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LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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Summary.—This paper examined a number of variables pertaining to the socio-cultural outlooks of 412 young Arab students learning English as a foreign language and the relation of their attitudes and motivations prior to their learning of the language. Analysis indicated clearly that certain variables appeared to be correlated with their attitudes and motivations more than others. Most of the students had maids in their homes, and the presence of a maid was associated with most of the psycholinguistic variables tested. Their previous learning experience of the language was positively correlated as was their knowledge of English stories. Having some sort of English games had the highest correlations (.25 to .41). Potential pedagogical implications of these results were discussed.

Attitude is a psychological concept that has been dealt with in various fields of learning. Gardner (1985, p. 9) gave a definition of an individual's attitude as being 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. The first feature is that 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 should largely stem from past experience. For example, if students receive an "F" on a foreign language test, their reaction to the new foreign language learning situation most probably would be negative (Oskamp, 1977). 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, for instance, people's attitudes toward learning a foreign language might be inferred from knowing their views about their experience in learning the particular foreign language.

Educators concerned with students' personalities have investigated the role of attitudes in the learning process. As in other areas of learning, foreign language researchers have tried to evaluate the reasons behind the success of some students 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 a second or foreign language (Al-Ansari, 1985). Other

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researchers (Spolsky, 1969; Wangsothorn, 1975; Oller, Baca, & Vigil, 1977; Wimmer, 1981; Wong, 1982) have conducted a number of studies of the effects of attitudes on foreign language acquisition. Yet, there is no definite answer about the bases of individual differences in acquiring a foreign language. All researchers agree, however, that the most crucial factor in learning a new language is the role of the learner (Savignon, 1983).

A foreign language learner might be either integratively or instrumentally oriented toward learning the new language. Gardner and Lambert (1972) provide definitions of integratively and instrumentally motivated students. They (1972) define an integratively oriented student as "... the student who wishes to learn more about the other cultural community because he is interested in the community in an open-minded way, to the point of eventually being accepted as a member of that other group" (p. 132). On the other hand, Gardner and Lambert (1972) define the instrumentally motivated student as "... the person who has a desire to gain social recognition or economic advantages through knowledge of a foreign language" (p. 132).

Most of the studies in the literature reviewed focus on the relationship between learners' attitudes toward learning English language and their proficiency in English. These studies fall into two categories, one of studies concerned with learning English as a foreign language, the other of studies concerned with learning English as a second language. The first category includes studies conducted in both an Arabic-speaking environment and a non-Arabic-speaking environment. Only a few studies were conducted in the Arabian Gulf region where the present study was carried out. Two of these studies involved Bahraini participants. Results of Al-Ansari's study (1985, 1993) on Bahrainis' English proficiency showed that instrumental motivation correlated significantly with the attained proficiency of all groups studied. No significant correlation, however, was found between these variables for the high achievers. Three other studies were conducted in Saudi Arabia (Mulla, 1979; Surur, 1981; Al-Shammmary, 1984). Mulla (1979) reported that relationships were strong between students' performance on tests of English proficiency and their motivations and attitudes. Al-Shammmary (1984) investigated the development of 600 Saudi male intermediate and secondary students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language. His results 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). The relationship between attitude and motivation to learn English was not as high as some previous researchers reported. Surur (1981) found 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.

Studies in non-Arabic-speaking environments were conducted by Wang-

sothorn (1975), Chihara and Oller (1978), and Jayatilaka (1982) who investigated the relationship between motivational orientation and attained proficiency. Testing 120 Thai college students, Wangsothorn (1975) compared the associations of affective variables (Instrumental Attitude, Motivational Intensity, Orientative Attitude, Integrative Attitude, and Ethnocentrism) with achievement in English. There were significant relationships between attitudinal-motivational variables and achievement. In another study, Chihara and Oller (1978) examined 123 Japanese adults enrolled in basic, intermediate, and advanced classes in English as a Foreign Language at the Osaka, Japan YMCA. The researchers found a relationship between subjects' attitudes and their attained proficiency. Jayatilaka (1982) undertook a multiple correlational study which indicated that instrumentally motivated students (86% of his subjects) performed better on the language proficiency test than the integratively motivated students (34% of his subjects). A regression analysis showed that among the best predictors of subjects' scores on the proficiency test were desire to live abroad temporarily, desire to live abroad permanently, parental encouragement, authoritarianism, and intensity of motivation. Jayatilaka investigated these predictors among children who lacked experience in learning English formally, while the present study's participants were individuals who will learn English at a later time, and Jayatilaka's participants had a lot of experience in learning English.

