

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL BACKGROUND ON MOTIVATION IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING: THE CASE STUDY OF TWO SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN PORT HARCOURT MUNICIPALITY, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at examining the influence of social background on motivation in second language learning with special focus on two secondary schools, Akpor Grammar School and the University of Port Harcourt Demonstration Secondary School both in Port Harcourt municipality, Nigeria. The population used for this study covers all the Senior Secondary Three (SS3) students of both Akpor Grammar School and the University of Port Harcourt Demonstration Secondary School. The selection of this sample population was by random. The research instrument used for the generation of data was structured questionnaire. Our findings indeed reveal that motivation is very crucial in second language learning and that one's social background plays a very significant role to enhance his motivation in learning a second language. The Learning of a second language can be greatly enhanced by the right and adequate kind of motivation and motivation itself can be affected by factors such as age, personal interest, teaching method, learning situation and availability of learning materials, status, sex, etc.

INTRODUCTION

Language is purely a human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. Therefore, language is very essential to the existence of every human. At every point in a man's life, there are thoughts that need to be communicated (transferred) from person to person. If there is no medium for the expression of such thoughts or innate ideas, they are often lost. For this reason, language has come to be an indispensable factor in human existence. Seeing the crucial role language plays in life, it is not surprising that researches have been extended to studying why and how motivation affects the learning of a second language.

The relationship between second language learning and motivation is a very striking one. This is because motivation plays a very important role in the activity of human beings and more specifically in language learning. Motivation is the force or reason for any human behavioural action in second language acquisition. There are two types of motivation as identified by Gardner (1982). These are integrative and instrumental which are also referred to as positive motivation and negative motivation

respectively. Whereas integrative motivation refers to the positive response of the learner and the determination to be integrated into the community of the target language, instrumental motivation looks at the achievements economically or socially which would accomplish such learning. Specifically, the main objective of this research is to evaluate the effects of motivation in successes or failures in second language learning among secondary schools in Port Harcourt Municipality, Nigeria. It is hoped that a research of this nature will enlighten the depth and effects of problems encountered in learning a second language and also suggest ways of alleviating them.

MOTIVATION

Motivation is the disposition to doing something and with reference to learning in general it is that factor which can either enhance or retard the learning process depending on the various goals of the individual. Gardner (1982, 2001) and Lambert (1972) have proposed that motivation is influenced by two main factors in language learning. These factors are integrative and instrumental motivation. Integrative motivation is a self factor, not pushed by anybody or motive to learn the language. This carries a high positive response as opposed to instrumental motivation. An integrative learner of a language would utilize every available means to successful learning in order to identify with the target community.

In other words, the integrative learner accepts the language and is therefore driven by an internal positive force to achieve the ambition. Instrumentally motivated learners however, are people who learn the second language as a means for survival or to an end. Such people learn language because they have no option. This group of learners sees language as a means of survival, (e.g. passing examination or to communicate especially where the target language is the only medium of proving one's status. Crookes and Schmit (1991) have identified four areas of second language motivation which have a direct bearing to the classroom: these are the micro level, the classroom level, the syllabus level and external factors. The micro level is evidenced by the kind of attention given by the learner to learning the language. The classroom level refers to factors such as teachers' approach to language teaching (ability of the teachers to present the subject excitedly, attitude of classmates to the subject, among other things). The syllabus level addresses issues like the content of the syllabus since the content can lure students to the subject. While the external factors refer to factors outside the classroom setting such as informal interaction in the target language.

Dornyei (2001) has developed a giant model of motivation whose effects center on the classroom language motivation. The frameworks of this model are the Language Level, the Learner Level, and the Learning Situation Level. The language level focuses on orientations and motives of the second language learner, the language studied and the learning goals. The Learner level involves individual's desire to achieve success and self confidence while students' motivation to learn depends on their needs and interest. Learning situation implicates the psychological environment

where learning is done. The environment where one learns can either affect one positively or negatively. Thus, learning in a good classroom atmosphere promotes students involvement and activity. Crookes and Schmit (1991) note that there are four conditions for motivation: interest (in the topic and activity), relevance (to the students' lives), and expectancy (expectations of success and feelings of being in control), and satisfaction (in the outcome). These four conditions contain elements of each of the major approaches to motivational psychology. According to Crookes and Schmit (1991), it is necessary or rather customary to distinguish "instrumental motivation" in which the learner's attitude to learning is determined by his desire for cash or a better job and the "integrative motivation" in which the learner is seeking skill or knowledge in order to become a member of a further different social group. The proportion in which each of the descriptively opposed drive is active in any one case is determined by factors outside the learner as well as inside him. However, the motivation in the learner is far more important since he has attitudes to his learning task and these may cluster and harden into instrumental or integrative motivation. The quality of learning performance usually improves as the strength of motivation increases. Indeed, speed of learning is usually employed as a criterion for measuring the strength of motivation. In other words, motivation determines the degree of learning.

