

Motivation, Attitude and Language Proficiency as Predictors of Students Academic Success: A Case Study of Undergraduate Students at the University of Bahrain

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Abstract

The purpose of the study reported here was to investigate the relation between the academic success of a sample of undergraduate Bahraini University students and their attitudes and motivation in learning English. Results of the study demonstrate a positive association between their attained proficiency in the language and their overall academic achievement at the undergraduate level. Their attitudes and motivations towards English did not act as predictors of their academic success. However, only their attained proficiency in the language tended to act as a predictor of academic success at the University. These results were also found to be true of the higher achievers. As far as the less successful students are concerned, their GPA was found to be slightly correlating with their motivation to learn the language. Apart from this, no significant correlation was found between any of the attitudinal/motivational and their proficiency in English. In this report, the background and rationale of the study were first discussed and an analysis and interpretation of the statistical findings were then presented. Finally, the methodological implications of the findings for the less successful learners were considered.

1. Attitudinal and motivational variables in language learning

Attitude is a psychological concept that has been dealt with in various fields of learning. Gardner (1985:9) gave an operational definition of the attitude as an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent. This definition basically includes two major features of an attitude. The first feature is that an attitude is an "evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object." This means that a student reacts to a certain learning situation in a manner that stems from past experience. For example, if a student got an "F" on a foreign language test, his/her reaction to the new foreign language learning situation most probably would be a negative one. This explanation leads to the second feature of "attitude" indicated in Gardner's definition: "inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent." This means that learners' attitude toward learning a foreign language, English in this case, is inferred by knowing their views about their experience in learning this particular foreign language.

Educators concerned with a learner's personality have investigated the role of the student's attitudes in the learning process. As in any other area of learning, foreign language researchers have tried to determine the reasons behind the success of some learners over others in grasping a new language. Lambert and Gardner are the pioneer researchers concerned with the role of a learner's attitude in acquiring English as a second language (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). Other researchers (Wangsothorn, 1975; Oller, et. al, 1977; Wimmer, 1981; and Wong, 1982) conducted a number of studies over years to examine the effects of attitudes on foreign language acquisition. Yet, there is no definite answer about the causes of individual differences in acquiring a foreign language. However, the most crucial factor in learning the new language is the role of the learner (Savignon, 1983). This role is summarized in two major divisions: the learners' language proficiency and learners' attitudes, on the one hand; and motivations and learners' background factors, on the other (Wongsothorn, 1987; Gradman & Hanania, 1991; Wilhelm, 1995).

The studies which consider the relationship between learners' attitudes toward learning English language and their level of proficiency in English could be classified into two categories: studies concerned with learning English as a second language, and studies concerned with learning English as a foreign language. The studies devoted to learning English as a second language were mainly conducted in a non-Arabic-speaking environment. Gardner and Lambert (1972:132) assessed the attitude of learners of

English as a second language in a non-Arabic-speaking environment. They studied one hundred and three Philippino senior high school students. The major objective of the study was to test the researcher's hypothesis that integrative motivation plays a substantial role in the acquisition of a second language. Results of the study indicated that instrumental motivation played a stronger role than integrative motivation in acquiring English as a second language. The researchers also pointed out that integratively oriented students showed considerable motivation and desire to learn English, expressed an interest in foreign languages, had good study habits, reported considerable parental encouragement to learn English, and appeared satisfied with the society and with their role in it.

The findings of Lambert and Gardner's study (1972) were supported by Lukman (1972) who measured the attitude and the language proficiency of sixty Marthi-speaking high school females to see whether these students were integratively or instrumentally motivated and to determine the relationship between the motivational variable and students' language achievement. A t-test showed that the subjects were instrumentally motivated ($t = 6.20, p < .001$). This type of motivation correlated significantly with their Cloze Test scores ($r = .41, p < .001$).

