



REVIEW ARTICLE

THE INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL PRACTICES ON LEARNERS' BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES

*Ali A. El-Husseini

Lebanese University, Faculty of letters and Humanities, Branch 4, Lebanon

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 27th February, 2018
Received in revised form
20th March, 2018
Accepted 18th April, 2018
Published online 30th May, 2018

Keywords:

Intrinsic motivation,
Extrinsic motivation,
Task motivation,
Attitudes, learners' class Misbehavior.

ABSTRACT

Attitudes and motivation are crucial factors in language learning. Lack of discipline in schools is mainly attributed to the absence of these two factors. Past research has addressed two different concepts of motivation that motivate students to learn: intrinsic and extrinsic which were investigated in this study. This study aimed at finding out if task motivation and extrinsic motivation would help learning in the absence of intrinsic motivation at a school in Biqa'a (North Lebanon). The participants were all the students in two sections of Grades 11 scientific section (11SE) and literary section (11LS). Learners' scores were collected in the beginning and Questionnaires were administered to all learners and the Math and English teachers in the two classes. Questionnaires and interviews were administered after treatment and scores collected again at the end of the term. The data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The questionnaires, interviews and test results were the methods of data collection for the study. Results indicated that both concepts of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) had significant effects on students' self-image and their learning outcomes. Results also indicated that in the absence of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic and task motivation could help learners to change their attitudes and improve their learning. They also showed that school administration can promote or hinder learning through their practices which could lead to negative attitudes which, in turn, lead to lack of discipline.

Copyright © 2018, Ali A. El-Husseini. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

INTRODUCTION

Statistics in the Ministry of Education documents show that English language teaching in Lebanon has been a bad experience for teachers and learners alike. Language learners do not learn the language from the teacher like acquiring a virus. Many factors contribute to language learning; some of these factors act as catalysts (like motivation and attitudes), while others (input) are a must for the learning process and without which learning can never take place.

Statement of the Problem: In Lebanon, English is taught as a foreign language, and students have to face it from their early school days. Students are expected to take two official exams, one at the end of the second cycle (Brevet) and another at the end of the third cycle (Baccalaureate). During all years long, results have shown that language learning (especially English) has been disastrous and, according to official exam results, language learning has been extremely poor with success percentage reaching as low as 13% (see El-Husseini's interview on Future TV, 2000). Of course, the blame is always on students (they are bad, they are not studying, etc.). Of course, in all this, students and parents were not consulted in anything and had no role despite the claim in the new curriculum

*Corresponding author: Ali A. El-Husseini,
Lebanese University, Faculty of letters and Humanities, Branch 4,
Lebanon.

that parents and students are involved. The main goal of students and their parents is for students to pass the exams and move to further steps on the ladder of education. That is also the goal of the teachers who direct all their efforts towards that goal. What kind or quality of teaching and learning is happening is not the main concern. Learners in this study were not aware of any goals in their lives and did not have a clear idea about their studies. When a curriculum is made, students' goals must be taken into consideration (Richards, 2015). Some applied linguists (Brandle, 2007) emphasise cooperative learning and urge on using genuine teaching materials and tasks that reflect real life situations. Lei (2010) argues that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have great positive impact on language learning. We should help learners to establish their goals and encourage them to go towards achieving them. This will create motives, positive attitudes and incentives in the students to work hard and take their studies seriously, and thus achieve high grades and pass their exams. If this does not happen, students will be frustrated and, hence, misbehave and break rules.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to check the following hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is a direct relationship between motivation and learning outcome.

Hypothesis Two: Change in attitudes can lead to a change in learning outcome.

Hypothesis Three: Task motivation can boost learning in the absence of other types of motivation.

