



Self-Efficacy, Learner Autonomy and Motivation in Second Language Learning: A Case Study of Pakistani Universities

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Abstract- This study was an attempt to find a correlation and impact of self-efficacy, learner autonomy and motivation in second language learning through a concurrent triangulation mixed methods research on a sample of some purposively selected Pakistani universities undergraduates' students studying English as their compulsory or allied subject. It used an adapted questionnaire to check the perceptions of these students about these variables. A self-structured, experts validated and verified achievement test was used to check the impact of the above mentioned variables on second language learning and some semi-structured interviews of English teachers were also taken for eliciting their opinions and responses for the correlation and impact of these variables on second language learning. The study used self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997), Learner autonomy (Little, 2007) and Dornyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System theories as the framework of the research. The results showed a significant correlation between self-efficacy, learner autonomy and motivation and the impact of these variables on learning a second language was also high. The results suggested that if proper attention is given on developing students' self-efficacy beliefs and allowed them to be gradually autonomous in their studies while motivation remain at the central point, then not only the academic results can be remarkable but the students can also be extraordinary in the other matters of life.

Key Words: Self-Efficacy, Learner Autonomy, Motivation, English Language Learning

I. INTRODUCTION:

Motivation has been regarded an important factor for language learners in language acquisition (e.g., Gardner, 1985, 2001, 2010; Dörnyei, 2003, 2005; Dörnyei& Ushioda, 2011; Noels, 2003, 2005; Ushioda, 2007, 2009 as cited in Shahbaz and Liu, 2012). Brewer and Burgess (2005) consider motivation as the primary and most essential part of the language learning, but the fact is that it remained the "neglected heart" of language teaching (Rost, 2006). Motivation is considered as a key factor towards successful acquisition of language and is defined as "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language" (Gardner, 1985, p. 10 cited in Xu 2008). Second language learning is regarded as a dull and boring activity in many contexts and Cook (2000) believes that three factors namely age, personality and motivation can affect language acquisition yet motivation is regarded as the basic impulse to boost this process and can indeed work as the stimulating force to help sustain this long process; as all other major factors which are involved in L2 acquisition presuppose that motivation is the basic element (Dörnyei, 1998), but if motivation is insufficient, students of even remarkable caliber cannot get long-term targets and dedicated teaching and appropriate curricula fail to play their role towards their achievement (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998, as cited in Huang 2007).

Learner autonomy has evolved as a crucial part of education over the last few years (see Lamb and Reinders, 2008; Vieira, 2009; or Benson, 2011). It has been defined as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (Holec, 1981). 'Bergen definition reveals that "learner autonomy is characterized by the readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes. This definition entails a capacity and willingness on the part of the learner to act independently and in cooperation with others as a socially responsible person (Dam, 1995: 1). It takes into account the social aspect of one's being as one is supposed to act within a given society and his/her actions do have their effects on the society also. Jiménez

Raya et al. (2007) consider it as “the competence to develop as a self-determined, socially responsible and critically aware participant in (and beyond) educational environments, within a vision of education as (inter)personal empowerment and social transformation”, where autonomy is taken as a source of empowerment not only of oneself but of the society as well. It puts a responsibility over autonomous learners’ shoulders of facilitating the other human beings. More recently Illés (2012, p. 509) defines Learner Autonomy as the “capacity to become competent speakers of the target language who are able to exploit the linguistic and other resources at their disposal effectively and creatively”.

Learner autonomy can have a number of ways through which an autonomous learner can express himself/herself. Two of which have already been identified (cf. Holec, 1981; Little, 1995). Benson (2011) added a third way to the representation of the concept of learner autonomy which is the political version of learner autonomy; the two being psychological and technical (cf. Holec, 1981; Little, 1991). In the sense of learner autonomy, political autonomy is taken as one’s capacity of ruling oneself.