Wangsotorn (1975), Chihara and Oller (1978) also conducted studies in non-Arabic speaking environments. Wangsotorn (1975) compared the relationships of a set of affective variables (Instrumental Attitude, Motivational Intensity, Orientative Attitude, Integrative Attitude, and Ethnocentrism) for 120 Thai College students to their achievement in English. The results showed that significant relationships exist between attitudinal-motivational variables and achievement. In another study, Chihara and Oller (1978) studied 123 Japanese adults enrolled in basic, intermediate and advanced EFL classes at the Osaka, Japan YMCA. The researchers found a relationship between subjects' attitudes and their attained proficiency.

A study involving Belizian primary school students conducted by Gordon (1980) investigated the relationship among measures of language learning, aptitude, social attitudes, their motivation in learning the language and achievement in written English. The results showed a significant correlation between achievement in English on the one hand, and language aptitude ($r = .69$), attitudes toward the learning situation ($r = .38$), integrativeness ($r = .24$), and instrumental motivation ($r = .18$), on the other. The results showed that the subjects were both integratively and instrumentally oriented. Gordon (1980) concluded that language aptitude

was significantly more accurate as a predictor of English achievement than were attitudes and motivation.

Jayatilaka (1982) undertook a multiple correlational study, which revealed that instrumentally motivated students (86% of his subjects) performed better on the language proficiency test than integratively motivated students (34% of his subjects). A regression analysis showed that among the best predictors of subjects' scores on the proficiency test were the desire to live abroad temporarily, desire to live abroad permanently, parental encouragement, authoritarianism, and motivation intensity.

Svanes' study (1987:357) revealed that the motivational factors were found to be of no importance as a predictor of language proficiency for the high achievers. The results of this study do not support Gardner's findings concerning the importance of the integrative motivation. In a study conducted on 101 students taking intensive English at Indiana University, Gradman and Hanania (1991) found that factors such as previous experience of learning English, exposure to and the use of English inside and outside the classroom influenced students' levels of English proficiency.

These backgrounds factors not only influence the learning of language, but they contribute to the learners' motivations and attitudes towards learning the target language. Travelling abroad, watching TV programs, communicating with speakers of English could affect the perceptions of learning English by children. Giota (1995) made a survey of the use of English in a non-academic environment by Swedish 9 years old students. The researcher found that 16% of the children visited English speaking countries; they used English differently, speaking, learning, reading and writing in their leisure time. And 89% of the children felt that their parents helped them with doing homework. And finally, almost all of these children felt that English was important for Swedes to know.

Most of the studies concerned with learning English as a foreign language were carried in an Arabic-speaking environment. Three of these studies were conducted in Saudi Arabia (Mulla, 1979; Surur, 1981, and Al-Shammary, 1984) and two studies in Bahrain (Al-Ansari, 1985 & 1993). Mulla (1979) found that strong relationships existed between students' performance on English proficiency tests and their motivations and attitudes.

Surur' non-correlational study (1981) revealed that 77% of the students liked to study English. 76% of the students had the desire to speak the language like a native speaker and 89% of the students enjoyed studying English. Al-Shammary's study (1984) investigated the development of six hundred Saudi male intermediate and secondary students' motivation to

learn English as a foreign language. Results of his study showed that the attitude toward learning English in the Saudi school context was generally more favorable in the upper three grades (10, 11 and 12) than in the lower three grades (7, 8 and 9). Results of Al-Ansari's studies (1985) revealed low but significant correlations between students' attitudes toward the language and learning about its culture and their achievement in English. No significant correlational values were found for the motivational orientation. However, a significant low correlation was obtained between students' motivational intensity and their achievement. Al-Ansari's study (1993) on Bahrainis' level of English showed that instrumental motivation tended to correlate significantly with the attainment proficiency of all the studied groups. However no significant correlation was found among the high achievers.

2. Background and rationale of the present study

It appears from the results of the studies discussed here that the influence of attitudinal-motivational variables on learners' rate of success tended to vary from one learning context to another. This noticeable degree of variation resided in learners' socio-cultural background. It is worth mentioning that almost all attitudinal and motivational studies carried out since the emergence of the attitudinal-theory tended to be of a correlational type. The present study takes a similar form. It examines the amount of attitudinal and motivational dispositions that Bahraini learners of English have toward learning the language and the extent to which these influence their rate of their academic success at the University.