Hypothesis Four: Change in school practices can lead to change in learners' attitudes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Wigfield et al. (2004) motivation and other affective factors play a crucial role in language learning. Focusing on attitudes and motivation, the humanists' view that learners should be presented with materials which involve them deeply in the use of language is supported by Schunk et al (2008) who reported that this kind of involvement leads to better and quicker learning. It is also in consistency with Deci and Ryan (2008) argument that learners' creative involvement in the classroom helps them learn better. So motivation should be given the important space in the learning process. Several types of attitudes have been researched in Applied Linguistics (Gardener 1985; 2005; 2009). Motivation and its impact on learning outcome has also been studied (Alderman, 2004; Brophy, 2004; Dornyei and Dornyei, 1998). These studies argue that learners with positive attitudes towards their school and classroom can learn better than those with negative ones (Tavani and Losh, 2003). This is related to motivation, and it is usually referred to as "situational motivation" (Brown, 1980). In this study, the focus is mainly on the learners' attitudes towards school and on the three types of motivation mentioned earlier: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and task motivation. Research on L2 motivation by Dornyei and Dornyei (1998) and Williams (2008) also revealed a need for a more pragmatic education centered approach, examining classroom reality and identifying and analyzing classroom specific motives. It is thought that students are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation if they attribute their educational results to internal factors that they can control, believe they can be effective agents in reaching desired goals, and are motivated towards deep 'mastery' of a topic (Hansen, 2009; Saxena, 2009). Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, occurs when a student is compelled to do something or act in a certain way because of external factors (like money, rewards, good grades, or punishments). Students that are extrinsically motivated will work on a task because they will get some reward or because they want to avoid punishment (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Mc Daniel, 2011).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To test the 4 hypotheses of this study, the researcher used the two types of research: quantitative and qualitative. Both methods were used for collecting data in this study. Quantitative research is defined by Aliaga and Gunderson (2000) as "explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics)" (cited in Muijs, 2004). It is essentially used to gather numerical data so that it can be studied objectively. Qualitative research is based on non-numerical data. It includes a large number of methods such as interviews, case studies, and feedback forms (Muijs, 2004). The author has used interviews and feedback forms to conduct the qualitative

part of this study which is related to the comparisons of the scores.

The Participants

The participants were two teachers (Math and English) and 57 learners in two classes, but the focus was on 12 misbehaving learners in section SE. The two classes 11SE and 11LS were chosen mainly because they did not have official exams, since official exam students usually do not care much about school grades.

The Procedure of Data Collection

The first week a pretreatment questionnaire was administered to the students in the two classes, who were a mixture of males and females. It was a list of questions on their thoughts and feelings about school to determine their concept of motivation and their level of class participation. The scale was read and explained to the students and they had to circle the responses. This did not take more than 20 minutes. The classes were also observed for a few times to record learners' behaviours and the kind of tasks learners were given to perform. Another questionnaire was filled by the Math and English teachers to pinpoint the learners with misbehavioural problems. All the learners in the two classes were observed but the focus was mainly on the trouble makers. Another post-treatment questionnaire was administered and learners, and teachers were interviewed after the experiment. School test scores were collected in the beginning and end of the study for comparison. After the interview with the administration, the questionnaires were administered to both the teachers and the learners. After the information needed was collected, The treatment was given to students by raising their awareness about their learning goals and changing their attitudes and boosting their incentives to study. Then learners' scores were collected again at the end of term and questionnaires were administered again to learners and teachers to see the differences. Interviews with learners were held during and after treatment as well. Interviews with teachers and administration were held at the end of the term to see if any changes took place.

The treatment

After the grades were obtained before treatment, questionnaires were analyzed and participants interviewed, the researcher suggested to the administration to break the ice and take all the upper classes on a trip to a river in the south of the country. Teachers were also told to change in their tasks to make them more communicative and encourage speaking and discussions in class, as the learners requested. Group work was also introduced in both Math and English. Grade 11SE learners were also taken to some universities and to an exhibition in Beirut for universities who showed them courses offered. Learners were interested to meet university representatives and they had some discussions about careers with them. They were made aware of the importance of education and studying.

RESULTS

After the data were collected and analysed, the results were surprising, though expected concerning learners' attitudes and behaviours. The following parts show these results.

Part One shows the results of the analysis of the first and second questionnaires of Grade 11SE which were administered before and after treatment. No need for detailed results of the control group since results showed no change in their attitudes since they were positive from the beginning of the study. Part Two deals with analysis of individual questionnaires and interviews and compare them with the learners' scores. It is important to mention here that 11LS learners were well-behaved and the misbehaving learners belonged to 11SE class despite the fact they all came from the same environment and socio-economic class.

Part One

Results of Grade SE – misbehaving class: Table One shows that among all the variables studied, there was minor increase in the positive attitude towards English and Math; however, what is very interesting is that there was drastic positive change in learners' attitudes towards school and class. This supports Hypothesis Four of the study.

Part Two

After looking at the results of the questionnaires, some learners were interviewed, especially the ones with bad behaviour. Some qualitative results were obtained through the learners' answers.

