

Investigating the Effect of Pupils' Motivation, Attitudes and gender difference on EFL Learning in Adrar Middle Schools

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Abstract:

This study aims to investigate the effect of middle school learners' attitudes and motivation on learning English as a foreign language in Adrar, Algeria. It seeks to understand the importance of these two psychological factors in the success of the English learning process in Algerian middle schools. To achieve this, data were collected through a questionnaire that was distributed to a randomly selected sample of 242 middle school pupils at different levels. The questionnaire was based on the Attitude/Motivation Battery which is constructed by Gardner (1985). Data analysis was descriptive. The results revealed that the pupils had positive cognitive, emotional and behavioral attitudes toward learning English, and thus they have higher motivation. Furthermore, the results showed that females are more motivated than male learners. Based on this, teachers are recommended to incorporate more convenient methods and strategies that enhances the learners' attitudes and thus develop their motivation.

Keywords: learning, English, foreign language, attitude, motivation, middle school



1. INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a foreign language is a challenging task for middle school pupils as they are beginners. Many language researchers believe that success in learning a foreign language is based on the teacher's knowledge and competence rather than on the learners' performance. Although the teacher invests all knowledge content in a target language, the learners might fail in learning a FL because they lack the motives to learn. For this, learners should develop a sense of confidence to learn better (Hawk

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et al., 2000). Noticeably, learning a foreign language depends on the students' readiness, and their attitudes and beliefs toward the target language.

In this study, the focus is both on the motivation and attitudes toward English as a foreign language (EFL). In the process of learning, the learners develop some orientations which shows their liking or disliking for English learning. In the meantime, motivation and attitudes toward English are also influenced by other factors. Since they study English for the first time, learners encounter various obstacles that may hinder their motivation. Unlike Arabic, their mother tongue, English has a distinct syntax, vocabulary and grammar. The difficulty may result in some negative attitudes for some learners, which would influence their motivation in EFL learning. Furthermore, the drives to learn are varied from one learner to another. While some find the pleasure in language itself, others find the pleasure in the benefits and goals for studying it. In an attempt to understand the effect of both factors, the current study aims to investigate the following questions:

- 1) Does attitude affect EFL learning?
- 2) Does motivation affect EFL learning?
- 3) Do middle school learners have positive attitudes toward learning English?
- 4) Is there any difference between male and female learners in terms of their attitude and motivation toward EFL learning?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Attitudes

People shape certain orientations toward objects as a form of attitude. Thurstone (1931) defines attitude as the feeling toward or against a psychological object (i.e, positive or negative). Furthermore, Gardner (1985) defines attitude as an evaluation that an individual shows regarding the object on the basis of his/her beliefs system. Attitude has three aspects: the first is the object of attitude which can be a human, an institution or an abstract concept such as religion or education. The second aspect is human perception toward the object that can be positive or negative. The third aspect is the reaction or behavior that individual demonstrates in accordance with the prevailing belief.

Language attitude is a significant factor in its learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972) ensure the important role of attitude that exerts great impact on learners' abilities to learn a foreign language. In contrast to the students with negative attitudes, those who hold positive attitudes have great willing to invest time and efforts, and to improve their skills inside and even outside classroom. The concept of attitude toward language reflects expressions such

as ease, difficulty, degree of importance, elegance of language and even social status (Richard and Smith, 2002). These elements can lead learners to change their attitude.

There are three components for attitude: first, the cognitive component which refers to the beliefs and perceptions about language. Second, the affective component which implies the degree of liking or disliking, associated with a teacher and language class (Gan, 2004). The third component is the behavioral attitude which refers to the consistent action or behavioral intention toward the object (Wenden, 1991)

Additionally, personality and social factors affect language attitude. According to Getie (2020), the social factors as English speakers, peer groups, learner's parents influence positively attitude of language learners, taking into account that individuals believes in their society's beliefs, in addition to the educational elements such as language teachers, school environment and textbook. Understandably, attitude is related to the extent learners are motivated in a way that determines their intention to learn the language or not.

