadays, everyone is aware that English is the global language, especially in business and commerce. Actually, I learn English in order to find a job easily. For example, if anybody applies for a job, the first condition will be that he must speak English fluently. In addition, most of the things around us are written in English, beyond Arabic. For instance, signs along roads, in shops, hospitals and airports are written in English. And if someone doesn’t understand what’s written, he may get into trouble.

An interesting addition to these instrumental reasons to learn English, and one that has appeared previously in Fahmy and Bilton (1992) and Al Haq and Smadi (1996), is the idea that the language can be used to either defend Islam from the challenges of non-Muslims or to spread Islamic influences outwards. This position was clearly stated by Hanan:

Another reason that lay behind my desire to learn English was my personal, religious and social ambition. Since English is a global language, most people around the world speak it, so I decided to manipulate it to serve my religion, Islam. As an illustration, I’ve decided to be an English specialist because I want to teach Qur’an citation to those who don’t speak Arabic. This way I will be able to convey the message of my religion.

Moreover, the influence of cultural-religious concerns on motivation as highlighted by Hanan was also reported by a number of participants who explicitly rejected the notion of admiring Western cultures associated with the English language and of seeking to integrate into these in line with Gardner’s (1985, 2001) integrative motivation. Here, Latifa stated that:

I decided to go on a language journey and knew that I had to stop at some stations during the journey to refuel myself with determination. I also realised that language is a sign of identity, so, before I started to learn English, I promised myself that I would keep my identity unspoiled.

Despite the predominance of such responses, however, a small number of participants did admit to developing a deep respect for not just the English language, but for the Western cultures that the language is often assumed to transmit. This included an acknowledgement of the link between language learning and culture by Ibrahim, who maintained, “The clearest way to begin understanding and learning English is by understanding and discovering its culture”. While another participant, Khuloud, describes how Western audio-visual cultural products made her more receptive to English which, in turn, made her more receptive to Western cultures:

At that time, I began to watch many translated American shows and programs. I admired many of the American famous actors and show presenters, like Tom Cruise, Oprah Winfrey and Dr. Phil. My admiration for those people in an indirect way made me more interested in the English language. I started to pick up words and phrases from these shows, and automatically my English improved. I also started to read translated English novels and became interested in the culture of English people. At that point, the seeds of loving English started to grow inside me.

The three types of motivation that clearly dominated the interview data, therefore, are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which were reported an almost identical number of times, and instrumental motivation. Although elements of integrative motivation did appear in a small number of participants, these were not the extreme cases of learners seeking to fully integrate into the target language community, but rather examples of participants who admired the Western cultures often associated with the English language or who viewed gaining a greater understanding of these cultures as one way in which to enhance their language skills.
Sources of Motivation

Table 1 indicates the 13 sources of motivation reported by participants. Of these, the three sources that occurred with the highest rate of frequency were family members (mentioned 31 times by participants), good teachers (28) and learners’ own positive attitudes towards the language (22). In relation to the first point, a number of participants retold how either their parents, siblings, or even members of their extended families, encouraged them to learn English. Often, these family members were professional language teachers, students of English-medium colleges or universities, or involved in fields that required the use of English as a lingua franca for communication between diverse linguistic and/or cultural groups. The encouragement these family members offered took a number of forms, including teaching participants about aspects of the language, reading to them in English, or giving them gifts such as English-language books and dictionaries. A number of participants also recalled looking upon their English-conversant family members as models. For instance, Basma describes the influence of her aunt on her language studies in these terms:

My relatives, also, affected me directly. For instance, my aunt had a direct influence on making me a lover of English. She was the pusher who stimulated me to keep improving my knowledge of the language. Frankly, I love her so much and I love whatever she loves. I liked learning English because she liked it, too.