As is the case in other Gulf States, English is the only foreign language that has had a significant impact on the whole Bahraini educational structure in that it is being taught as a compulsory subject in all state schools. Certainly the classroom is not the only source from which Bahraini learners of English get their language input. Despite the fact that a large number of English-speaking residents are present in various work environments, there is little social integration with the local inhabitants in their homes, in clubs or other social milieu. Yet most middle-class Bahrainis do achieve an acceptable level of both academic and professional proficiency in the language.

However, the fact remains that foreign language learners do not attain the same degree of language competence. There is always a variation in students' approach to the adoption of an attitudinal and motivational outlook towards their learning of the foreign language.

3. Research Method

3.1 Subjects: A total number of 124 students at the University of Bahrain constituted the subjects for the study. These represented 25% of the undergraduate student population. The students were randomly selected from various first- and second-year language courses. They took these common courses of English language as part of their college requirements. In spite of being potential majors of different specialisations, the subjects were very homogeneous in respect of age, nationality, mother tongue and both cultural and educational background.

3.2 Instrumentation: An attitudinal scale was developed. Most of the items in the developed scale were adapted from Gardner and Lambert's Attitudinal/Motivational Scale (1972). The scale contains items which measure the following six variables: Integrative motivation, Instrumental Motivation, Desire to Learn English, Motivational Intensity, Parental Encouragement and Attitude Toward Learning English and its culture. Because of the resemblance between the developed scale and Gardner and Lambert's Attitudinal/Motivational Scale, the reported reliability of coefficient of .85 for Gardner and Lambert's scale (Gardner and Lambert, 1972) will be considered for the developed scale.

3.3 Materials: A questionnaire consisting of the following variables was developed and administered in Arabic. An English version of the questionnaire is given in the Appendix. The components of the questionnaire are as follows:

3.3.1 Attitudes towards learning about a foreign culture: Four negatively worded statements and one positively worded statement were presented to the students. Again, on a 4-point scale the students were asked to indicate their extent of agreement or disagreement with learning about British culture. Their responses to the items would indicate the type of attitudes they hold toward the value of learning about British culture.

3.3.2 Attitudes towards the learning of English: Students indicated on a 4-point scale their extent of agreement or disagreement with the benefits of English language learning. They were asked to respond to five positively worded statements about the value of the learning of English as a foreign language.

3.3.3 Instrumental motivation: This seven-item scale (maximum = 21) assessed the extent to which subjects perceive utilitarian reasons for studying English. Their responses must be descriptive of their feelings. The students were asked to rate on a 3-point scale the extent to which each of the seven instrumental reasons for learning English was descriptive of their feelings. The higher a student's score on this measure is, the more he or she is identified as being instrumentally oriented.

3.3.4 Integrative motivation: This four-item scale (maximum = 12) assessed the extent to which students believe that learning English is important because it enables them to interact and share cultural experiences with the English speaking community. The students were asked to rate on a 3-point scale four integrative reasons for learning English that were descriptive of their feelings. If the students are highly integratively motivated in their learning of English, they will be assumed to place more emphasis on the integrative value of learning it as a foreign language, e.g. a means of learning more about or meeting members of the target community. The higher the student's score on this measure are, the more he or she is identified as being integratively oriented.

3.3.5 Motivational orientation: The scale of this orientation index provided the students with the same eleven alternative reasons for studying English. The students were asked to rank the eleven items as to their relevance to them personally. The higher the scores will be, the more the students are said to be motivationally oriented (both instrumentally and integratively) in their learning of English as a foreign language.

3.3.6 Motivational Intensity: The alternative responses and the multiple-choice statement developed here reflect the degree of commitment the students show in their learning of English. This motivational intensity is measured through both an index of motivation to study English and their desire to learn it. The alternative items were on a 2-point scale while the multiple-choice statements were on a 3-point scale. The statements of the motivationally intensity scale include here measure the extent of work they do for homework, whether they are going to study English and make use of it in the future. Others deal with their preference for English over other school subjects, their eagerness to do the homework, their degree of attention in class and their overall interest in learning and using the language. The items here focus more on measuring students' attitude towards learning English while the items of their desire to learn the language measure an actual effort being made while acquiring the language.