2.2 Motivation

The concept of Motivation has been widely tackled in the field of human psychology. It refers to the meaning "to be moved to do something" (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Many other researchers have examined motivation from different perspectives. For instance, Boussard and Garrison (2004, p.106) defines it as "the attribute that moves us to do or not to do something. Brown (1987, p 114) defines motivation as "an inner drive, impulse, emotion, or desire that moves one to a particular action." These actions serve certain goals. As Bhatia (2004) puts it, motivation is a stimulation or action toward a particular goal where there is little attraction to the action.

2.2.1. Types of Motivation

2.2.1.1. Integrative Motivation

Learners have different reasons to learn a foreign language. This determines the way they are driven to learn a language. Some learn a language for a purpose to be integrated into L2 society; this type is called integrative motivation. Gardner and Lambert (1972) define integrative motivation as the desire to associate with speakers of the target language out of interest in their language or culture. Later, Gardner assures that some learners are interactively motivated to learn a second language because they have a positive feeling toward the community that speaks the target language (Gardner, 1985). As a result, these learners show a great willing to integrate in that community (Gilakjani et al., 2012) for personal growth or cultural

enrichment. Ellis (1994) guarantees that integrative motivation is the best type for FL learning. Nevertheless, such view might fit some learners but not all of them, particularly middle school learners who are too young to think of emigration.

2.2.1.2 Instrumental Motivation

Unlike integrative motivation, instrumental motivation refers to the factors that drive learners to achieve practical benefits (Zhang et al., 2020). In the case of foreign language, Lambert and Gardner (1972) note that instrumental motivation means accomplishing the practical value and advantages from learning a new language. This usually connects to pragmatic gain because, here, learning a language has a specific purpose such as getting a job, passing an exam, meeting an educational requirement (Mahadi & Jafari, 2012). This type helps more learners who lack enjoyment in learning for its sake.

2.2.1.3. Intrinsic Motivation

Deci and Ryan are the pioneers of Self-Determination Theory in which they divide motivation into two forms: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation implies the activities done for inherent satisfaction of the activity itself whereas extrinsic motivation refers to actions carried out to achieve certain instrumental ends as earning rewards or to avoid punishment (Pulido et al., 2010). Noel (2001) correlates intrinsic motivation to integrative motivation, but they are not totally identical. Deci and Ryan (1985) define intrinsic motivation as a desire to perform actions simply for the pleasure which accompanies the action. These feelings of pleasure come from innate needs for competence and self-determination (cited in Noel et al., 1999). People who have intrinsic motivation feel that they do tasks voluntarily. These tasks represent a challenge to their existing competencies and require the use of creative capabilities. In an L2 learning context, Feng and Poh Kiat Ng (2015) think that learners are assumed to be intrinsically motivated when they learn the target language for its sake. Intrinsic motivation is defined as the extent to which the individuals strive to learn a language for the sake of satisfaction inherent in this activity. The reward for that is inherent in the enjoyment of the activity itself or the feeling of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

2.2.1.4. Extrinsic Motivation

Unlike intrinsically motivated learners, some can be motivated because they will achieve some external goals. They are called extrinsic motivated learners. Extrinsic motivation refers to the performance of an activity for attaining some separable outcomes (Dennis et al., 2010). It is mainly the action done to achieve other instrumental ends such as avoiding punishment

or earning rewards. Therefore, extrinsically motivated people enjoy taking part in activities due to the reasons which are not related to these activities (Mahadi & Jafari, 2012). This means that enjoyment in extrinsic motivation is met in the task's environment.

For language learning, Brown (as cited in Alizadeh, 2016) determines the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Then he argues that extrinsic motivation may well turn out as integrative form if L2 learner wishes to integrate into L2 culture.