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<tr>
<th>Sources of Motivation</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
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<tr>
<td>Family members</td>
<td>Parents, siblings, aunts/uncles</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Often family members spoke English and encouraged participants to do so</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good teachers</td>
<td>Inspiring, encouraging, qualified, admired</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Used interesting methods</td>
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<td>Managed the class well</td>
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<td>Omani</td>
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<td>Students’ positive attitudes towards English</td>
<td>Acceptance, curiosity, fascination, enjoyment, novelty</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competitiveness</td>
<td>Wanted to stay on top of the class</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Protecting reputation as good student</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Participated in competitions</td>
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<td>Colourful books, stories etc.</td>
<td>Loved the books and stories</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realising the importance of English</td>
<td>English is important for jobs and communication worldwide</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra tuition in English</td>
<td>Took courses in private institution</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social context</td>
<td>Community spoke English</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-cultural community, large number of Indian residents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neighbour taught children English in the mosque</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelling to English-speaking countries</td>
<td>Travel to Western countries</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting and interacting with tourists</td>
<td>Meeting tourists in hometowns and tourist places</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second most frequently occurring motivator was good teachers. Participants described teachers who they found motivating as inspiring, encouraging and qualified. Moreover, participants claimed these teachers were often Omani and, as such, could act as close language models within the classroom. Noor, for instance, recalls how the variety of methods employed by her high school language teachers proved pivotal in her studies:

My teachers’ way of instructing us motivated me to perform better and to consolidate my bond with English. They used a variety of methods such as playing games at the end of the lesson to check our understanding, watching educational videos and listening to different English songs. It was a turning point in my studies and helped me to get high grades in my final English exams and so enter SQU.

Although these two sources of motivation involve the inspiration derived from other people, the third most frequently occurring source was that of the participants’ own positive attitudes towards the language. While most respondents showed an acute awareness of the instrumental value of the language and how it could be used to gain external rewards, a number of participants also focused on the intrinsic motivation they had to engage with a language they viewed with a sense of curiosity, adventure and novelty. Typical of these attitudes, Marwa states:

English…. English…. English! The word sounds very authoritative and powerful when we pronounce it. It has this kind of magic that makes us wonder about its power and beauty every time we hear or use it. Actually, we have been hearing this word everywhere, inside home and outside, during the last decade. We have been preoccupied with this lovely word and even use it as part of our Arabic.

Other sources of motivation to emerge from the data include the learner’s sense of competitiveness or desire to remain the best student in the class (7), exposure to colourful English-language books and stories that helped encourage a love of reading in participants (4), and an understanding of the language’s importance as the world’s lingua franca (3). An interesting addition to this list is having a supportive social context (3), in which members of participants’ communities, often reported as multi-cultural and/or with a large component of expatriate Indians, communicated in English as a lingua franca. A number of participants also reported wider community support for engaging in English-language studies and use, including the example of support from friends and peers and even of neighbours who taught English to children in the local mosque. While travelling abroad (2) and meeting international tourists (2) also featured a handful of times as motivating sources, attending an international kindergarten, enrolling in a private English-medium school for a period of at least one year, and participating in English clubs and various other extra-curricular activities involving the language, were only reported as motivating factors in the data one time each.

Sources of demotivation for participants are listed in Table 2. Ten sources of demotivation emerged from the data, with the teacher (23) being highlighted as by far the most important factor. Participants described teachers who demotivated them as cruel, discriminatory and unfair. These teachers were also identified as failing to offer any form of encouragement, and as being difficult to understand due to heavy foreign accents. In opposition to motivating teachers who were described by a number of participants as Omani, these demotivating teachers were often, though by no means always, portrayed as foreigners who...
students could not respect. One participant, Iman, retold of her struggles with her non-Omani English teachers.

I loved this language and I thought that I would learn it very quickly when I went to school. However, this was not the case for our school was controlled by foreign teachers. They were very stubborn and cruel. They were not aware that we hadn’t spoken English before and they punished us whenever we used Arabic words. On the other hand, we did not understand their English because they spoke very quickly and their pronunciation was not clear. They spoke English as they spoke Urdu. I remember that one day our teacher was explaining to us the scope of the test paper, but I could not understand what she was saying, so I asked her about the number of pages that the test would include. She punished me for this and forced me to stand up for the whole lesson.

The two next most frequently occurring sources of demotivation among participants were negative personal perceptions of, and attitudes towards, English (18), and a lack of purpose in learning English (10). Regarding the former, participants who held negative attitudes towards English claimed that the language was difficult, strange and “not their own”. In relation to lacking a purpose to learn, responses indicated that participants reported no real communicative purpose for using English in their lives and/or a lack of awareness of its importance. Moreover, these participants also stated that they saw no value in learning the language. For instance, Majid recalls:

I thought that English was a waste of time and that there was no need to study it. It was difficult for me and for the majority of students, and the reason behind that was that we did not study for English exams. Also I did not meet any teacher who could prove me wrong.