Studies concerning learning English as a second language were done by Gardner and Lambert (1972), Lukmani (1972) and Gordon (1980). Gardner and Lambert (1972, p. 132) assessed the attitude of 103 Philippino senior high school students who were learning English as a second language. They tested the hypothesis that integrative motivation plays a substantial role in the acquisition of a second language. Their results indicated instrumental motivation accounted for far more of the variance in performance 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 society and their role in it. Yet, in Gardner and Lambert's study instrumental motivation appeared to correlate better with language acquisition than did integrative motivation.

Lukmani (1972) supported these findings. Lukmani measured the attitude and the language proficiency of 60 Marthi-speaking high school girls to see whether these students were integratively or instrumentally motivated and to assess the relationship between the motivational variable and students' language achievement. There was a significant correlation between attained proficiency and instrumental motivation. This type of motivation correlated significantly with their Cloze Test scores ($r = .41$, $p < .001$).

A study involving Belizian primary school students conducted by Gordon (1980) investigated the correlations among measures of language learning, aptitude, social attitudes, the students' motivation in learning the language, and their achievement in written English. The analysis showed a significant correlation between achievement in English and language aptitude ($r = .69$), attitudes toward the learning situation ($r = .38$), and integrativeness ($r = .24$), and scores on instrumentality ($r = .18$). These values suggested 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.

Although all of the above studies investigated the effects of attitudes and motivation on foreign language acquisition, there is no definite answer about sources of individual differences in acquiring a foreign language. However, many educators agree that the most crucial factor in learning the new language is the characteristics of the learner (Savignon, 1983). In this regard, Wangsothorn (1987, p. 31) stated that success in learning a foreign language depends on several identifiable variables. The literature summarizes these variables in two major divisions: first, the learners' proficiency and attitudes and motivations, and second learners' background factors (Wangsothorn, 1987; Gradman & Hanania, 1991; Wilhelm, 1995). In a study of 101 students taking intensive English at Indiana University, Gradman and Hanania (1991) stated that factors such as previous experience in learning English and exposure to and the use of English inside and outside the classroom influenced students' proficiency in English. We have looked at similar background factors. These include exposure to the use of English at home, for example, playing with games containing English words and hearing or reading simplified stories in English or hearing and reacting to spoken English in places where English is used by the people present, such as waitresses at fast food restaurants, and learners' past formal experience in learning English. We assume that such background experiences might have significant effects on children's expectations toward learning English at school.

These background factors should not only influence the learning of language, they also should contribute to the learners' motivations and attitudes toward learning the target language. Travelling abroad, watching TV programs, and communicating with speakers of English influence the perceptions of learning English by children. Giota (1995) made a survey of the use of English in a nonacademic environment by 318 10-yr.-old Swedish students. The researcher found that 16% of the children visited an English-speaking country, and they used English differently, speaking, learning, reading, and writing in their leisure time. Of the children, 89% felt that their parents helped them with doing homework. Finally, almost all of these children felt that English was important for Swedes to know (Giota, 1995).

Thus, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the expectations of 9-yr.-old Bahraini children toward learning English. Furthermore, the correlations of these children's expectations toward learning English and some of their sociocultural factors were also examined.

METHOD

Participants

Two hundred and three boys and 209 girls enrolled in 19 elementary state schools were chosen to participate. Almost all the participants were nine years old and attended Grade 3. In Grade 3, students study all subjects (Arabic, Religious Study, Social Study, Mathematics, and Fine Arts) except English, which is taught in Grade 4 and upward. In addition, most of these students were from lower middle-class families who had non-Arabic-speaking housemaids from India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Indonesia, Nepal, and Ethiopia.