Extrinsic motivation is internalized through different levels. Noel et al. (2001) divide extrinsic motivation into 3 subtypes: external regulation, introjected regulation and identified regulation. These types are proved when one is being more internalized into self-concept than the other learner. External regulation is a situation when L2 students learn a language for certain pressure or reward that is inherent in the social environment. Ryan and Deci (2000) affirm that such behaviours of external regulation are performed to satisfy an external demand or obtain an externally imposed reward contingency. So, external regulated L2 learner does their best to learn language mainly for the purpose of gaining rewards or acquiring a course credit. The second form is the introjected regulation in which a learner internalizes some reasons as pressure to motivate himself/ herself to learn L2 as doing assignments to impress others by his/her proficiency or to feel guilty if he or she does not do the homework. The form of introjection is *ego involvement* (Nicholls, 1984; Ryan, 1982). People do actions to enhance or maintain self-esteem and the feeling of worth. The final form is known as the identified regulation is the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation. Here, an individual feels that the language activity is personally worthwhile. These attempt to internalize FL learning and make as one's own goal looks interesting and workable to develop language motivation.

2.3. Motivation and Attitudes to Learn English as a Foreign Language

Attitude and motivation receive a wide range of importance in learning English as a foreign language as well. Lambert (1963) advocates a discipline in which a person can learn a foreign language based on the level of motivation and attitude toward it and the ethnocentric predisposition. This psychological modal underlines the cognitive aspect as intelligent language abilities and then affective variables such as motivation and attitude (Al Othman & Shuqair, 2013).

In Chalack and Kassaian's (2010) study, an investigation for the various psychological orientations of Iranian undergraduates toward learning English, they focus on the motivation of learners and their attitudes toward

target language and the community it belongs to. On eight domains, the study limits the purposes: interest in English, parental encouragement, motivational intensity, attitudes toward learning English, attitudes toward speaking people, integrative orientation, desire to learn English and instrumental orientation. Gardner (1985) includes all these elements in constructing the modal of Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). A study revealed that Iranian students are motivated for learning English for both integrative and instrumental reasons. Moreover, their attitudes toward the target language community is highly positive.

Other studies were conducted in the Arab contexts to investigate EFL learner's motivation and attitudes. In Yemen, Al-Quyadi (2002) found that Yemeni learners had similarly a high level of both instrumental and integrative motivation, and they had positive attitudes towards the English language. Additionally, Qashoa (2006) devoted a research on secondary school students in Dubai to examine the priority of integrative or instrumental motivation in English learning, then to recognize the factors that affect their motivation. The finding revealed that students have higher degree of instrumental motivation rather than integrative. In Algeria, Mellit and Idri (2019) conducted a study that probed into attitudes the second year EFL learners held toward reading English literary texts at the Department of Foreign Languages, University of Setif. Findings demonstrated that the students had a very low reading motivation due to their negative attitudes towards reading English literary texts.

EFL learning in some cases is a compulsory subject. It is a subject which must be taken as a course. Then learners do not have the choice to quit or refuse studying it. So, they learn it only to pass exam or to get a future job. This implies the instrumentality in EFL learning rather than other motivation types. However, it can not exclude them with some students.

Understandably, attitude and motivation are interrelated in EFL learning. Students who hold a positive attitude toward English learning have also a higher level of motivation, whereas those with negative attitudes and beliefs are unlikely to be motivated to learn it.

2.4. Gender Difference in Attitudes and Motivation in EFL Learning

Gender is one of the most important factors that affect EFL learning. Many researchers conducted their studies, trying to investigate who is more interested in EFL learning. Murtafiah and Setyo Putro (2020)'s study explored the gender differences in reading attitudes and motivation, both in elementary and secondary school levels among Santri students, who were living in boarding schools where gender segregation is applied. 319 students

were asked to complete a type of reading questionnaires and motivational questionnaires (MRQ). This results showed that there is significant differences among female and male students both in terms of motivation or attitudes. it revealed that female students are statistically higher in attitudes in both academic and recreational reading than male students. It was also reported that have higher motivation in both questionnaires than males in the three dimensions (i.e, reading involvement, importance of reading and competition in reading).

