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MOTIVATION AND ANXIETY AMONG IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS AT DIFFERENT PROFICIENCY LEVELS

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By His Exalted Name

In the Name of God

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To my parents and my husband

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Abstract

The present study was an attempt to determine the types of motivation and levels of foreign language learning anxiety among EFL students studying at Azad and State universities in Kermanshah and to determine the relationship between these two factors and language proficiency and gender .To this end, the Foreign Language Learning Motivation Scale, by Deci and Ryan (1985), were administered to 120 students selected on the basis of the criterion of Oxford Quick Placement Test (Allen, 1992).Descriptive statistics showed that the subjects were grouped into the two major groups of intrinsic (IM) and extrinsic motivation(EM) and the EM appeared to be more dominant especially among male subjects .In terms of FLA the majority of subjects had average levels of anxiety and female subjects were found to be more anxious than male subjects .The results of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient indicated that for the whole sample, there was a positive relationship between anxiety and motivation. It means the more anxious the subjects in learning English, the higher the motivation they had .And there was a negative correlation between participants' proficiency level and their mean anxiety .No relationship was found between motivation and gender .However, anxiety appeared to have a weak relationship with gender.Classroom Anxiety Scale developed by Horwitz and Cope (1986), the Language

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List of abbreviations

AM :Amotivation

EM :Extrinsic Motivation

IM :Intrinsic Motivation

EFL :English as a Foreign Language

ESL :English as a Second Language

FLCAS: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

OPT :Oxford Placement Test

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview

This chapter presents an introduction to motivation in EFL context and Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and it is followed by statement of the problem. Then research questions are presented, together with the hypotheses. This chapter closes with the significance of the study, limitations of the study, and definition of key terms.

1.2 Introduction

According to Cook (1996), Language is the centre of human life. It is one of the most important ways of expressing ourselves, communicating with people, planning our lives, remembering the past, exchanging ideas and preferences. The ability to do so in more than one language multiplies the opportunities for people to experience all these functions and even master them and develop their career opportunities. Foreign Language learners vary in terms of many factors such as attitudes, motivation, learning style, age, gender and aptitude. Wenden (2002) believes that the notion of learner –center instruction in foreign and second languages is the outcome of the recognition that language learners are diverse, in their reasons for learning another language, their approach to learning, and their abilities. Therefore, acquiring a second language appears to be a complex process and undoubtedly instruction seems to be at the heart of this process.

One of the primary objectives of instructional design is to facilitate student learning and affective variables have been known to play a critical role in fulfilling this objective. Affective variables are defined as "…everything which

impinges on language learning which is unrelated to cognition" (Scovel, 1991, p. 15). These variables may include learner personality type, anxiety level, and motivation. These factors may influence the performance of students in the language classroom, and it is for this reason that language teachers try to control them to the best of their ability. Dornyei and Csizer (2002) believe that among these variables, anxiety and motivation seem to be very influential. When the learning of a second language takes place at home with the support of the neighborhood and local schools, it seems to be learned with relative ease, sometimes automatically. But when the process happens in the classroom, the school, social context and the special conditions under which such learning takes place have a decisive influence. That is one of Gardner's hypotheses (1985) and our starting point.

Dornyei (1998) believes that, despite being a somewhat elusive concept, motivation is a central concern for teachers. A growing recognition of the importance of motivation in language learning and acquisition has elevated its importance in recent decades, and this interest has resulted in the evolution and expansion of language learning motivation approaches and models (Ryan & Deci, 2000). An evidence of this interest has been research into language learning motivation in an expanding range of national settings. For most psycholinguists, either in a language learning situation or in a second language acquisition context, the importance of the learner's attitudes and motivation plays a major role. The role of Motivation is to help arise orientation and direct it towards a set of goals, either with a strong interpersonal quality or a strong practical quality (Dörnyei, 2001). Anxiety is also a complicated mental problem

in educational centers and many EFL teachers are usually observing learners of English language to express a feeling of stress, nervousness or anxiety while learning English Language. The problem exists among ESL/EFL learners from beginning to more advanced levels. Even highly advanced ESL/EFL learners feel anxious while learning English in some situations. According to Obsorne (2006) the influential effects of these two factors have been extensively studied with different subjects and in various contexts.

1.3 Instrumental and Integrative Motivation

Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert (1972) carried out one of the first significant studies of motivation, to determine the effects of attitudinal and motivational factors on language learning. They extensively studied foreign language learners in several countries. The result of their studies was the identification of the two types of instrumental and integrative motivation. According to Brown (2000) "the instrumental side of the dichotomy referred to acquiring a language as a means for attaining instrumental goals: furthering a career, reading technical material, translation and so forth. The integrative side described learners who wished to integrate themselves into the culture of the second language group and become involved in social interchange in that group" (p 162).

A few years later, Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) more appropriately referred to the dichotomy as orientation. Depending on whether a learner's context orientation was (a) academic or career-Related (instrumental) or (b) socially or culturally oriented (integrative), different needs might be fulfilled in learning a language (cited in Brown, 2000).

Gardner and Lambert (1972) showed that integrative motivation was commonly present with high scores of proficiency tests in a foreign language. They concluded that integrativeness was indeed an important requirement for successful language learning. However, counter evidence quickly started to appear. Lukmani (1972) discovered that among Iranian students learning English in India, learners with higher scores in tests of English proficiency were instrumentally motivated.

The different results in empirical studies suggest that the two orientations are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Brown, ibid). Graham (2006) claimed that integrativeness was too broadly defined and suggested that some integrative orientations may be only a moderate desire to socialize with or find out about speakers of the target language, while deeper assimilative orientations may describe a more profound need to identify almost exclusively within the target language culture. And instrumentality can be described as an academic orientation, on one hand, and a career or business orientation on the other.

1.4 Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation

Another more powerful dimension of the whole motivation construct is the degree to which learners are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. According to Edward Deci (1985, p 23):

> Intrinsically motivated activities are ones for which there is no apparent reward except the activity itself. People seem to engage in the activities for their own sake and not because they lead to an extrinsic reward… Intrinsically motivated behaviors are aimed at bringing about certain

intrinsically rewarding consequences, namely, feelings of competence and self determination.

On the other hand, extrinsically motivated actions are done in anticipation of a reward from outside and beyond the self.

Maslow (1976) pointed to the superiority of intrinsic motivation to extrinsic motivation. On the basis of a hierarchy of needs mentioned before, once our basic physical safety and community needs are met, we are finally motivated to achieve self-actualization. It is important to distinguish the intrinsic-extrinsic construct from Gardner's integrative-instrumental orientation.

1.5 Anxiety

Anxiety plays an important affective role in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition. Anxiety could be described as feelings of uneasiness, frustration, nervousness, and worry. A learner's emotional feelings or attitudes might affect learning efficacy, motivation, and self-confidence. Anxiety is also often linked to fear that one will fail in some way: on an assignment, on a test, when speaking in class or when communicating with foreigners. Some researchers also indicate that anxiety has a negative influence on foreign language learning, since language anxiety appears to be related to learners' oral performance (Gregersen, 2002) and to the components of writing and speaking (Cheng, 1999).

1.6 Debilitative Versus Facilitative Anxiety

Anxiety can be distinguished into debilitative and facilitative anxiety (Brown, 2000). Not all anxiety is detrimental. Some language researchers point out that