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## **Motivational orientations of English as foreign language (EFL) learners:**

### **A case study in Kuwait**

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#### **Abstract**

The present study aims to find the motivational orientations of EFL in the university students of Kuwait and to examine if the western inspired theories of motivation i.e. self-determination theory of motivation is related to the Kuwaiti EFL students or not. Motivation for the present study is used in the context of the language learning, which shows the student's cause of acting in a particular way. The sample of the present study consists of 885 university students. The data collected from these students were analyzed using exploratory factor analysis with the varimax rotation. The study found that there are three motivational orientations of the students of Kuwait; extrinsic, international and intrinsic orientation.

**Keywords:** EFL ; Kuwait students; international orientations; motivational orientations; self-determination theory

#### **الملخص:**

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى إيجاد التوجهات التحفيزية لتعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لطلاب جامعة الكويت ودراسة ما إذا كانت النظريات المستوحاة من الغرب عن التحفيز، مثل نظرية التحفيز لتقرير المصير مرتبطة بطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية أم لا. الدافع الرئيسي لهذه الدراسة تجسّد في سياق تعلم اللغة، والذي يوضح سبب تصرف الطالب بطريقة معينة. تتكون عينة الدراسة الحالية من 885 طالبًا جامعيًا. تم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها من هؤلاء الطلاب باستخدام تحليل العامل الاستكشافي (تدوير فارماكس)، ووجدت الدراسة أن هناك ثلاثة توجهات تحفيزية لطلبة الكويت وتصنف إلى خارجية وعالمية وجوهرية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** تعليم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية، طلاب الكويت، التوجهات الدولية، التوجهات التحفيزية، نظرية تقرير المصير.



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## **Introduction**

The urge to learn the foreign language is driven considerably by a motivational force, which enforces a person to attend successful learning courses. The motivational factors generally steer a person, what to do and how to achieve something. However, various factors affect a person's urge to learn a second language, but, motivation is demonstrated to be the most influencing variable that helps a person to achieve a milestone of learning English language as a second language. According to Abrar-ul-Hassan (2014), motivation to learn language involves the propensity towards goals attainment and the efforts exerted which helps a person to wish for learning a new language. Different researchers have different perspectives for motivational propensity towards English as a foreign language (EFL); however, the studies are not in larger quantities, but very few studies examined the motivational factors of EFL learners. A study conducted by Gardner & Lambert (1959) asserted that different individual has a different motivational factor, which results in different attitude for learning English. Moreover, due to the increased obstacles found by the students in learning English in non-western countries, they need internal/intrinsic motivation to learn English as a second language. The reason of suffering is, such students have different backgrounds and need different learning strategies to keep motivated and active in learning an English language. However, motivational factors including intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors are not new in the perspective of learning language; but, integrative motivation and instrumental motivation have a considerable role and is seen as a primary source of motivation in learning a second language. When a person interacts with a



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And Science Publications ( MECSJ )

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second language group of people, the motivation to interact with them is driven by integrative motivation, whereas, instrumental motivation is the person's wish to gain the fluency in the second language. Both these theories of motivation are demonstrated as second language acquisition theories. Instrumental motivation is equally seen as extrinsic motivation by other researchers, for instance, the study conducted on Taiwanese students found lack of integrative motivation in those students and learning process of English language is similar to that of EFL students. Various studies have been conducted on the learning process of English as a foreign language, based on the second language acquisition theory in western countries, but, in non-western countries, particularly Arab countries need to inquire about the motivational orientation of EFL learners because such people have different cultural background with a significant language difference. Moreover, the students do not only learn them as EFL, but use it as a primary mode of interaction in class rooms and other life perspectives, which requires intrinsic motivation to foster the learning process (Dörnyei, 1994) The present study investigates the motivational orientation for EFL amongst the students from different universities in Kuwait.