In the same context, in a quantitative study, As Sabiq et al.,(2021), they explored the effect of gender on learning English in their attitudes and motivation in a state Junior high school, Ranyumus Regency, Indonesia. Results revealed that there is a significant effect of gender difference. Furthermore, it revealed that male and female students have moderately high attitudes and motivation. But female students show a higher score of survey results. Some of the reasons that explain the male's lower result are the limit exposure and the lack of real-life practice of English. This proves that females have.

Makrami (20110) examined the effect of motivation and attitudes on Saudi university students in English for specific purposes (ESP) compared to students learning English for general purposes (EGP). This study revealed that attitudes, anxiety and motivation within the same gender did not change from the pretest to the posttest. However, males ended up with lower attitudes than males. Similarly, in his study, Akdemi (2019) showed that gender difference affects EFL learners' attitudes and motivation and female students are scored higher than male students. In addition, it was revealed that there is a positive and meaningful relationship between mini attitude motivation test battery (mini- AMTB) and their willing to listen (WIL) scores. Eventually, there should be remarked that gender is an important factor that affects motivation and attitudes in EFL learning. Female students are usually more motivated to learn English, and that is a part of their inclinations.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The population chosen for this study was middle school learners from different levels (first, second, third and fourth-year levels), gathered from different school around the city of Adrar. More than 250 had received the questionnaire but only 242 responded. There were 149 female pupils and 93 male ones. The study groups first and second levels together, then groups the third and fourth levels. The first category (first and second levels) consists of

113 participants representing 46.7% of the total number, and the second category comprises 129 participants, representing 53.3%.

3.2. Materials and instruments

As the study purpose to explore the importance of students' attitude and motivation in learning English, the method used is the five Likert scale questionnaire. Some questions in this questionnaire are inspired from Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Battery Test (1985). The questionnaire is also divided into two main sections, the first section includes three sub-sections (behavioral, cognitive and emotional attitudes), and the second is devoted to motivation. Questions cover each type of motivation (intrinsic, extrinsic, instrumental and integrative). The questionnaire consists of 27 questions. The respondents were asked to tick (√) under the most convenient option.

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested through a Cronbach's Alpha test, with 31 students. Four items were deleted after this exploratory study: 1) "learning English is very difficult"; 2) "I cannot apply knowledge that I learned in real life"; 3) "I do not get anxious to answer any question in English class"; 4) "I feel bored in English class." As all students shared the same answer. The reliability score is 0.649

3.4. Data Analysis and Techniques

The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, v. 26). Frequencies, the mean and standard deviation were computed to ascertain the types and frequencies of the students' attitudes and motivation toward EFL learning. The study uses t-test and ANOVA test.

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

The study selected randomly three middle schools to conduct the study. Middle school learners are still beginners for EFL learning, and they may face difficulties to answer a foreign language questionnaire, that is why the researcher translated it into their mother tongue (Arabic). After taking the permission from teachers of English to take parts their sessions' time to explain the questionnaire carefully. Pupils were given enough time to think and were even allowed to take the questionnaire home and submit it the following day.

3.6. Results

Beginning with the first section, it is devoted to the general information about the learner's background in learning English. The participants are requested to tick their geographical area. (52.9 %) are from the city center of Adrar and (47.1%) are from rural areas. Gender information revealed that 61.6 % are female and 38.4 % are males. Age group is divided into three groups: 57.0 % between age (11 and 13), 34.7 % are placed between (14

and 15) years old) and finally, 08.3 % are found between (16 and 17). Students also have to tick their educational level to examine if motivation and attitude are affected by the learner's level. Frequency result shows that 46.7 % are between first and second year levels. Finally, 53.3 % learn between the third and the fourth level.