Tests

An attitudinal scale was developed. Most of the items in the developed scale were based on Gardner and Lambert's Attitudinal/Motivational Scale (1972).² The scale contains 30 items which measure the following six variables: Integrative Motivation, Instrumental Motivation, Desire to Learn English, Motivational Intensity, Parental Encouragement, and Attitude Toward Learning English in School. Respondents were asked to rate each item on a 3-point Likert-type scale anchored by 3: like and 1: dislike. Respondents who answered "uncertain" received 2 points. The maximum score on this measure is 90 points. A respondent with a higher score is identified as having a more positive attitude toward learning English as a foreign language than a respondent with a lower score. The test required 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Given the resemblance between the developed scale and Gardner and Lambert's Attitudinal/Motivational Scale, the reported reliability coefficient of .85 for Gardner and Lambert's scale (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) was considered a reasonable goal for the developed scale. The Arabic version of the scale has a test-retest reliability of .79, which was obtained by administering the translated questionnaire to 50 Bahraini children in Grade 3. The face validity was attested to by the four experts in the field of teaching English as a foreign language, asked to comment on the various items. Upon receiving the experts' comments, some items were modified and others were either changed or omitted. A total number of 30 children in Grade 3 were

²The authors acknowledge the kind permission of the authors to translate and reproduce their items for this research project.

asked about the length, relevancy, and the language of the translated items. Based on the students' comments, some items were reworded.

Procedure

Upon receiving permission from the Bahraini Ministry of Education enabling the researcher to conduct the study in the elementary schools, 19 schools were contacted. Two hundred and three boys and 209 girls were randomly chosen from lists of all students enrolled in the final year of science and literary branches to participate. After the participants were selected, visits to schools were scheduled to administer the questionnaire. In the schools the researcher arranged to meet the selected participants in that school in a private room, usually the school library. Before the participants answered the questionnaires, they were instructed on how to express their attitudes toward the questionnaire items and asked questions about their academic backgrounds. Before entering the collected data into the computer for analysis, each participant was assigned a number. After that the scores from the attitudinal or motivational questionnaire were computed using the SPSS program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Means and standard deviations for the questionnaire scores for motivational-attitudinal variables of all respondents are shown in Table 1. The mean score obtained for the tested variables indicates that the students in Grade 3 of these Bahrain primary schools tend to hold strong positive attitudinal and motivational outlooks toward learning English as a foreign language. A total score of 84 out of a possible 90 appears to be a clear indication that these Bahraini learners of English tend to approach their instruction in English with strong positive attitudes and motivation. Note that the variance is small.

However, certain psycholinguistic factors may also be related to certain sociocultural variables associated with learners' own social and cultural sur-

TABLE 1
MEAN SCORES AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR ATTITUDINAL
AND MOTIVATIONAL VARIABLES TESTED (N = 412)

Variable	M	SD
Attitudes Toward Learning English in School	13.7	1.7
Desire to Learn English	13.9	1.5
Parental Encouragement	13.9	1.6
Motivational Intensity	14.1	1.4
Integrative Motivation	14.1	1.5
Instrumental Motivation	14.5	1.0
Total	84.0	6.9

*For each individual variable the maximum of 15 indicates a very favourable attitude.

rounding. The means and standard deviations for questionnaire scores on such social and educational variables are shown in Table 2. Here again the mean scores obtained for the variables associated with students' social and previous learning background indicate their possession of favourable social and academic backgrounds which presumably should clearly enhance their learning of English as a school subject. Means and variances are very similar.

TABLE 2
MEAN SCORES AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR SOCIOCULTURAL VARIABLES ($N=412$)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Maid at home	1.4	.5
Foreign countries	1.4	.5
Foreign friends	1.5	.5
Previous learning experience	1.5	.5
Fast food restaurants	1.6	.5
Nursery	1.7	.5
English stories	1.7	.5
English games	1.7	.4

Table 3 gives the Pearson correlation matrix for the attitudinal-motivational variables. All correlation coefficients were significant and positive. All the tested attitudinal-motivational variables intercorrelate significantly with each other but were of moderate magnitude. Such results suggest the importance of English as a foreign language in the Bahraini milieu and the type of

TABLE 3
PEARSON CORRELATION* MATRIX FOR ATTITUDINAL-MOTIVATIONAL VARIABLES ($N=412$)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Desire to Learn English							
2. Attitudes Toward Learning English in School	.64						
3. Parental Encouragement	.56	.53					
4. Motivational Intensity	.57	.58	.48				
5. Integrative Motivation	.50	.48	.48	.61			
6. Instrumental Motivation	.52	.47	.48	.61	.61		
7. Total	.80	.80	.77	.67	.69	.67	