FACTORS AFFECTING MOTIVATION IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

The relationship between language learning and motivation has been investigated extensively by both psychologists and linguists. Perhaps no research is more directly relevant to the concerns of a college student than that of investigating how quantity and quality of his learning can be improved. It is often asked whether the purposes of the learner are important in determining quantity and quality of learning. Careful studies have revealed a number of factors that influence the course and quality of learning. Some of these factors are related to the characteristics of the learner himself and what he brings to the learning situation. Others have to do with the content to be learned. There are discuss six factors that influence and affect motivation. These are: Age, Personal Interest, Teaching Method, Situation and availability of Materials, Status and Sex. These are briefly discussed below.

Age: The age of every human being determines what he wants out of every activity. A person of the age of five or six is actually influenced by older people around him in what he says and does. How is age then a factor influencing motivation most especially in second language learning? A child may not have a high motivation in learning another language when he has just barely familiarized himself with his first language. The child's mental ability may not need to be bothered because children are always contended with the little around them in so far as they can be understood in the language they have learnt to express themselves. Their motivation will therefore, be said to be low towards second language learning, because they are rather occupied

with the learning of their immediate language. On the other hand, adults with age and experience will have a higher motivation in learning a second language because they have a wider range of communication needs, and even, the knowledge of a second language may be a means to an end (for example, serving as an instrument for employment). Moreover, adults are not easily bored and could therefore stand the trauma of a conscious study of another language. Learning a second language to them would be easier and more effective because they have better developed memories than children. However, children learn better without any inhibitions like shyness. They play in the language and also have more time for the language than the adults do.

Personal Interest: Psychological studies have shown that personal interests determine how well or otherwise a person does a thing. Personal interest is, therefore, a factor that determines a strong or weak motivation. Thus, the stronger the interest of a language learner, the higher the output of his performance in language learning. This may be as a result of effective utilization of the input. The high interest, being a contributing factor leads to a higher motivation while a low interest leads to a low output toward the second language.

Teaching Method: The teaching method is another variable by which motivation can be measured. If the teacher of a particular second language, say French as in Togo, or English as in Nigeria, does not make the class interesting, the learners in such a situation may (have to) lose interest in learning. This is because the teacher has failed to excite their aspiration. He has not made any move or induced motivation and a person who already has the least interest in learning the language, sees a reason for having utmost dislike for the language.

Learning Situation and Availability of Materials: The situation of learning a second language determines the performance of the individual learners. The classrooms for learning must be comfortable for both teaching and learning. In effect, good environment can be a source of inducing high motivation because as psychologists have said, good environments induce good behavioral pattern (Rucd, 1963) and it would not be surprising that a good learning situation stimulates a relative motivation corresponding to it. The learners should also have adequate materials to guide them in the absence of the teacher. This enables them have a wider exposure in the language apart from what is taught in the classroom. Learners are likely to learn more when they study alone with reference to the teachers guide. Also, a person who has broad interest learns more than one whose interests are narrowed. When there are enough materials, learning and performance are enhanced and motivation could then be said to be on the increase but the reverse is the case when there are no learning materials.

Status: The status of every individual in a society influences whatever he does, and how well he does it. One's status can be high, mid or low. The high status corresponds

to the rich in the society, the mid refers to the average income earners and the low is for the common man, - the poor in the society. In a second language learning situation, it will be common to see that people of higher class have more interest in learning the second language because the language serves as an instrument of identification with the elite class. Moreover they are in a better position to pay the tuition fee and buy the books and other necessary materials for effective learning of the second language. In other words, they have more inducing factors than the average and low common persons in the society, who are often exploited and dominated, and barely feed themselves well how much more thinking of learning a second language that will be of little use to them. Even when they aspire to learn the language, they have no financial backing to aid or ease learning. So, the motivation towards such a second language is dropped and they are contented with their first language only.