3.6.1. Learners' Attitudes toward EFL Learning

The first section of the questionnaire is devoted to the three types of attitudes. It aims to investigate how learners believe, feel, and behave toward learning English as a foreign language. In the first sub-section of behavioral attitude, the high scores reported by students show that they have a positive attitude, for instance, 42% of respondents strongly agree that they like to be able to speak English as fluent as native speakers while practicing English. Furthermore, 42.6 % agree that they enjoy communicating English with fluent speakers of English. On the contrary, negative statement receives low scores. Such as 43% strongly disagree that they are not interested in doing homework of English lessons. So, behavioral attitude toward EFL learning score (mean = 3.10 and SD=0.61) has medium level of agreement.

The second subsection reveals the findings of cognitive attitude. 30% of learners agree that success in learning English enables them to succeed in other subjects. Then, 33% agree, and 43% strongly agree with the idea that learning English makes them more knowledgeable, and that the content of the English course covers different fields' knowledge.

For the third part which is concerned with emotional attitudes part, the results demonstrate that most students have positive attitudes about learning English as shown in statements as: "learning English is enjoyable," 35 % agree and 40% strongly agree. To the statement "I feel proud and confident if I get good grade in English exams," 68% respond with strongly disagree, and only 2% disagree that they feel proud and more self-confident when they learn English. The majority of respondents representing (31.8%) disagree that they have little interest in English. Emotional attitude is a high degree of agreement with mean value 3.46 and standard deviation (SD) = 0.54. These results indicate that learners have a noticeable positive emotional attitude toward EFL learning.

3.6.2. Learners' Level of Motivation toward EFL Learning

Similarly, in the motivation section, majority of the respondents' answers show that they are highly motivated to learn English. For the statement which expresses that learning English helps them for future career, the majority with 45% strongly agree whereas the least percentage with 6.6% strongly disagree. Similarly, in "I learn English because it provides me

with several future opportunities," the 42% as a majority strongly agree, 32 % agree and 5.8% strongly disagree. This indicates that students can be instrumentally motivated and they have their reasons to learn English. However, the learners show an integrative motivation as well. A majority of 50% strongly agree that English helps them integrate with native speakers, but only 3.3% disagree. In response to the statement "English helps me to learn about others' cultures, values and thoughts," only 7.0% strongly disagree and the majority agree. A percentage of 56.2% agree that learning English allows them to travel abroad. A majority of respondents with 109 in total, representing 45%) strongly agree that they learn English because they like it; and 6.2% have strong disagreement as the lowest percentage. In another statement, 40.1% strongly agree that they are autonomous learners of English because they are intrinsically motivated.

The results show that the respondents have an even a high level of agreement in extrinsic motivation. 60% of them agree that they are more motivated to learn English if the teachers have encouraging personality and use effective strategies in EFL teaching, while a few disagree with 1.2%. Moreover, they are motivated by their families 32.2% agree and 31.4 % strongly agree that they are motivated thanks to their parents' encouragement.

3.6.3. The Effect of Different Types of Attitudes on EFL learning

Table N°1: Result of T-statistical test of the effect of behavioral attitude in EFL learning

Behavioral attitude	Mean	Std. Deviation	DF	calculated T-statistic	Signification
	3,10	0,61	241	2,489	0,014*

This table shows that the signification is (0,014) there is a significant difference between the mean 3,10 of the behavioural attitude and the hypothetical mean of the study tool (3) with a risk error (0,05) or 5%. So we conclude that behavioural attitude has a significant and positive effect on learning English as a foreign language

Table N° 2: Result of T-statistical test of the effect of cognitive attitudes on EFL learning

Cognitive attitudes	Mean	Std. Deviation	DF	calculated T-statistic	Signification
	3,22	0,67	241	5,205	≤0,001***

This table illustrate that there is a very high significant difference between the mean of the cognitive attitude (3,22) and the hypothetical mean

of the study tool (3) with a risk error of (0,05) or 5%, therefore, the cognitive attitude has a very high significant and positive effect on EFL learning.