4. Students' University CGPA

Students' end of semester CGPA (cumulative grade point average) was also computed. Their CGPA was used in order to examine the extent to which their academic success at the University and their proficiency in English were predicted by the type and the amount of motivation/attitudinal outlooks they possess while learning the language. Although their CGPA is derived from various University courses, the English language courses, plus the courses taught through the medium of English, comprise 50% of their overall CGPA.

5. Proficiency measures

The students' responses to the items on the questionnaire were correlated with scores obtained from a program-neutral proficiency test. This incorporated a multiple-choice reading comprehension test a multiple choice grammar and usage test, a free composition test doubled marked by two independent examiners and a cloze test in the standard format for reading, with the passage gapped at fifths and the answers marked in accordance with the exact word criterion. Correlations coefficients of .67 (reading), .61 (listening), .65 (grammar), and .63 (composition), all significant at the $p < .01$ level, were obtained between the result of the close test and the results of the proficiency test. The four components of the proficiency test were all equally weighted and each scored out of 25. It needs to be pointed out that the test was not designed as a test of functional or communicative competence. In particular, it did not incorporate any test of oral fluency. Although it did not contain any material relating directly to students' academic programme, it nonetheless tests the 'academic' rather than the 'communicative' component of language proficiency. Since our ultimate purpose was to determine the relationship of a number attitudinal / motivational variables to the students' rate of success at the university, this bias was considered entirely appropriate.

The mean score in the final examination was used as the basis for dividing the students into two groups: high achievers and low achievers, those scoring above the mean being considered high achievers and those scoring below the mean being considered low achievers. Of the 124 students tested, 50 came out as high achievers and 74 as low achievers. the mean scores and standard deviations for the group as a whole and for both low as well as high achievers are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Proficiency scores (out of 100)

Students	Mean	Standard Deviation
All Students	71.67	12.05
Low achievers	59.55	6.09
High achievers	77.40	6.84

The table shows an almost 18 per cent difference between the mean score of the high achievers and the mean of the low achievers. A much narrower spread, of course, would have called into the validity of the distinction between relatively high and relatively low achievers in respect of this sample.

6. Results of the variables tested

An analysis of all the variables tested for the three categories is show in Table 2.

Table 2
Students' mean score of the variables tested

Variables tested	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D.
Att./culture	124	4.00	20.00	11.87	3.27
Att./language	124	5.00	21.00	14.62	3.25
Instrumental motivation	124	6.00	27.00	19.08	4.13
Integrative motivation	124	0.00	16.00	08.69	3.36
Motivation orientation	124	8.00	41.00	27.78	6.53
Motivational intensity	124	13.00	38.00	26.87	4.39
Proficiency score	124	50.00	94.00	70.07	8.05
CGPA	124	0.00	4.00	2.08	0.84

Results of the means show in Table 2 above clearly indicate that the undergraduate student sample tended to hold favourable motivational and attitudinal dispositions while learning the language. However, they tended to show moderate attitudes towards learning about the English culture and held lesser integrative motivation than students learning the language in a bilingual setting. This is expected from students who are still living in their own monolingual and mono-cultural milieu.

To measure the differences in the mean scores of both the high and the low achievers, *t* tests were computed on all the variables. Results of these *t* tests are given in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Students' mean score of the variables tested

Variables tested	Mini.	Maxi.	Mean Dev.	Std.	t
Attitude toward culture (High achievers)	4.00	20.00	11.87	3.27	.78
(low achievers)	4.00	18.00	12.13	3.05	
Attitude toward lang. (High achievers)	8.00	20.00	15.40	2.89	1.77
(low achievers)	5.00	21.00	14.09	3.39	
Instrumental Motivation (High achievers)	6.00	27.00	19.22	4.05	.21
(low achievers)	7.00	27.00	19.00	4.22	
Integrative Motivation (High achievers)	2.00	16.00	8.72	2.77	.21
(low achievers)	0.00	16.00	8.67	3.73	
Orientation Index (High achievers)	8.00	41.00	27.94	5.55	1.62
(low achievers)	10.00	40.00	27.67	7.15	
Motivational intensity (High achievers)	18.00	38.00	27.52	4.14	.25
(low achievers)	13.00	37.00	26.43	4.53	
Proficiency score (High achievers)	70.00	94.00	77.45	8.01	5.33*
(low achievers)	42.90	64.81	53.45	6.73	
CGPA (High achievers)	2.50	3.73	2.92	.30	42.33*
(low achievers)	1.15	2.48	1.65	.31	