Other important demotivating factors included the negative influence of peers who discouraged participants from learning the language and derided those who attempted to use it outside of the classroom (6), EFL textbooks and curricula that were deemed by participants to be boring and offering little chance to practise (6), unsupportive social and community contexts where negative views towards English are prevalent (5), and parents’ negative attitudes towards the language (4). These demotivating factors are almost all related to the negative views of English held by others, and are expressed in the following quotes from Thuraiya and Majada:

When I was in grade 3, one of my village friends who had reached grade 4 told me that I would reach a stage where I could learn a new language, which was English. “What!! It sounds ridiculous because there’s nothing more important than Arabic,” I said. She told me that English was difficult, the class boring and when you didn’t answer right, the teacher would hit you and kick you out.

And:

I did not really approve of the idea of learning a foreign language because I used to think that if English people did not learn our language, then we should not learn theirs. Thus, I was not at all motivated to learn English, and that was reflected in my performance. At the end of the year, I got a C grade and learnt only a few letters and the meaning of the single sentence, which was “Close the window.”

Participants’ lack of knowledge about the English language before they first started studying (4) also featured as a source of demotivation, while the two factors that emerged only one time each were learner anxiety, associated in the data with being afraid of making mistakes and not being aware of how to communicate effectively, and participants’ own lack of attention to their studies.
Table 2. Sources of Demotivation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Demotivation</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Cruel, discriminatory, unfair, unqualified</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not easy to understand, strong accent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students could not respect him/her</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative personal perceptions and attitudes towards English</td>
<td>Difficult, strange</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not our language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of purpose to learn English</td>
<td>English not used in real-life communication</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of awareness of its importance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No reason to, or value in, learning it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers’ negative influence</td>
<td>Discouraging from learning the language</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saying English is difficult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laughing at students who use it outside of classroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demotivating curriculum and textbooks</td>
<td>Boring</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not much practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not having to study for exams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive social and community contexts</td>
<td>General community has negative views of English</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of past knowledge about English before starting to study it</td>
<td>No one introduced English to the student before formal study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner anxiety</td>
<td>Being afraid of making mistakes and not knowing how to say something</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carelessness about the language</td>
<td>Not paying attention to their English studies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

The first research question inquired into the dominant types of motivation among Omani EFL students. With reference to the socio-educational model’s concepts of integrative and instrumental motivation, Dadi’s (2010) belief that Omani students would predominantly display instrumental forms of motivation was borne out as almost all participants reported behaviours, beliefs and/or attitudes typical of this form of motivation. On the other hand, only a handful of participants could be classified as reporting actions and/or beliefs more in line with Gardner’s (1985, 2001) integrative motivation even though, as stated above, these participants were far more likely to admit to admiring certain elements of Western cultures than seeking to integrate themselves into these cultures.

That instrumental motivation should be dominant among English-language learners in Oman is often reported as being due to a variety of factors, including the high utility of the English language across a large number of domains within Gulf societies and an awareness of the social and academic rewards that can be gained from engagement with English-medium education (Charise, 2007). In terms of the almost complete lack of examples of integrative motivation evidenced in the interview data, a number of authors claim Arab Muslim learners are likely to actively eschew the Western cultural values they encounter in their English studies due to potentially conflicting social and religious concerns (see Asraf, 1996; Karmani, 2005a, 2005b).
Of the studies that have examined issues of integrative and instrumental motivation in the Gulf and greater Muslim world, most tend to report that instrumental motivation is far more prevalent than integrative motivation among Muslim learners (Al-Tamimi, 2009; Fahmy & Bilton, 1992; Karahan, 2007; Mostafizar Rahman, 2008). However, it is nonetheless interesting to note that in one recent study in the Muslim-majority nation of Bangladesh, Mamun, Mostafizar Rahman, Rahman and Hossain (2012) reported undergraduate students enrolled at an English-medium university to display high levels of both instrumental and integrative motivation – a finding the authors use to claim that participants “like the English language and they like those who speak English” (p. 207). Moreover, similar results were also reported by Al-Khwaiter (2001) in the Gulf itself, with a study of 587 students across 12 gender-segregated schools in Qatar revealing high levels of both instrumental and integrative motivation, regardless of demographic features including gender, parents’ level of educational achievement, school location and so on.

