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**Exploring the Role of Motivation in Sustained L2 Learning among Higher Education Learners in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**

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**Abstract**

The paper discusses the importance of motivation in long-term retention of second language (L2) among university students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The research is based on key motivational theories, including the Socio-Educational Model by Gardner and the L2 Motivational Self System by Dornyei, to determine how intrinsic, extrinsic, integrative, and instrumental motivation affects the capabilities of the learners to maintain the mastery of the English language. Data collection was based on the mixed-method approach and was performed by surveys (questionnaires), language-retention tests, and semi-structured interviews with students and teachers. The results show that students who are highly intrinsically and integratively motivated have been found to retain more vocabulary, show better speaking fluent and more long-term language sustained. The research also indicates that positive learning conditions, educational encouragement, and appreciable language exposure lead to long-lasting motivation. The results point to the importance of introducing motivational approaches to curriculum and pedagogy in universities to enhance the long-term L2 retention among institutions of higher learning.

**Keywords:** Second Language Retention, Motivation in Language Learning, University Students, Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

**1.1 Background of the Study**

Motivation has been considered a very important variable in second language acquisition (SLA) as it defines whether the

learners will be successful or not. Although the quality of exposure, teaching quality and learning environment are vital, in the long term, motivation is what can drive one to work. The topic of motivation in the long-term language retention is especially pertinent in multilingual societies like Pakistan, where English is used as a language of study, commerce and upward progress.

Even though a significant number of Pakistani learners attain some level of proficiency throughout the course, only a handful of them are able to maintain and apply English in a fluent manner in the long term. This contradiction poses very important doubts about the kind of motivation which is the most effective in encouraging second language use outside of the classroom.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Even though there is a lot of focus on English education, a big percentage of Pakistani university graduates lose a lot of their active competence after attaining their degrees. The concern is not on the initial learning, but the maintenance of linguistic competence. Empirical evidence is missing which would examine how this retention process is influenced by motivational factors both intrinsic and extrinsic as viewed within the sociocultural setting of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. What is the impact of motivation on long term retention of English as second language in university students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa?
2. What are the differences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation when it comes to the duration of use of English language?
3. Which approaches to long-term learner motivation can institutions employ?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

To find out how motivation correlates with second language retention.

- To know the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors.
- To propose pedagogical measures that promote long-term motivation in learners.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This research is significant in relation to the language teachers, curriculum developers and policy makers who intend to enhance the long term situation of English teaching in Pakistan. Knowing the effects of various types of motivation on language retention,

the teachers in question will be able to develop their instruction techniques that would foster a long-lasting interest.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Motivation in the Second Language Learning is a topic of interest to Second Language Learning researchers and teachers alike. Motivation in the Second Language Learning This is an area of interest to both the Second Language Learning researchers and teachers.

Motivation can be described as the inner impulse that initiates, guides and supports behavior in direction to a goal (Gardner, 1985). Motivation in SLA is viewed as playing a very important role in not only the processes of initial learning but also the sustenance of learning in the long run (Dornyei, 2001). Highly motivated learners will stay resolute during times of challenge and will contemplate exercising even when professional courses have already ceased.

### **2.2 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation.**

Intrinsic motivation is a way of learning because of the natural pleasure and satisfaction of the process. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is the rewarding of a person through outside things like grades, approval or a job. Research like the one by Deci and Ryan (1985) indicates that intrinsic motivation yields deeper learning and long-lasting retention as opposed to extrinsic which induces superficial engagement.

### **2.3 The Socio-Educational Model**

Gardner and Lambert (1972) constructed the socio-educational model that focused on integrative and instrumental orientations. An integrative motivation, which is learning a language in order to communicate with the people of that language, will promote greater long-term success. Though instrumental motivation is helpful in the short-term such as in exams, they might not be useful in the long-term once the short-term goals are achieved.

### **2.4 Motivation and Retention within the Pakistani Situation.**

English is a social good, as well as an academic prerequisite in Pakistan. The students are usually highly extrinsically motivated initially because of the pressure of the institutions and the society. But as soon as they lose the immediate incentives, they lose their language skills. The works of Mansoor (2004) and Rahman (2019) underline that the pattern of motivating learners is strongly determined by sociocultural and economic factors.

### **2.5 Gaps in Existing Research**

Although there is a lot of research on motivation in language learning, however, less is done on motivation and retention especially in the post instruction period. In addition, there is little research done on specific sociolinguistic backgrounds of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in which access to English exposure is imbalanced.

### **Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework.**

The paper is pegged on Self-Determination Theory (SDT) advanced by Deci and Ryan (1985) which underlines the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as attributes of motivation. SDT will draw a line between intrinsic and various levels of extrinsic motivation, stating that self-regulated learners are more persistent in the long run.