**p* < .001

Although there were marginal differences in the mean scores of all the attitudinal and motivational variables tested, no significant differences between the high and low achievers were found. However, significant differences were found in the proficiency and CGPA scores. Such differences are bound to exist, as the two groups of language learners are highly significantly different with respect of their academic performance at the University.

6.1 Bivariate correlations

It is clear in Table 4 that the attitudinal and motivational variables tested here are highly inter-correlated except for the motivational intensity which is

not found to correlate with instrumental motivation. Although students' attitude towards learning about English culture tended to significantly correlate with all the other attitudinal/motivational variables, its correlation is not of high magnitude. This supports the claim made earlier concerning students not living in a bicultural setting. However, the correlation coefficients obtained for students' attitude towards learning the language tended to be more significantly higher. Their instrumental reasons for learning the language were found to be highly correlating with their integrative motivation for learning the language. In spite of these significant bivariate correlations among the attitudinal and motivation variables, most of these were not found to exhibit significant correlations with either students' proficiency score or their academic performance at the University. Their proficiency score was found to moderately correlate only with their attitudes towards learning the language and their desire to learn the language. However, the correlation coefficients are not very high. None of all the other attitudinal and motivational variables is found to significantly correlate with either their CGPA or their proficiency score. The most significant finding here is that students' proficiency score tended to highly correlate with their CGPA ($r = .53, p < .001$). The better their performance on the proficiency test, the better was their academic performance at the undergraduate level.

Table 4

Bivariate correlation coefficients among Proficiency score, Grade Point Average (GPA) and Motivational/attitudinal outlooks (ALL)

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Att culture	–							
2 Att. Language	.24	–						
3 Instrum Motiv.	.23	.30	–					
4 Integ. Motiv	.26	.34	.50	–				
5 Motiv. Orientation	.28	.37	.89	.83	–			
6 Motiv. Intensity	.29	.32	.08	.31	.24	–		
7 Proficiency score	.07	.27	.09	.05	.08	.29	–	
8 CGPA	-.10	.11	.00	-.06	-.02	.08	.53	–

In this table correlations of $\pm .20$ or higher are significant at $p < .05$; correlations of $\pm .25$ or higher are significant at $p < .01$; and correlations of $\pm .30$ or higher are significant at $p < .001$. **(The significant results are bolded)**

Table 5 gives the bivariate correlations obtained for the high achievers while Table 6 gives the results obtained for the low achievers.

Table 5
Bivariate correlation coefficients among Proficiency score, Grade Point Average (GPA) and Motivational/attitudinal outlooks (High achievers)

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Att culture	–							
2 Att. Language	-.07	–						
3 Instrum Motiv.	.18	.23	–					
4 Integ. Motiv	.00	.26	.29	–				
5 Motiv. Orientation	.13	.30	.87	.71	–			
6 Motiv. Intensity	.35	.04	.20	.09	.19	–		
7 Proficiency score	.12	.18	.22	.03	.18	.28	–	
8 CGPA	-.07	-.04	-.04	-.25	-.16	.07	.40	–

In this table correlations of $\pm .28$ or higher are significant at $p < .05$; correlations of $\pm .35$ or higher are significant at $p < .01$; and correlations of $\pm .50$ or higher are significant at $p < .001$. **(The significant results are bolded)**

The results obtained for the high achievers in Table 5 tend to be different than those obtained for the entire sample. Their instrumental and integrative types of motivation are found to correlate highly with each other. Also their motivational intensity tends to correlate with attitudes towards learning about the English culture. Similarly to the whole sample, an almost equal correlation magnitude has been obtained again here between high achievers' proficiency score and their intensive motivation to learn the language ($r = .28, p < .01$). Their CGPA was also found to highly correlate with their proficiency score ($r = .40, p < .001$). Again none of all the other attitudinal and motivational variables is found to correlate with either their CGPA or their proficiency score.