Dadi (2011) also predicted that most Omani EFL learners would display high levels of extrinsic motivation based on traditional Arab socio-cultural tendencies that “individuals are expected to engage more in activities with immediate rewards” (p. 33). However, the current research contradicts this belief as, of the 49 participants who were classified as motivated English language learners, there was an almost perfect divide between those who displayed more intrinsic (25 participants) and more extrinsic (24) motivation forms. For example, participants who were classified as being intrinsically motivated reported holding positive attitudes towards the language and a drive motivated by enthusiasm, enjoyment and novelty. Moreover, these participants were often inspired by their family members and/or teachers to engage with their studies, and came to express this inspiration through a love of English-language books, stories and other cultural products. Learning the English language for these participants, therefore, was an experience that was rewarding in and of itself, with concerns about the external rewards it could bring being of a secondary nature.

Those participants who were classified as extrinsically motivated, on the other hand, were often driven by an understanding of the potential benefits associated with English, such as securing good jobs and allowing fuller participation in the global workforce. Moreover, these participants were often competitive, desiring to stay on top of their classes, and wished to please family members and/or teachers. These kinds of extrinsic motivation feature a combination of external regulation, with a number of participants claiming they studied English because they had to or to avoid getting in trouble from their teachers or parents, and self-introjected regulation due to evidence of the internalisation of rules and demands initially imposed from the outside and later adhered to so participants could identify themselves as good learners.

The second research question inquired into the sources of motivation and demotivation for Omani EFL students. As outlined above, the three most common sources of motivation reported by students were family members, teachers and the learner’s own positive attitudes towards English. Of the first two, it is interesting to note that Dörnyei (1994) claims persuasion and reinforcement by teachers and parents is one way in which L2 learner self-efficacy, or a belief in one’s own ability to successfully perform a given action, is developed. This concept of self-efficacy features in Dörnyei’s Learner Level. Moreover, even if studying English to gain the praise of these authority figures is an example of external regulation, this motivational component nonetheless is associated, according to Dörnyei, with the L2 learner’s affiliative drive, and therefore may lead to more autonomous forms of extrinsic motivation.

The third most common motivator to emerge from the interviews was participants’ own positive attitudes towards English. This motivator is associated with instrumental and integrative motivation and orientation as offered in Gardner’s (1985, 2001) socio-educational model and featured in Dörnyei’s (1994) Language Level. Of the two forms of integrative and instrumental motivation Gardner offers, it is the instrumental form that was dominant among participants. That is, of those learners who held positive attitudes towards the English language, the vast majority claimed to hold these attitudes due to an awareness of the instrumental value of the language. It is interesting to note, however, that while instrumental motivation is often associated with extrinsic forms of motivation in which L2 learners learn the language in order to receive external rewards, a number of participants did, nonetheless, claim to
genuinely enjoy their English language studies. While very few of these moved beyond a love of the language itself to the kind of admiration of Western cultures associated with integrative forms of motivation, an admiration of the L2 could nonetheless be argued to be indicative of Gardner’s (1985, 2001) concept of integrative orientation, even if falling short of integrative motivation itself.

The three most frequently occurring demotivating factors were cruel and unqualified teachers, learners’ negative attitudes and lacking a purpose to learn English. The first two of the sources of demotivation have been discussed above. The “cruel” teachers a number of participants describe not only hinder the development of the learner’s self-confidence, interest and affiliative drive, but also may be associated with an increase in the learner’s language use anxiety while, at the same time, making it impossible for learners to view their teachers as models to which to aspire. This may account for the reasons why a large number of demotivated students claimed to not be able to respect their English-language teachers while also dreading attending their classes.

Learners’ personal negative attitudes towards English was the second most common source of demotivation. Here participants reported they found English difficult and saw no reason to engage with a language they believed to be foreign and not their own. Similar negative attitudes were also reported from peers, parents, and the wider community in which participants lived. These negative attitudes, therefore, could be said to encompass all three of Dörnyei’s (1994) levels, and to hence have a powerful negative impact on instrumental and integrative motivation, the learner’s need for achievement, interest, expectancy, satisfaction and so on. Moreover, negative affect in Self-Determination Theory is also commonly claimed to characterise amotivated learners, or those with a complete lack of interest in performing an activity (Vallerand, 1992).