There has also been a lot of criticism over the notion of learner autonomy as Cuypers (1992) is of the opinion that we cannot presume learner autonomy as the ‘primary principle’ of education. He goes on to say that it should be substituted by the concept of “caring about something” (p. 9) in which something can be oneself and this realization becomes the real goal of education. This idea is a restricted one as identity is one of the elements of learner autonomy and if it is fostered, identity would be strengthened reciprocally. As learners would better be able to understand each other, define and explore themselves through learner autonomy, so they would better be able to take care of themselves (Little, 1994; Benson, 2012).

Self-efficacy is ‘a judgment of one’s ability to organize and execute given types of performances’ (Bandura, 1997, p. 21). It is also a belief in one’s ability to accomplish something challenging and that one can grow with extended effort (Gaumer Erickson & Noonan, 2016). It has four elements (Bandura, 1994); Performance Accomplishments, Mastery experience, Social Persuasion and Somatic and Emotional States where performance accomplishment is the memory of the negative or positive past experience for a similar task which is again being performed in present; Mastery Experience deals with seeing similar people doing and managing similar tasks successfully and Social Persuasion with the assurances that one has the capabilities to manage tasks and activities effectively and Somatic and Emotional States refer to one’s strengths and capabilities. Self-efficacy has been regarded as the most influential variable among the Individual variables (Bandura, 2006). Zhong (2013) believes that in order to motivate student towards speaking an L2, self-efficacy plays an important role. Bilge, Cetin and Dost (2014) examined the need of self-efficacy in school education. Ersanal (2015) suggests that high level self-efficacy allows the individual not to lose his/her courage in the odd contexts. In 2016, Sinan and Jongur studied the relationship of self-efficacy with mathematic performance and concluded that both have close positive impact over each other. Stennis (2016) measured the self-efficacy of different ethnic groups which resulted that there are no differences of self-efficacy among the groups. A study conducted by Sardegna, Lee and Kusey (2018) reported that high self-efficacy level resulted in the improved pronunciation while Zahibi (2018) says that low self-efficacy negatively affects second language learning.

Self-efficacy is also believed to have association with motivation and motivational self-system of Dörnyei (e.g. Oxford 2011). Chircov (2009) highlighted the importance of motivation and self-efficacy. A construct claimed that increased level of self-efficacy can result in increased motivation of the student (Subtirelu, 2013; Zhong, 2013). Motivation has also been regarded an essential developmental factor along with self-efficacy (Ghanizadeh & Rostami, 2015) but if the leaning needs of the students are not met, the students may be left behind in their motivation and performance (Baygi, Ghonsooly, & Ghanizadeh, 2017). Studies have also been conducted showing the interplay of self-efficacy and learner autonomy (Cotterall & Crabbe, 1999). It has been pointed out that self-awareness or self-efficacy is the key to learner autonomy (Cotterall & Crabbe, 1999, p.161).

Purpose of the Study

This study was an attempt to show the correlation between self-efficacy, learner autonomy and motivation in learning English as a second language. It also attempted to check the impact of these variables on learning English as a second language.

Research questions

1. How do Self-Efficacy, Learner Autonomy and Motivation correlate with one another in learning English as a second language at university level in Pakistan?

2. How do Self-efficacy, Learner Autonomy and Motivation play any role in learning English as a second language at university level in Pakistan?

Significance of the study

The study was significant as it attempted to show the correlation between self-efficacy, learner autonomy and motivation in learning English as a second language. It also showed the impact these variables on learning English as a second language. It can be helpful to students for making them realize their capabilities, teachers for understanding their role in the career of the students as one of the motivating forces and government for making education effective policies and strategies for better education system.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Most of the existing models of motivation focused only at the linear angle of it but they actually ignored its dynamic nature. According to Gardner there came the age of “motivational renaissance” (Gardner and Tremblay, 1994) in which some scholars like Ushioda (2009) studied the dynamic nature of motivation but a very unique and important development comes with Dörnyei’s (2005,2009) L2 Motivational Self System that combines aspects from self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) and possible selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986). They come out with three unique components of motivation including ‘Ideal L2 learning, Ought to L2 learning and L2 learning experience in which Ideal L2 self and L2 learning experience are attached to intrinsic motivation (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1985; Noels, Clément, & Pelletier, 1999) and Ought to L2 self is connected with extrinsic motivation (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). Ideal L2 self and L2 learning experience are further associated with extroverted students (Ghapanchi et al., 2011).