As for the low achievers, all their attitudinal and motivational variables are found to highly significantly and positively correlate with each other. The levels of significance of most of the correlation coefficients obtained are also high. These results are given in Table 6.

Table 6
Bivariate Correlation Coefficients Among Proficiency Score,
Grade Point Average (GPA) and Motivational/attitudinal Outlooks
(Low achievers)

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Att culture	–							
2 Att. Language	.50	–						
3 Instrum Motiv.	.27	.34	–					
4 Integ. Motiv	.43	.39	.61	–				
5 Motiv. Orientation	.39	.40	.91	.88	–			
6 Motiv. Intensity	.27	.44	.37	.31	.38	–		
7 Proficiency score	.15	.22	-.01	.08	.03	.25	–	
8 CGPA	-.03	-.10	-.00	-.05	-.02	.37	.11	–

In this table correlations of $\pm .22$ or higher are significant at $p < .05$; correlations of $\pm .27$ or higher are significant at $p < .01$; and correlations of $\pm .39$ or higher are significant at $p < .001$. **(The significant results are bolded)**

What is significant in the above table is that low achievers' CGPA does not correlate with their CGPA. On the contrary, it tends to slightly significantly correlate with their motivational intensity ($r = .37$, $p < .01$). Their proficiency score is also found to slightly correlate with the motivational intensity variable ($r = .25$, $p < .05$).

6.2 Multivariate correlations

Tables 7 and 8 show the results of the stepwise regression predicting students' CGPA for the whole sample and for the high achievers, respectively, using the component scores of the CGPA as independent variables. Note that only the proficiency scores contributed enough to the prediction of students' CGPA to be maintained in the linear model. The same appears to be true only with regard to the high achievers' CGPA (0.5 probability criterion was utilised).

Table 7
Stepwise regression of the test scores
Onto the overall GPA (forward selection) – All the sample

Dependent variable	Entry order	Independent variables	Partial <i>r</i> -square
CGPA	1	Proficiency	.284
	–	Other variables	–
Total <i>r</i> -square			.284



Table 8
Stepwise regression of the test scores
Onto the overall GPA (forward selection) – High achievers

Dependent variable	Entry order	Independent variables	Partial r-square
CGPA	1	Proficiency	.186
	–	Other variables	–
Total r-square			.186

7. Discussion of the results and implications

Results of the study show that the undergraduates' composite CGPA is highly correlated with their proficiency score. This was also seen to be true with the CGPA of the high achievers. None of the attitudinal/motivational variables tested is found to correlate with their CGPA or their proficiency score. These results were inconsistent with the findings of the studies of Wangsotorn, 1975; Chihara and Oller, 1978; Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Lukmani, 1972; Gordon, 1980. But they were consistent with the findings of Svanes (1987). It is evident that in spite of Bahraini undergraduates' possession of favourable attitudes and motivations to learn English these variables were not found to act as predictors of academic success at the University. Their success is determined by their proficiency attainment in the language. In other words, the more proficient in the language they are the higher was their academic achievement in the undergraduate courses, most of which are in English language courses and literature courses.

Although a slight positive significant correlation was obtained between low achievers' motivational intensity and their proficiency score, together with their CGPA, the results of the stepwise analyses revealed no significant finding when all the variables were combined together. It appears that low achievers; CGPA is perhaps predicted by variables other than those tested here. It is also evident that academic success of undergraduate students at the University of Bahrain is not significantly predicted by affective variables but by the cognitive characteristics that reside in the learners themselves. affective variables may prove to be effective at the early stages of learning the language as has been the case with the earlier studies but their effect of such variables may start to diminish at upper stages of foreign language study. Although, as was indicated in the introductory remarks, Bahrain approximates in many respects to an ESL environment, integration and acculturation are not significant factors influencing the level of attainment

among university students. It is true that they may possess certain motivational reasons for learning English, but as long as their motivation is not fulfilled outside the institutional setting, its influence on their performance is almost nonexistent, for they generally lack opportunities to come into contact with the language for actual communicative functions. Even if such opportunities exist, learners might not be able to make use of such opportunities, either because of the existence of social barriers between the two groups or because of the learners' unwillingness to accept social integration.