Gardner’s (2001) revised socio-educational model claims that L2 learners’ attitudes towards the learning situation, which encompass their attitudes towards their teachers, textbooks, classmates and so on, is directly influenced by external motivators which here could be conceived of as including parents, peers and the wider community. Moreover, these attitudes in the socio-educational model share a strong two-way relationship with the concept of integrativeness, with these two variables together forming what Gardner describes as major correlating supports of learner motivation. These negative attitudes, therefore, are also directly linked to the reasons why participants highlighted a lack of purpose in learning English, which is offered in all three models of motivation presented above as one of the key factors driving learner engagement.

**Conclusion: Implications for Classroom Practice**

The current research sought to investigate the types of motivation most prevalent among Omani EFL university-level students and the sources of their motivation and demotivation before and during formal schooling. As widely, though by no means universally, reported in the literature, instrumental forms of motivation were far more common than examples of integrative motivation for these Arab Gulf students. However, forms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were almost equally evident among participants.

Thirteen motivating and ten demotivating factors were identified in the interviews. The most frequently occurring motivating factors were family members, good teachers, and learners’ own positive attitudes towards the language. On the other hand, the most commonly occurring demotivating factors were cruel and unqualified teachers, learners’ negative attitudes towards English, and a lack of purpose in learning the language. In terms of classroom practice, perhaps the most apparent point to emerge from the study is that good teachers who are inspiring, encouraging, qualified and employ interesting techniques in their classes, will not only motivate students to learn, but may also act as a model to which learners aspire. This is what Dörnyei (1994) terms the direct socialisation of motivation, and may be one reason why participants suggested that Omani English language teachers are generally far more motivating than foreign-born instructors.

Teachers and institutions will, no doubt, have little influence over the attitudes family members have towards learning English. However, building upon the potential influence of teachers, it may be feasible
that a good teacher of English who learners admire and perhaps even aspire to be like can help raise awareness of the instrumental value of English both within Oman and overseas. This awareness could help develop learners’ levels of intrinsic motivation through fostering curiosity, enjoyment and enthusiasm in their language learning. Helping students develop a sense of intrinsic motivation, or at least more independent regulatory styles, as quickly as possible may be an important factor in long-term language learning achievement. This may be accomplished, according to Madrid (2002) through increasing the learner’s sense of relatedness, which refers to their sense of belonging to and connectedness with the people, groups or cultures associated with the dissemination of the L2, and increasing the learner’s perceived competence so they feel a strong sense of efficacy in relation to the tasks they are asked to undertake. Moreover, helping raise student awareness about the instrumental value of the language, both within Oman and overseas, may also help these learners overcome the potentially demotivating factors of negative personal attitudes towards English and a lack of purpose in studying it.

Here, however, it may be necessary to avoid the revised socio-educational model’s placement of integrative motivation as a key concept in fostering L2 learner motivation due to concerns with the often-postulated incompatibility between the values transmitted in English language learning and traditional Arab Muslim beliefs (Asraf, 1996; Harris, 1991; Smith, 2011). While there is very little that an individual teacher may do to change the negative attitudes of peers, parents and the wider community towards English itself, it could be that focusing on the instrumental value of the language, while at the same time backgrounding the cultural values of Inner Circle nations often associated with it, could be one way in which learners can be taught how to use the language to achieve their own ends. This course was highlighted by several participants in the current study who claimed to have made a conscious effort to maintain their own identity in their encounters with English, or even to employ the language to project their cultural and religious beliefs outwards.

Finally, it should be reiterated that applying the findings gained through the current research to other samples and foreign language learning contexts can only be attempted with a great deal of care. In particular, the fact that the vast majority of participants in the present study were either English-majors or studying other specialties where English is the primary medium of instruction, means that most had been successful in their encounters with English and that the language’s instrumental value in their lives as students of Oman’s only public university is, by necessity, quite high. Moreover, the research asked participants to look back upon their English learning before and during formal schooling, which, for many, was an experience that had finished several years before. Therefore, the possibility that memories of past learning experiences had been influenced by current experiences and attitudes cannot be entirely discounted. For these reasons, examining the motivation types and sources of a greater variety of Omani and/or Gulf Arab learners, including those currently studying English as a foreign language in primary and high school and those in non-English-medium colleges at the tertiary level, could yield interesting results.

References