Sex: The sex of a person also influences motivation in a second language learning situation. Scholars in sociolinguistics (Trudgil, 1983) have found that women learn language faster and better than their male counterparts because 'more correct serious behaviour is expected of women.

Having discussed briefly some of the factors that can affect motivation and why there can be performance variations in second language learning, the effect of the social background of learners on motivation in second language learners, using two secondary schools in Port Harcourt Municipality, Rivers State, Nigeria as a case study was examined.

METHODOLOGY

The population used for this study covers all the senior secondary three (SS3) students of Akpor Grammar School and the University of Port Harcourt Demonstration Secondary School. The selection of the sample was by random. The research instrument used in the collection of data was the structured questionnaire. 100 copies of questionnaire which examined the problem under investigation were administered on the students of the selected schools and 100% responses were recorded. One of the two schools used in the case study, Akpor Grammar School consists of boys only. The other school, the University of Port Harcourt Demonstration Secondary School is a mixed school of both sexes (boys and girls). The University Demonstration Secondary School has the reputation of being a school for the children of the rich. Akpor Grammar School on the other hand is a village school for the children of the average privileged workers. The data have been analyzed using the comparative approach in order to be able to reveal regularity in pattern of the effects of social background on motivation. Data were analysed using frequency and simple percentage presented on tabulated format.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Analysis of the data from Akpor Grammar School.

A Analysis Based on Family Type

	Monogamous	Polygamous	Total
Number of Students	19	31	50
Percentage	62	38	100

B Analysis Based on the Language spoke at home

	Native Language only	English Language	Nigeria Pidgin English	Total
Number of Students	30	18	2	50
Percentage	60	36	4	100

C Analysis Based on the Subject Liked Best

	English Language	Other Subjects	Total
Number of Students	13	37	50
Percentage	26	74	100

D Analysis Based on the Education of Parents

	Above Primary	No Education	Total
Number of Students	28	22	50
Percentage	56	44	100

E Analysis Based on the First Language Spoken

	Mother Tongue	English	Total
Number of Students	40	10	50
Percentage	80	20	100

F Analysis Based on the Usefulness of English to the Students

	Communication Purpose	Academic Purpose	Employment Purpose	Total
Number of Students	41	4	5	50
Percentage	82	8	10	100

A total of 50 students were examined in Akpor Grammar School. The range of age among these students was from 15 to 27 years of age. Of these 50 students, 30% were students whose parents were civil servants. 50% had their parents as petty-traders. The other 20% came from homes where both parents are farmers. 62% of the students were from monogamous homes while the other 38% were from polygamous homes. The number of persons in the polygamous family ranged from 6 - 35 in a single family, while that of the monogamous family ranged from 6 - 12 persons per family. 60% of the students from the school speak basically the native language only at home. Only 36% speak mainly the English language at home.

Another 4% use mainly Pidgin English as the language of conversation at home. The students, 100% of the students examined in Akpo Grammar School used English both to their friends and teachers at school. Only 26% of the students in the school have English as their best subject while 74% had other subjects like Mathematics, Biology and Economics as their best subject. 100% of the students confirmed the language teachers as making the class (learning situation) lively. Thus one expects that if motivation in second language learning is low, it is more likely to be from the family background than the method of teaching.

Also all the students claim to like the language and also often pass their tests. In this study, the data collected revealed to us that only 56% of the students' parents had education above the primary school level. The remaining 44% had no education at all. 80% of the students speak their mother tongue before learning to speak the English language. While only 20% speak English as their first language. This indicates that majority of the students have English as their second language. It is expected that this large number will (therefore) be faced with interference from their mother tongue. The students who speak their mother language first learnt to speak English from the age of five to twelve years which is the age from which pupils are enrolled in primary schools. 82% of the students found English useful for communication purposes. 8% found English useful in academics specifically for passing examinations. Another 10% found the language useful as an instrument of job employment. These variations in the students perception of the usefulness of English language, invariably indicate the various factors that influence motivation.