Opportunities to become communicatively engaged in the language are difficult to come by, particularly since social integration between members of the same group can take place through the vernacular language and this obviously inhibits learners from manipulating the target language in its contextual functions. Social integration with speakers of the foreign language is less easily achieved when learners themselves are mono-lingually and mono-culturally oriented and tend to live within their own monolingual and mono-cultural community. The learning of French as a second language in a country such Canada constitutes an entirely different socio-linguistic phenomenon. Second language learners there might be undergoing both socio-cultural and economic pressures, if not political pressures, to acquire the second language. Acquisition of the second language becomes a necessity for such learners and probably becomes a much easier task than the acquisition of English in Bahrain since opportunities for becoming engaged in social interaction with speakers of French are readily available and so can be linguistically exploited.

Bahraini learners of English may well be aware of the attitudinal and motivational reasons for learning the language, but such awareness is probably less evident in the earlier stages of learning the language when it is treated merely as a compulsory school subject. The economic and educational fulfillment of the attitudinal and motivational variables are probably more evident at the tertiary learning levels where learners have become mature enough to perceive the influential role the language can play in their future career prospects. By this time, however, the level of proficiency in the language will have already been established, since learners in Bahrain will already have been exposed to English instruction for a period of not less than ten years.

The present findings call into question the validity of the motivational/attitudinal theory initiated by Gardner and Lambert (1972:3). Their theory seems to be workable only in situations where learners directly experience the socio-psychological benefits of living in a bilingual and

bicultural type of environment. Such a theory does not have any significant value in a monocultural setting such as that of Bahrain in which the mother tongue and the culture of the learners impose no social constraints or social inhibitions.

The findings of the present study do not, of course in any way, challenge the view that attitudinal and motivational dispositions can be major factors influencing the level of achievement in foreign or second language learning. It is clear, however, that for motivational and attitudinal variables to act as predictors of achievement, students need to develop appropriate motivational and attitudinal orientation to a much greater extent than they appear to do in Bahrain and at an early stage. Learning a foreign language such as English with natural and world-wide recognition is of vital importance for young Bahrainis and their motivational approaches to the learning task must be developed. The fascinating challenge for these students, however, is to keep their own cultural and linguistic identity while mastering a foreign language. Whether, with the proper attitudinal orientation and motivation, one can become bilingual without losing one's identity, however, is a question on which we must, for the time being, reserve judgement.

The pedagogical implications derived from this study are obvious. Students need to improve their proficiency in the language in order to attain a better academic performance at the University. Specialists in the pedagogy of teaching the foreign language should come up with alternative learning and teaching strategies by which low achievers' proficiency deficiencies can be better cared for. A teaching strategy adopted by Duff (1991) in his evaluation of three Hungarian-English dual-language schools is a strategy which can be applied to the foreign language learning situation in Bahrain. She (1991:468) is of the opinion that many students have a great deal of difficulty following the explanations of native speakers who are qualified and often have had experience teaching their subject material, but who lack experience in teaching non-native speakers of English. They felt these teachers were unaware of the difficulties faced by students studying in the second language: e.g. learning new vocabulary, listening to different dialects of English, following very rapid, colloquial speech, or technical or abstract explanations. This finding suggests that teachers should modify their speech to facilitate students' comprehension and acquisition.

We should learn a lesson from Oxford and Ehrman' study (1995) on adults' language learning strategies in an intensive foreign language program in the United States which certainly has concrete implications to the current study. They found that cognitive strategy use was positively