### **The concept of motivation**

One of the basic factors in a learning process is to keep the learners motivated towards the attainment of the goals and objectives. However, various researchers have investigated motivation from the different perspectives, but, no single author defines it clearly, instead, every researcher has narrated its personal stance on the perception of motivation and explained it. According to Liu & Thompson (2018), motivation is the person's initiation towards the attainment of the desires and wishes, which are raised due to cognitive and motor mechanism of



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And Science Publications (MECSJ)

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the person. Another description is put forward by Gardner & Lambert (1959), motivation is the intrinsic driver that leads a person to act in a particular way. Motivation is demonstrated as a global approach, which helps a person to act in a particular direction because of anticipated outcomes and person executes his/her actions by exerting a specific propensity of energy. The intellectual and physical abilities of a person help a person leading towards a responsive behavior and act more consciously to attain goals and objectives.

From the perspective of foreign language learning, the researchers consider particular principles of language learning and the topic is narrowed down because motivation has the primary role in learning language process. However, motivation in learning second language is a complex set of factors that need considerable energy and struggles to acquire a new language. Although, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is significantly used in educational perspective, but, according to the study conducted by Gardner & Lambert (1972) there is a difference in intrinsic motivational and extrinsic motivational behaviors. For instance, extrinsic motivation in language learning process is when a person achieves a good score, whereas, intrinsic motivation is the pleasure of executing a particular activity. However, according to Dörnyei (2003), the motivation for language learning is referred to four basic motivational approaches; behavioral, humanistic, cognitive and socio-cultural. Under these four approaches, the outcome of each motivational source will be different and can be categorized under intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of learning second language. Furthermore, when a person learns a second language, it is driven by various factors such as; the degree of intensity of motivation. However, to categorize students on the basis of extrinsic and intrinsic factors, it is impetus to group them according to their level of



www.mecs.com/

Multi-Knowledge Electronic Comprehensive Journal For Education  
And Science Publications ( MECSJ )

Issue (39),2020

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motivation in the class; low, medium and high. Researchers indicate that the motivation is different for a different learner but every motivation has a specific energy and a reason for acquiring a new language.

### **Empirical considerations**

Motivation helps a student to move towards a new possibility. This shows that every student has a potential to learn new concepts, but they need to know about their likeliness to believe in themselves. This is made possible by motivation, which helps a student to prove their abilities to learn new concepts. The detailed description of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is drawn back to one of the motivational theories, self-determination theory, which states that a person has a particular intention and every person's behavior moves between a controlled and self-determined intentions. The person's desire to act upon a particular action is raised under intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Au SY (1988) exhibited a detailed explanation of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and explained it; intrinsic motivation is referred to act in a particular way because it has a separate result. It shows that intrinsic motivation is a person's wish to learn a new language. This concept is further elaborated by Bernaus & Gardner (2008), which stated that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation under self-determination theory has a continuum of parallel autonomy. Amongst the two sides, left end is for a motivation and right end is for intrinsic motivation. A motivation means when there is lack of self-determination. This means that a person on a motivation does not have any intention or motivation to do something, rather they lack intentionality. On the



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contrary, extrinsic motivation lies between a motivation and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is explained by (Gardner ,2000) which is related to a desire of achieving goals or objectives and attain a separable result in the end.

Research indicates humans have a curiosity in their nature, which evoke their self-interest to learn something new and make them curious about learning. This is something related to intrinsic motivation, whereas, extrinsic motivation is related to a student's wish to attain a goal, for instance, students want to learn a second language because they want to get the good attention from their relatives or a student wants to go abroad for higher studies. From the educational perspective, when the institute triggers the natural curiosity and offers a source of stimulation and has various challenges, intrinsic motivation nurtures in a person and leads student to learn a new language.