From the analysis, there is an indication that students from Akpor Grammar School are generally of the low status parentage. The polygamous background and the high number of children in a single family do not give room for both mother and father to instruct their children adequately. The parents of these students are barely educated and can hardly converse in English. This directly illustrates the fact that the only place the child speaks English is in the classroom and within the school environment. One expects that the performance of the students will be low because there is no reinforcement of the language at home as its use is very limited. The poor background of the students does not provide them the opportunity to be educated in better schools where the second language (English) could be effectively taught. The poor performance of the students in the English language is obvious from the fact that the students could not even spell their words correctly in the questionnaire. For instance, one of the examined students spelt 'caterer' as 'katera' and two of the students spelt the word 'Pidgin' as 'peagion' and 'pigeon' respectively. The errors are in fact too numerous to be mentioned here. Most times, the answers they gave were contradictory but the fact of what is intended was concluded from the answers they gave, with reference to their family background.

Table 2: Analysis of the data from the University of Port Harcourt Demonstration Secondary School

A Analysis Based on the Sexes of Students

	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of Students	26	24	50
Percentage	52	48	100

B Analysis Based on the Education of Students

	Tertiary Education	Secondary Education	Total
Number of Students	20	30	50
Percentage	40	60	100

C Analysis Based on the Family Type

	Monogamous Family	Polygamous Family	Total
Number of Students	44	6	50
Percentage	88	12	100

D Analysis Based on the Language Spoken at Home

	English Language	Other Subjects	Total
Number of Students	35	15	50
Percentage	70	30	100

E Analysis Based on the First Language Spoken

	Native Language	English	Total
Number of Students	24	26	50
Percentage	48	52	100

F Analysis Based on the Subject Liked Best

	English Language	Other Languages	Total
Number of Students	15	35	50
Percentage	30	70	100

G Analysis Based on the Usefulness of English to the Students

	Communication Purpose	Academic Purpose	Employment Purpose	Total
Number of Students	35	13	2	50
Percentage	70	26	4	100

The total number of students examined was 50 in University of Port Harcourt Demonstration Secondary School. 53% of them were boys while 48% were girls. The age range of these students is from 16 to 18 years. The school is a mixed school having boys and girls. Of these 50 students, 40% of the students come from homes where both parents had tertiary education. Their occupation varies from being university lecturer, medical doctors, staff nurses, engineers, computer analysts to

naval and recruitment officers. The other 60% of the parents were those who have attained secondary education and their occupation varies from teaching, nursing, business enterprises to the police force. Actually, the students in this school are mostly from the middle class of the society as indicated by the various occupations of their parents. This contrasts with the case in Akpor Grammar School. 88% of the students were from monogamous homes while the other 12% were from polygamous homes. From the mere fact that most of the students are from monogamous families where both parents are educated and have well-paid jobs, one expects that such students will receive a great amount of attention from their parents with a closer parental relationship.

Also the parents are expected to speak more English language to their children because they have the knowledge of it. This contrasts with the case where the parents have no knowledge in the use of English language as it is the case in Akpor Grammar School. This is usually obtained where the parents are not educated and do not appreciate the use of English language. The number of persons in the polygamous family as the data from this school revealed ranged from 4 - 14 persons in a family, while that of the monogamous family ranged from 2 -10 persons per family. This is unlike the case found in Akpor Grammar School where the number of persons in a polygamous family ranged from 6 - 35 persons per family and in the monogamous set up, the number ranged from 6 - 12 persons in a family. 70% of the students from the school speak basically English language only at home.

Thus their performance is reinforced at home by their parents. The other 30% speak mainly their various native languages at home. All the students claimed positively to use only English language to both their friends and teacher at school as in Akpor Grammar School. 52% of the students examined, has English as their first language while the remaining 48% speak their native language before English was learnt at school. This is different from the information obtained in Akpor Grammar School where 80% of the students speak their mother language first before learning English language, while only 20% speak English language as their first language. In the English class in this school, the problem of mother tongue interference as a source of error in performance will be reduced for the teacher because more of the students learning the language speak it as their first language.

Furthermore, the interaction of the other students who speak their various native languages first with those who speak the English language as their first language will help brush them up. This is because the association will help them speak like their friends. 30% of the students examined in the school had English language courses as their best subject while the remaining 70% had other subjects as their special area of interest. All the students examined confirmed the language teacher as making the language class lively. It follows that if performance is low, it is likely not a fault of the teacher but may be due to other factors that determine the students' progress and success in the second language. This is similar to the case in Akpor Grammar School. All the students in this school too claimed to like the English

language which is the second language in the Nigerian context. From the information one expects to see a high performance competence in the second language but this does not always follow because the attainment of competence in a language is more than just having interest in the language as there are other factors that play a role in the situation of second language learning. 70% of the students found English useful for the purpose of wider communication. 26% found it useful in the area of academics for the purpose of various studies. The other remaining 4% found it as an instrument of employment. In the Akpor Grammar School, majority of the students found English language useful for communication purposes, 8% found English language useful in academic purposes specifically for passing examinations. Another 10% found the language useful as an instrument of job employment. These variables invariably indicate the various factors affecting motivation.