Result of interviews

There were two sections of Grade 11; 11SE and 11LS. The former was a misbehaving class in general and the later was a well behaved section. The result of questionnaires and interviews showed that 11SE learners were bored with class activities and tasks; they were also unhappy with the administration because it did not treat them like 11 LS. The administration took class 11LS on a trip and to universities but not 11SE. The administration justified that by saying that 11SE was a misbehaving class. So it was a real dilemma; you do not know where to start to solve the problem. Nevertheless, the researcher thought that the best thing was to start with the administration.

The quantitative results: Comparison of scores of the pre and post tests

1-The GPA of misbehaving learners in the two classes

Table 2 shows us that all misbehaving learners advanced in the post test except for 2 learners who went backwards. However, though most of them advanced, they still failed their post test according to school scores. Only S5 and S9 passed the post test after they failed the pretest. This shows us that the trip, the visit to universities and exhibition and change in tasks have made a lot of difference and broke the ice between learners and administration.

Table 1. the differences between attitudes in the pre-treatment and post-treatment questionnaires – Grade 11 SE

	1 st quest		2 nd Quest		
	positive	negative	Positive	negative	Don't know
Attitudes to En T	16	1	16	1	
Attitudes to Math T	10	9	10	9	
Attitudes to Eng	14	5	15	4	
Attitudes to Math	8	11	10	9	
Attitudes to En speaking people	2	17	2	17	
Attitudes to En books	6	10	6	10	2
Attitudes to Math books	4	13	4	13	1
Attitudes to school	6	13	17	3	

Table 2. The progress of misbehaving learners between the 2 tests (GPA)

Student	Pretest total scores		Posttest total scores		difference
S1	206	F	244	F	+38
S2	152.5	F	234	F	+82
S3	156	F	241	F	+85
S4	161	F	247	F	+86
S5	263.5	F	346	P	+86
S6	201	F	193	F	-8
S7	167	F	237.5	F	+70
S8	373	P	446	P	+43
S9	306	F	338	P	+32
S10	93.5	F	154	F	+60
S11	42.5	F	107	F	+64.5
S12	234.5	F	141	F	-92.5

Table 3. The progress of misbehaving learners in English and Math

Student	Pretest Math	Post math	diff	Pre En	Post En	diff
S1	23	30	+7	45	19	-26
S2	20	45	+25	26	3	+
S3	20	55	+35	22	45	+23
S4	10	10	0	27	52	+25
S5	58	75	+17	20	30	+10
S6	36	20	-16	13	7	-6
S7	8	20	+12	18	22	+4
S8	28	60	+32	44	40	-4
S9	40	35	-5	40	35	-5
S10	3	10	+7	7	5	-2
S11	7	10	+3	5	16	+11
S12	5	12	+7	9	18	+9

This also supports Hypothesis Four. Table 2 shows that change in attitude leads to better learning outcome. This supports hypotheses One, Two and three.

The progress of misbehaving learners in English and Math

Table 3 shows us that most learners made progress in both subjects: English and Math. Only a few learners went back in their post test. This shows us that learners were motivated after the extracurricular activities and change in classroom tasks. Having a good look at the data in Tables 2 and 3, we notice that there is a direct relationship between negative attitudes and motivation on one hand and the learners' outcome represented by learners' scores on the other. However, the direction of the causality can not be determined; motivation can lead to success, and success can motivate learners. This means that Hypothesis One: "There is a direct relationship between motivation and learning outcome" is supported in this study.

Qualitative analysis

After the results of the post tests were obtained, learners filled the post treatment questionnaires and some of them were interviewed. When they were asked about whether the extracurricular activities changed them in any sense, this was a sample of the answers they provided. In response to Question 15: "Have you changed in any sense since you filled your 1st questionnaire?". S5 answered: "I do not misbehave anymore and I have changed; I spend more time on Math and English now and that is why I have improved my scores on both, and I have passed the post test and increased my GPA by 86". S12 who has the second worst score answered: "yes I have changed; I am not talking or misbehaving in class anymore. Now I like English and Math and I also like the teachers." This learner improved his scores slightly in Math and English (+7 in Math and +9 in English." All this was supported by good learners who complained about the behaviour of the administration. The data obtained from questionnaires and interviews show that task motivation could change attitudes and improve learning. After the treatment, misbehaving learners improved their behaviour and regretted wasting their time. Their scores also went up in the post test. This proves that the serious disciplinary problems schools face are a result of their own practices rather than students' home problems, and they can be reduced or solved if students' motivation and awareness are raised.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As noted in the literature review, all sorts of motivation are important for learning to take place. As Lepper et al (2005) reported, all these kinds of motivation do exist in class. Task motivation has shown to be extremely important in this study. Learners complained that the class activities were boring and they did not like their homework. In fact, it may be quite assistive for students to look for activities that they find intrinsically enjoyable while simultaneously paying attention to the extrinsic outcomes of those activities in any certain environment. On the other hand, situational motivation has also played a role in the learners' attitudes. Learners like English and they are aware of its importance, but they could not learn it not because of the teacher but they hated the administration. The administration is not providing any kind of assistance,