Furthermore, Kim & Kim (2016) elaborated the concept of a motivation and extrinsic motivation, which is formed from four basic types of extrinsic motivation; externally oriented, introjected, identified and integrated motivation. All these four types are different from each other in a way that which amongst them are self-determined. It is further explained in a way that the people with intrinsic motivation have inner satisfaction from the particular activity. Moreover, the high level of extrinsic motivation is driven by self-motivated behavior, which is exactly same as intrinsic behavior because each shows the desire for a separate identity. The theory of self-determination (SDT) is applicable to a variety of life perspectives. From the language perspectives, the SDT is first introduced by De Vaus (1985). According to him, the motivation to learn a new language is same as that of the motivational principles in SDT.



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Multi-Knowledge Electronic Comprehensive Journal For Education  
And Science Publications ( MECSJ )

Issue (39),2020

ISSN: **2617-9563**

Another study conducted by Gardner (2000), argued that those people who are intrinsically motivated will reduce their behavior towards extrinsic motivation. This is explained as; extrinsic motivation will erode self-determination of a person. This explanation is supported by the concept of lying motivational orientation in the continuum. However, various studies argued that extrinsic motivation is not necessarily harmful for intrinsic motivation, but, it can enhance intrinsic motivation. Research indicates that in various instances, the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is antagonistic, which exhibits the conflicting relationship, whereas, it is also likely to adjunct each other (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013).

In non-western countries specifically in Arab countries, in EFL context of language learning, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to learn a second language exists in a succession, where both the factors complement each other. Moreover, it requires further research in the context of antagonistic role in Arab countries.

The present study involves EFL learners in Kuwait, where the motivation exhibits the students' purpose of learning lies inside (intrinsic) or external (extrinsic) factors. Although, every student has a different purpose of learning a new language, but in the present study, two underlying reasons for learning a new language are presented under intrinsic and extrinsic motivational inclinations. These motivational orientations are dependent on the study of Self Determination Theory. According to this concept, the reason of learning a new language can be to achieve some extrinsic awards such as getting good score in English subject or using it as a mode of communication with friends and relatives, whereas, intrinsic motivation is connected with a



www.mecs.com/

Multi-Knowledge Electronic Comprehensive Journal For Education  
And Science Publications ( MECSJ )

Issue (39),2020

ISSN: 2617-9563

person's inherent behavior whose rewards are related to inner joy of performing an activity. This concept is further elaborated in a way that a person's inner joy of learning a new language is related with integrative motivation, which is concerned with a person's consent to interact with a group of second language and the interest to learn a new language. This helps them to interact with non-English speakers. The data is collected from the EFL learners in Kuwait to validate the classification of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for learning a new language.

### **Objectives**

The present study tends to find the motivational orientation of students in Kuwait to learn English as a foreign language. The basic aim is to fine the motivational forces that triggers them to learn a new language.

### **Research questions**

Based on the past studies, the present study will address the following questions in the end;

- What are the motivational orientations of the students in Kuwait in learning EFL?
- Are western-inspired theories of motivation in learning English relevant to EFL learners in Kuwait?

### **Research Methodology**

The study used non-probability sampling method, which targeted the university students in Kuwait who were studying English in their respective departments. Such students had different





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And Science Publications (MECSJ)

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countries of origin and had distinct ethnic categories. To collect the data from the sample of the study, a primary data collection method was followed and distributed questionnaires amongst the students of 1<sup>st</sup> semester, a week before their university entrance test for testing English language skills. A total of 1000 students were selected as a sample of the study, out of which 885 students participated and returned the filled questionnaire. These students had a prior learning experience of English language because these students had been studying English since their elementary school.

The present study is based on positivist paradigm because it aimed to estimate the behavior of the students by using quantitative research approach (Gardner, 2012) The questionnaire followed the self-report format provided by Abrar-ul-Hassan(2014) and Gardner et al.(1997). A total of 12 items were included in the questionnaire, which identified the prevalence of integration problem in EFL in the Kuwait university students (item 1-4) and to examine the student's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the items from 5-12 were related to find this. The present study followed the hypothesis that the motivation of the students to learn English as a foreign language is dependent on the context. The questionnaire used 5 point likert scale and measured the motivational orientation as never happened to me to always happen to me, ranging 1-5. The native language(Arabic) was used in the questionnaire to avoid the misunderstanding of the questions.