Moreover, another model that offers a secondary framework is the Socio-Educational Model developed by Gardner that demonstrates the interaction of attitudes, motivation, and cultural orientation in SLA. These two theories together give a holistic understanding of the role that both social and psychological influences play in language retention.

### **Chapter 4: Research Methodology.4.1 Research Design**

Quantitative approach alongside a qualitative approach to collect rich data on the motivational influences.

#### **4.2 Participants**

A total population of 120 undergraduate students of the three public universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were used as the participants, namely, Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST), University of Peshawar, and Gomal University. The sample was of various socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds.

#### **4.3 Data Collection Tools**

Two instruments were used:

1. Questionnaire- intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels will be measured with Likert-scale questions.
2. Semi-structured Interviews- were conducted with 15 students and this was to get deeper understanding and retention practices of them in terms of motivation.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics (mean, percentage, and correlation) were employed to analyze quantitative data, whereas the thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data, which was used to determine common patterns and meanings.

## **Chapter 5: data analysis and findings.**

### **5.1 Overview**

The chapter shows the outcome of the data that was gathered using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews involving 120 undergraduates students in three leader public higher education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This analysis was meant to establish the dependence between motivation and long term English language retention with particular focus on intrinsic and extrinsic motivational variables. Both the quantitative and the qualitative data have been interpreted and analyzed to give a holistic opulent representation of how the motivation works in real learning environment.

### **5.2 Quantitative Data Analysis**

#### **5.2.1 Descriptive Statistics**

Sixty-eight percent of 120 participants expressed high levels of intrinsic motivation and said that they enjoyed learning English and that they wanted to learn it because they needed to get better grades, have an improved career, or be recognized in society. Thirty-two percent were highly motivated by extrinsic factors, including the need to have better grades, a better career, or to be appreciated in the society.

Correlation analysis was done to determine the relationship between motivation type and long-term retention scores. The findings showed that there was a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.67$ ) between intrinsic motivation and long-term retention and moderate correlation between extrinsic motivation and long-term retention ( $r = 0.41$ ). Such results imply that students who have intrinsic motivation towards the English language will have high levels of proficiency even when the formal training stops.

#### **5.2.2 Gender and Institutional Differences.**

More detailed discussion showed interesting institutional patterns in gender. Women students tended to be more intrinsically motivated, and mostly associated English proficiency to their empowerment and their capacity to express themselves. The extra-motives manifested in male students, especially when it comes to employability. Furthermore, students of urban universities were better exposed to English media and online sources which

contributed to their more intrinsic engagement, with the rural students having an inclination to learn English as an academic need.

### **5.2.3 Postgraduate English Usage Frequency.**

Only 42 percent of the respondents on inquiring about their English use after their degrees said that they practiced regularly. The remaining confessed that they only used English occasionally, specifically when they had some formal event or exam. The outcome of this shows a decrease in motivation as soon as external influences are removed, and thus supports the idea of the necessity of instilling the internalized motivation in order to be able to use language in the long run.

### **5.3 Qualitative Data Analysis**

The qualitative stage consisted of 15 semi-structured interviews aimed at the exploration of personal experiences and perceptions regarding motivation and language retention. Thematic analysis identified a number of themes that recur:

1. Long-term Interest and Pleasure -Students who explained the learning of English to be fun, personally enriching or empowering reported higher consistency in language use.
2. External Rewards and Pressure- There are quite a number of participants who confessed that they studied English just to comply with the institutional requirements. As soon as the goal (exam or degree) was reached, they lost their motivation.
3. Environmental Support- Exposure and practice opportunities were highlighted by the students. The fact that those who participated in online discussion, communication using social media or English clubs showed higher retention.
4. Socioeconomic Barriers - Students who were based in rural or underserved settings claimed to be less exposed to English speaking communities and materials, which allowed them to be less motivated and retention was also poor.

### **5.4 Summary of Findings**

Intrinsic motivation is the most predictive variable of long term retention of English.

- Extrinsic motivation is able to induce short term motivation but decreases after some time.

Institutional and environmental factors are very critical in moderation.

- Motivational intensity and sustainability are influenced by cultural and socioeconomic differences.

These results form a basis of comprehending the overall implication of motivation in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 6: Discussion**

### **6.1 Interpretation of Findings**

As the analysis demonstrates, intrinsic motivation, which is learning to have fun, interest, and personal progress, is predominant in long-term memory of the English language among university students. Students who considered language as an identity or intellectual satisfaction were more inclined to use the language outside the classroom. This is in line with the Self-Determination Theory of Deci and Ryan (1985) that suggests that autonomy and competence are necessary to achieve motivation that is sustainable.

Although extrinsic motivation initially was successful in inducing learning behavior, it proved to have short-term effects. Students who were driven by exams, status in society or employment opportunities tended to drop active use of English when the external incentives were removed. This finding supports the argument of Dornyei (2001) that extrinsic motivation can bring about a temporary boost to behavior but it has to be internalized in order to provide long-term effects.