related to teacher perceptions of FSI (Foreign Service Institute) candidates and to actual proficiency outcomes in speaking. Students who were viewed as effective and as having a high aptitude tended to use cognitive strategies. Students who were viewed by teachers as relying more on effort than aptitude appear to have been less frequent users of cognitive strategies than those whose performance was judged as more aptitude-based. ... Students who used cognitive strategies were better educated, had studied more languages previously, and were more persistent than others. "... Cognitive strategy use was significantly linked with the MLAT's (Modern Language Aptitude Test) number learning scale, which requires analysis of input and logical remembering. ... Users of cognitive strategies appeared on the AS (Affective Survey) to be confident, positive, highly aroused or energized, strongly motivated, yet comfortable with language learning" (1995:379-380). They went on to add that "lower-aptitude students feel their lack of ability and in some way strive to compensate for it. Teachers could encourage lower-aptitude students to overcome their learning obstacles by the use of compensation strategies, like guessing, predicting, choosing a familiar topic, and circumlocution (talking around a word). Unfortunately, many lower-aptitude students are not natural risk-takers and may be cognitively somewhat rigid. Affective strategies such as positive self-talk might help them achieve sufficient flexibility to be able to use compensation strategies" (1995:380). The conclusion learnt from their study is that the interaction of all individual characteristics... with instructional treatment or methodology must be the subject of focused exploration in the future (381). Finally I believe that it is also the teacher who can give a student the feeling that he is an important part of a learning group and that both his art and skill make learning of a language a subject to look forward to. It is the teacher's perception that acts as a driving force that no doubt helps in promoting the desirable habits and the right attitudes needed for a successful language learning experience.

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APPENDIX 1 (A copy of the questionnaire)

Section A

Please put a tick in one of the five boxes indicating your extent of agreement or disagreement to each item.

	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree
Students' attitude towards learning about the English culture				
1. The English language textbook should cover all possible cultural aspects of Britain.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Learning the culture of a foreign nation forms a threat to our own cultural values.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. The English language textbook should include only those cultural features necessary for learning.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. The learning of a foreign culture forms a threat to the stability of family life in Bahrain.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. I am so satisfied with my own cultural values that I do not see any need to learn about any foreign culture.	_____	_____	_____	_____

Students' attitude toward learning of English as a foreign language

1. We have to learn English if we want to get to know those who speak the language.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Getting to know those who speak English will have some useful benefits for our country.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. The expertise of those who speak English has contributed to the development of our country.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Bahrain benefits from those who speak English in promoting its technical and industrial schemes.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. It is advisable that Bahrainis should make some effort to meet with those speak the language.	_____	_____	_____	_____

Section B

I am learning English because

1. I do not consider one to be really educated unless he has the capability to communicate in English.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. It will be useful in getting a good job.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. It is socially desirable that a person should know at least one foreign language besides his language.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. It is one of the major school subjects.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. The language used nowadays in science and technology is English.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. I need it in order to pursue my higher studies.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. It is the principal language of communication among most countries of the world.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I am learning English because

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. It will make me able to think and behave as foreign language learners do. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. It will enable me to meet and converse with those who speak English. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. It will enable me to understand foreign languages speakers more and get to know their social habits. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. It makes it easier for me to make friends among those who speak the language. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Section C

Read the following items and put a tick in the box that describes your feeling best.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| | usually | sometimes | never | |
| 1. Before the English language lesson, I ... do my homework | _____ | _____ | _____ | |
| 2. Before the English language lesson, I ... read through the previous lesson. | _____ | _____ | _____ | |
| | strongly agree | agree | disagree | strongly disagree |
| 3. I find the subject of English very interesting. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. I think English should be taught to all students at all levels. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5. If I knew enough English, I would read foreign books. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6. During English classes, I find myself absorbed in the subject matter. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 7. Whenever I have homework in English, I do it before other homework. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 8. I prefer English much more than most other school subjects. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 9. I comparison with other school subjects, I work harder for English. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 10. After my secondary education, I will continue to improve my English. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 11. On average, the time I spend each week studying English is about () hours. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 12. If English was not taught at my school, I would attend a course. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | always | sometimes | never | |
| 13. I prefer to sit at the back of the classroom during my English classes. | _____ | _____ | _____ | |
| 14. I study English without accomplishing much (<i>negatively worded</i>). | _____ | _____ | _____ | |
| 15. I learn grammatical rules and structural items without really understanding them (<i>negatively worded</i>). | _____ | _____ | _____ | |
| 16. Whether I like English or not, I work hard to get a good grade. | _____ | _____ | _____ | |

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