The collected data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 18.0. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was tested using item-to scale coefficient. To find out the scale's unidimensionality, this step was carried out because in this way it helped to find out if



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Multi-Knowledge Electronic Comprehensive Journal For Education  
And Science Publications ( MECSJ )

Issue (39),2020

ISSN: 2617-9563

the response to a specific item was shown in the number of other items. Cronbach alpha lower score determined to be acceptable because the scale used for motivation in language learning were very few (Ryan & Deci, 2000a) To find out the validity of the questionnaire, the correlation of each item with its relevant construct was evaluated. The results showed higher correlation of the items with their constructs, which also exhibited the validity of the items. However, the study was new and no prior research had been conducted on the motivational orientations in Kuwait, thus, the present study used exploratory factor analysis to recognize the constructs of the questionnaire, not to accept or reject the underlying framework of the measure.

## **Discussion**

In the present study, the international orientation in the factor analysis showed that in the prospect of globalization, the motivation in learning should be redesigned. However, the research shows that significant number of people exert remarkable efforts to learn English irrespective of immediate rewards. Moreover, the motivation for language learning must be conceptualized because in this way it will benefit growing number of people for learning English in this era of globalization. In the present study, the growing concern for international orientation coincides the study conducted by Kim and Kim (2016), who conducted study on Korean High school EFL. International orientation is one amongst the nine factors of motivation in their study for Korean students.

The findings of the present study showed that EFL students were interested in learning English because of international orientation and the globalization factor and not due to integration with



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Multi-Knowledge Electronic Comprehensive Journal For Education  
And Science Publications ( MECSJ )

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the people of different groups. In the same way, Setiyadi and Sukirlan (2016) had the same findings for the Islamic school in Indonesia, where they found that the orientation of the EFL students were due to globalization and they thought that English is an important language that needs to be learnt to interact with the outside world and not to speak with the native English speakers. This clearly shows that English is a global language and everyone is eager to learn it, not only Asian countries but Arab countries are also showing extensive interest.

The present study did not confirm the results of integrative motivation for EFL students in learning English. However, the students of Philippines showed that they were integratively motivated to learn English as a foreign language (Richard & Edward, 2000) but the study involved Malaysian students showed that they were externally oriented towards learning English and not to integrate with the students of the second language (Ryan & Deci, 2000b) The present study found that the integrative motivation, which was formed as an issue in ESL settings, is not related to the Kuwait EFL learners. However, in the present study, EFL learners had integrative international orientation to integrate with the people of other western English countries.

The findings of the present study also showed that the international orientation of the EL students in Kuwait can be reflected by referring to the self-determination theory of motivation. However, the international orientation in the EFL may be a new concept in the students of Kuwait, but the study showed that it is closely related to the intrinsic motivation, which showed that the extrinsically motivated students with self-determination is same as those people with intrinsically motivated learners to execute autonomous learning.



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Multi-Knowledge Electronic Comprehensive Journal For Education  
And Science Publications ( MECSJ )

Issue (39),2020

ISSN: **2617-9563**

### **Limitations of the study**

However, it is not possible that all sub-scales of motivation has high internal consistency, therefore, the findings of the present study must be studied cautiously because the sub-scale of intrinsic motivation is excluded from the higher consistency. Moreover, it is highly recommended to explore the motivational orientations with added motivation as shown by Self Determination Theory of motivation. The extended items for each type must be included to find more trustable findings on the motivational orientation in Kuwait students. Further research contributions may help to find the similarities and differences between ESL and EFL perspective associated to SDT. The present study also explored the motivational orientations of Kuwait students for EFL but it is also possible to find the relationship in the context of different cultural background. This may help to explore more reasons for EFL students and recognize the motivational orientation in response to the importance of English in this global era.



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Multi-Knowledge Electronic Comprehensive Journal For Education  
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Issue (39),2020

ISSN: 2617-9563

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Issue (39),2020

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