guidance or counseling. This has affected their work negatively since most learners had negative attitudes towards their school. In other words, intrinsic motivation was there but it did not help much their learning because of the school practices. Intrinsic motivation died down with school time. The data show that misbehaving learners were more influenced by extrinsic motivation. They wanted the school to take them out on trips and to universities and provide them with some counseling. This did not happen until after treatment when change took place in learners' attitudes and learning outcome. Learners started to like school, English and Math and they became more aware of their goals in life. They took their studying more seriously, and this reflected positively on their learning outcomes.

REFERENCES

- Alderman, M. K. 2004. *Motivation for Achievement: Possibilities for Teaching and Learning* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Brophy, J. 2004. *Motivating Students to Learn* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Deci, E.L. and Ryan, R.M. 2008. Facilitating optimal motivation and psychological well being across life's domains. *Canadian Psychology*, 49, 14–23.
- Dornyei, C. and Dornyei, Z. 1998. Ten Commandments for Motivating Language Learners. *Language Teaching Research* 2,3 pp 203-229.
- Gardener, R.C. 2009. Nurturing Love of Literacy. Retrieved March 1, 2018 from <http://myweb.stedwards.edu/mikekb/ReadStrong/nutureloveparents.html>
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation*. London, GB: Edward Arnold.
- Gardner, R. C. 2005. Integrative motivation and second language acquisition. Canadian association of applied linguistics joint plenary talk, London, Ontario, May 30, 2005. Retrieved March 1, 2014 from <http://publish.uwo.ca>
- Hansen, T.L. 2009, July 31. *Motivation and Confidence*. Retrieved July 28, 2017 from SelfGrowth.com Web site: http://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/motivation_and_confidence
- Lei, S. A. 2010. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation: Evaluating Benefits and Drawbacks from College Instructors' Perspectives. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 37 (2), 153- 160.
- Lepper, M. R., Corpus, J. H. and Iyengar. S. S. 2005. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivational orientations in the classroom: Age differences and academic correlates. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 97, 184-196. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.97.2.184
- McDaniel, R. 2011. *Theories of Motivation in Education*. Retrieved April 7, 2018 from http://www.ehow.com/facts_5010005_theories-motivation-education.html
- Muijs, D. (Ed.). 2004. *Doing Quantitative Research in Education with SPSS*. London, England: SAGE Publications, Ltd. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781849209014>
- Pintrich, P.R. and Schunk, D.H. 2002. *Motivation in education: Theory, research, and applications*. Columbus, OH: Merrill.
- Richards, J. 2015. *Key Issues in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. 2000. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25, 54-67
- Saxena, P.K. 2009. Principles of Management: A Modern Approach. New York, NY: Global India Publications.
- Schunk, D. H., Pintrich, P. R. and Meece, J. L. 2008. Characteristics of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation. In *Motivation in education: Theory, research, and applications* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall. from <http://www.education.com/reference/article/characteristics-intrinsic-extrinsic/> . Retrieved on 13 March 2018.
- Tavani, C. M. and Losh, S. C. 2003. Motivation, Self-Confidence and Expectations as Predictors of the Academic Performances among Our High School Students. *Child Study Journal*, 33 (3), 141- 151.
- Wigfield, A., Guthrie, J. T., Tonks, S. and Perencevich, K. C. 2004. Children's motivation for reading: Domain specificity and instructional influences. *Journal of Educational Research*, 97, 299-309.
- Williams, L. M., Hedrick, W. B. and Tuschinski, L. 2008. Motivation: Going beyond Testing to a Lifetime of Reading. *Childhood Education*, 84 (3), 135- 141.