### **6.2 Comparison to the past researches.**

The results are in line with Gardner and Lambert (1972), who defined the existence of integrative and instrumental orientations in SLA. The personal interest and cultural appreciation that led to an elevated retention in this study was integrative motivation, like Chinese (Cheng and Dorsyaki, 2007) and Japanese studies (Kikuchi, 2013).

There, however, are special issues presented by the Pakistani context. Being not widely used beyond the academic institutions, the chance to strengthen motivation with the help of genuine communication is restricted. This leads to dependence on academic environments and low retention as they disappear. Therefore, although motivation theories that are formulated in the Western world are universalistic, they need to be understood in the realities of sociolinguistic and economic Pakistan.

### **6.3 Pedagogical and Institutional implications.**

The paper highlights the necessity of overhauling language teaching in the higher education institutions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Teaching of English needs not be based on

examination-oriented objectives only but it needs to incorporate meaningful, communicative and student-centered approaches.

In building intrinsic motivation, teachers ought to inculcate real life communication activities, storytelling, interactive discussions and technology based learning. In institutions, English clubs, speech contests, podcasts, and online discussion groups should be created where students can use English at their pleasure and delight.

At the administrative level, universities must also reward hard work and ingenuity as opposed to memorization and therefore encourage a sense of self-reliance and competence. English is to be used as the tool of expression and sharing of knowledge instead of being an academic necessity.

#### **6.4 Theoretical Implications**

The research builds upon the Self-Determination Theory to confirm its relevance in a multilingual non-Western setting of education. It demonstrates that autonomy and self-regulation can flourish even under an exam-based system, in case learners derive actual satisfaction in learning. Besides, connecting SDT to the socio-educational framework proposed by Gardner, the paper demonstrates the interaction of internal and external motivational determinants of long-term retention.

The emphasis of this cross-model integration is on the relevance of contextualizing motivational theories in terms of cultural and institutional variation, especially within the South Asian educational systems.

#### **6.5 Limitations and Future Research.**

This study has made a good contribution, but it was constrained by a cross-sectional design and a moderate sample. Longitudinal studies to determine variation in motivation and retention should be incorporated to the future research. The comparative analysis of the public and the private institutions or of the various provinces may allow further insight into the influence of the social and economic variables on motivational patterns. Also, teacher motivation and feedback should be discussed as the factors that influence the persistence of the learners.

### **Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations.**

#### **7.1 Conclusion**

This paper has shown that motivation (particularly, intrinsic motivation) is central to the retention of English in the university students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the long term. Although extrinsic motivation (such as grades or employment opportunities)

only helps to drive short-term performance, it seldom results in long-lasting engagement. Students who find English a fun activity that offers them self-satisfaction keep doing it and refining it even when they are no longer in the classroom.

The study also indicates that motivational sustainability is highly influenced by the environmental support and institutional policies. English rich students were more retained, which implied that context and exposure enhance the effects of motivation. Therefore, to promote motivation, a complex strategy including pedagogical, institutional, and psychological aspects should be considered.

## **7.2 Recommendations**

**Following the findings, there are a number of practical recommendations:**

### **1. Improve Intrinsic Motivation:**

The activities created by teachers should encourage curiosity, creativity and communication, i.e., multimedia integration, debates and interactive projects. The lessons should be more relevant and enjoyable in order to develop an inner motivation.

### **2. Imbalance Internal and External:**

Although extrinsic motivators are effective, they must be accompanied by the possibility to express themselves and make their own decisions, and students will be able to internalize the motivation over time.

### **3. Institutional Support:**

Universities are supposed to establish English speaking zones, clubs or societies, where English may be used in a relaxed manner by students. Motivation can also be increased by recognition programs on constant English users.

### **4. Curriculum Reforms:**

The communicative competence and cultural knowledge as well as digital literacy should be included in English programs by the curriculum designers. Real life application of syllabi should be emphasized on instead of learning grammar by the book.

### **5. Teacher Training:**

**Teachers must be given the training on motivation psychology, engagement methods with students and the current pedagogy to establish favourable learning environments.**

### **6. Future Research:**

Future research must examine the interaction of motivation with cognitive strategies, learner autonomy and using technology. Longitudinal and comparative designs would provide more

information about the context-independent motivational sustainability.

### 7.3 Final Reflection

Those results of the work confirm once again that retention of second language is not only a mental phenomenon but also a motivational and emotional one. In other societies such as Pakistan where English is symbolically powerful, motivation is the key factor between learning and long-term proficiency. With the ability to develop and foster this motivation, teachers and policy makers will be able to turn language learning into not only a mandatory educational experience, but also a life long skill that is based on curiosity, confidence, and personal development.

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