Table N° 3: Result of T-statistical test of the effect of emotional attitude EFL learning

Emotional attitude	Mean	Std. Deviation	DF	calculated T-statistics	Signification
	3,46	0,54	241	13,303	≤0,001***

The result shown in the table demonstrates that it is a high significant difference between the mean of emotional attitude (3,46) and the mean of the study tool (3) with a risk error equivalent to 0,05 or 5% which means that emotional attitude of the learner has a high positive and significant effect on EFL learning.

Table N° 4: Result of T-statistical test of the effect of Motivation on EFL learning

Motivation	Mean	Std. Deviation	DF	calculated T-statistics	Signification
	3,92	0,72	241	19,72	≤0,001***

The table reveals that result indicates the high significant difference between the mean of motivation (3,92) and the hypothetical mean of the study tool (3) with a risk error equivalent to 0,05 or 5%. This brings into the conclusion that motivation has a very high positive and significant

Table N° 5: Result of ANOVA statistical test of the effect of gender in attitude and motivation on EFL learning

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	DF		calculated F-statistics	Signification
				1	2		
Behavioral Attitude	female	3.15	0.57	1	240	2.955	0,087 NS
	male	3.01	0.65				
Cognitive Attitudes	female	3.29	0.63	1	240	3.329	0,069 NS
	male	3.13	0.73				
Emotional Attitude	female	3.48	0.50	1	240	0.428	0,514 NS
	male	3.43	0.60				
Motivation	female	4.09	0.62	1	240	23.215	≤0,001***

In this table, findings reveal that there is no significant relationship between gender and behavioral, cognitive, or emotional attitudes to learn English. Male and female learners share the same attitudes toward English. However, there is a highly significant relationship between gender and

motivation. Female students' mean=4.09 indicates that they are highly motivated than male students (3.43). The value $p \leq 0.001$ reveals that there is a highly significant effect with risk error equal to 0,05.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

As shown in the findings that most EFL learners have highly positive attitudes toward English (in terms of their beliefs, behaviors and emotions). Although, they are highly motivated, students have different underlying motives. While some find pleasure in learning English for its sake, others have reasons to travel abroad to be integrated into the native English speaking communities, and the last group aims just to get good grades and to avoid failure or even to get a future job.

Concerning gender, female learners in middle schools show that they have more positive attitudes and higher motivation regarding EFL learning. This is because female students are more interested in learning in general and in foreign languages in particular. Males' parents and teachers should exert much efforts to motivate them for English learning both inside and outside classroom. This can bring good attitudes if they know these students' needs and connect them to EFL learning.

To summarize, the learners' level of motivation, which is a result of their attitude and beliefs, determines their success in EFL subject. It is necessary for learners to put this motivation into practice and do their best in learning English. However, despite the fact that EFL learners have a positive attitude, they may have a poor performance in English. Therefore, the duty lies primarily on the teachers who should play a vital role in increasing learners' motivation and attitude to enhance English learning. Many strategies and styles can be used for the curriculum goals and meanwhile fulfill the learners' needs and goals. The following recommendations instruct how the teacher can help the learners to perform better in EFL learning by:

- Creating a friendly classroom climate where learners feel valued. This safe and comfortable environment will encourage learners to take part in class activities.
- Personalizing EFL classroom environment: a learner-centeredness has a great influence on language acquisition and personalizing class environment display a high level of motivating learners to do their tasks without fear of being criticized.
- Creating class situations in which students feel a sense of accomplishment. There, EFL teacher must give positive

feedback on learners' mistakes. Therefore, these learners feel more self-confident to get better achievement

- Connecting language learning to learners' interest and their life experience. In today digital world, it seems a necessary need for learners to be taught using ICT tools.
- Providing pair and group work tasks to develop learners' confidence and sense of collaboration. Learners may learn better through sharing, doing and acting.
- Creating a colorful classroom setting by sticking some English cards, or pictures related to the current sequence. Middle school learners will appreciate leaning English in such motivational environment.
- Encouraging male students to play vital role in classroom by sharing them with female peers, giving incentives, or connect English with their preferences as sport.

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