From the analysis above, the students of the University Demonstration Secondary School are mostly of the middle class where the family setup is basically monogamous. The data also showed that the parents of these students were gainfully employed, with an income reasonably high enough to afford their children the fees for schools with qualified teachers. Specifically, the information given us from the analysis of the data from the two different schools is that there is regularity in pattern of the factors that influence motivation. From a comparison of the two different schools in the analysis of the data, most of the students from 'Akpor Grammar School' were from very poor homes, from families of the polygamous type. Their parents were also barely educated. This means that the children had no reinforcement of the English language they learnt at school in their various homes. Their low performance is indicated by the incorrect sentences they constructed and error in word spelling.

Apparently, one can see that children of this poor background have low motivation in the second language learning situation because they have a lot of problems like mother tongue interference, finance, non-reinforcement of the language at home amongst others. On the other hand, students from the University of Port Harcourt Demonstration Secondary School are generally from good background of educated parents whose jobs yield a good income. These students are more exposed to the language and performance is better among these students than their Akpor Grammar School counterpart. They are mostly from monogamous homes and this situation makes it possible for both children and parents to interact as often as possible, because the number of persons in the family is manageable by the parents. The oral interview with some of the students of University of Port Harcourt Demonstration Secondary School revealed that all their teachers were University graduates unlike their 'Akpor Grammar School' counterpart whose teachers were mainly of the 'Teachers Training Level'. The regularity in pattern revealed that students who are of good family background, and who attend a good school, have a higher motivation in the context of second language learning. The reverse is the case for their counterparts who are of the poor family background and who attend local schools.

The first major finding is that motivation affects the degree of efficiency in second language learning and in any other type of learning in general. The implication of this is that efficiency or competence will be high if motivation is high and low if the interest is low. Also, it has been noted that one of the factors that can retard competence in second language learning is the influence of the first or mother tongue language, most especially when there is a lot of difference between the two language systems. The implication of this is that effort should always be made towards reducing or simplifying the differences between two language systems by contrastive error analysis.

Another finding is that teachers as instruments of instruction play a major role as a factor that influences motivation. The implication of this is that teachers could help learners to react positively or negatively towards the learning situation; depending on their various methods of instruction. Appraisals and rewards from teachers help learners a lot to develop interest in the learning context. It also helps them to be self-dependent. In the same vein, the availability of text books for learning the language affects or rather determines the height of performance. The implication is that if materials for study were to be made available, then learning could be enhanced. But when on the other hand, the reverse is the case, the learning is likely to be low because there will be no driving force; that is no motivating factor. It has also been noted that students from well-to-do homes often performed well in most learning situation. To be precise and specific, students from homes whose parents were educated and had good earning jobs performed better, even in the way they answered the questionnaire. Their sentences were more grammatical and so were their spellings and even, they wrote more eligibly. The implication of this is that parental background influences performance in second language learning as our information from the two secondary schools of case study revealed.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We have seen that motivation affects both learning and teaching of second language and also that one's social background can affect motivation either positively or negatively. In fact social backgrounds which trigger a high motivation simplify the subject matter and makes learning much easier. With regard to the above, the following recommendations are made to help reduce the effect of factors affecting motivation that is, to increase motivation and efficiency in language learning since the aim of any linguist in language learning and teaching is to achieve efficiency and competence in the systems of the language(s) concerned. First, learners' motivation should be well directed towards an integrative direction in the context of second language learning. Also teachers should encourage (i.e. help) students develop interest through appraisals and rewards to those responding positively to the desired direction. However, students who show low performance should not be tagged failure but can be encouraged by telling them to put more effort. It also recommends the use of audio visual films, cartoons and regular assignments to the students. This is because

competence is the aim of any language instructor and the above recommended methods will help create a lively context of learning. The teaching of a second language to children at a very tender age where ethnocentric feelings and consciousness have not yet been developed should be encouraged. Finally, this paper recommends the provision of the essential text books necessary for second language learning. This is to encourage constant practice on the part of the students. This will also enhance independent learning on the learners.

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