* $p < .001$.

positive attitudinal-motivational presuppositions that young learners may hold before they commence to learn the language. An obvious reason for these correlations is that young learners of English have ample opportunities, which likely enhance their appreciation of the value of learning the language. It is the dominance of English as a compulsory school subject and the rapid increase in use of English in daily life situations which appear to act as a driving force by which learners come to have high expectations and motivation

to do well in English. The language is seen as a communicative tool by which better prestige in life can be reached.

Table 4 gives the Pearson correlation matrix for these sociocultural variables. Although the correlation coefficients in most cases are low, they are significantly greater than zero as the N is large. It is interesting to note that the correlations obtained for variables 6 and 4 and variables 1 and 4 are significantly greater than zero. A possible explanation for this is that these three variables characterize the learners' family milieu.

TABLE 4
PEARSON CORRELATION* MATRIX FOR SOCIOCULTURAL VARIABLES ($N=412$)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Maid								
2. Foreign countries	.26							
3. Foreign friends	.20	.25						
4. Previous learning experience	.30	.30	.20					
5. Fast food restaurants	.37	.30	.16	.26				
6. Nursery	.41*	.22	.15	.51*	.28			
7. English stories	.20	.20	.19	.22	.27	.16		
8. English games	.20	.20	.18	.16	.30	.29	.31	

* $p < .001$.

Summary

The Pearson product-moment intercorrelations of the two sets of factors are presented in Table 5. A number of inferences can be made from inspecting the correlations. The first is that whether there is a foreign maid present in the household is significantly correlated with most of the attitudinal or motivational variables. However, it is interesting to note that learners' instrumental motivation is not associated with whether there is a maid in the home although it might be expected that having a foreign maid also suggests higher income and willingness on the part of educated parents to encourage contact with the English-speaking world. Young learners' integrative motivation for learning English is significantly associated with having a foreign maid at home for English may be a common language between a child and a housemaid. This should not be overly interpreted, however, as this correlation was of low magnitude ($r = .15$) as are those for the learners' attitude toward school. Even children's motivation to learn the English with parental encouragement is very small (.13) and accounts for a very small amount of common variance.

Other correlations are of like magnitude or smaller, suggesting these measures are not sensitive perhaps for young children in Grade 3 or the children have not been influenced much by such experiences as visits to other countries or having friends from foreign countries.

TABLE 5
PEARSON PRODUCT-MOMENT CORRELATIONS* FOR TWO SETS OF FACTORS (N = 412)

Variable	Attitudes Toward Learning English in School	Desire to Learn English	Instrumental Motivation	Integrative Motivation	Motivational Intensity	Parental Encouragement	Total
Maid	.10	.10	.05	.15	.12	.13	.14
Foreign countries	.10	.03	-.02	.07	.10	.12	.07
Foreign friends	.04	.10	.04	.08	.08	.06	.06
Previous learning experience	.13	.08	.11	.16	.12	.12	.15
Fast food restaurants	.06	-.01	.04	.10	.07	.06	.04
Nursery	.05	.02	.01	.06	.08	.13	.08
English stories	.08	.02	.00	.14	.14	.20	.14
English games	.13	.15	.11	.20	.16	.24	.20

*Correlations of .1 and above are significant ($p = .05$) as are r s of .12 and .16, but given the large number of calculations, one may note that a Bonferroni adjustment of $p_{.05}$ corrects to an equivalence of $p = .0007$.

An important observation of these associations of learners' previous learning experience of the language with these attitudinal and motivational variables is their low magnitudes. But, as one looks at the relative magnitudes, factors noted in prior research enter into the somewhat larger correlations. Parental attitudes of support and encouragement and probably their own educational backgrounds would be involved in the exposure of these children in Grade 3 to preschool to English stories and English games, all of which involve more active use of English. These may be expected to facilitate motivation to learn English as the children might well acquire some knowledge of the English alphabet, basic lexical and structural items, together with simple arithmetic. Such experience might increase openness to reading and learning about another culture. This should be explored in further research with an eye toward how such information, if verified, may be used in related spheres.

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