Crump (1995) is of the opinion that interest, curiosity, enthusiasm and excitement are the key elements of motivation. It has been proved (Lightbrown & Spada, 2010) that these factors do play their role in the success of second language acquisition. The historical trajectory of motivational research has now entered into its third phase (Dörnyei and Ryan, 2015) where shift has been placed to the socio-dynamic perspective in which dynamic nature of motivation is being searched for but this is not the only current theme as people are working on other themes also (Dörnyei and Ryan, 2015, p.80). There have been a lot of recent developments in motivation including “Complex Dynamic Systems Theory that seems to be officially introduced in L2 motivation by the publication of a recent anthology by Dörnyei (2015). Several advancements in unconscious motivation are also there (Al-Hoorie, 2015) where mainly the psychologists in main stream motivational psychology are implicitly assuming that a learner is a rational person who not only recognizes the source of motivation but also articulates it (Al-Hoorie, 2016). Dörnyei (2015) introduced “Direct Motivational Currents” concept that can be referred to as flow-like experiences (cf. Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) leading towards a unified goal. A number of recent studies like Alqahtani (2017) which discuss “Intended Learning Effort” and “Religious Interest” (Alqahtani, 2017) as the new criterion measures in motivational studies in L2. All this clearly shows that L2 motivational researchers will benefit from the other sides of these concepts as well (Al-Hoorie, 2016a, 2016b).

Riley (1988) considers learner autonomy as a liberal western thought that cannot work in other environments. He says that this concept is ethnographic in nature, depending upon the circumstantial elements of the society but the studies conducted, for example in China, Japan, and Hong Kong positively suggest that even non-Western students like to take charge of their learning and value learner autonomy as an opportunity to facilitate themselves in the way they want (see Lee, 1998). A study conducted by Benson (2011) hypothesized the importance of motivation, affective and strategy in the development of L2 autonomy. Lin (2013) designed an assessment scale which defines autonomy as the mixture of ability, psychology and behavior. He (2015) also carried out a research which suggests the role of teachers in fostering learner autonomy. Xiang and Wu (2016) suggest that language teachers talk about autonomy from mainly two perspectives of “ability and power”. A congenial classroom environment can trigger the learner’s interest and motivate him/her in becoming an autonomous learner (Joe, Hiver, & Al-Horrie, 2017). Zhang et al., (2017) are of the view that future research needs to focus on the dynamic and psychological nature of autonomy as well.

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Self-efficacy and learner autonomy are directly proportional to each other because when the students will be aware of their capabilities, they will better be able to execute their tasks in a better way. Same is the case with motivation and learner autonomy. White (2003) studied the effects of motivation on distance learning. He is of the view that motivation increases students' decision power and enables them to perform well when they are to decide for himself. Here another point is worth stating that some students choose and design their own courses with a lot of zeal and motivation but their motivation cannot sustain for a very long time to achieve success (Harris, 2003; Smith & Sal, 2000).

Research Design

The study used a triangulation concurrent mixed methods research for its purpose. It distributed an adapted questionnaire among 1000 undergraduate students, out of which the data of 700 students was used in the study. An achievement test was conducted to check the impact of these variables of English language learning. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were also conducted to get English language teachers' perspectives on these variables.

Background Details		Frequency	Percentage
Total Size		700	100
Gender	Male	326	46.57
	Female	374	53.43
Year of study	1 st	180	25.71
	2 nd	195	27.86
	3 rd	203	29.00
	4 th	122	17.42
Medium of Instruction at Previous Schools			
Urdu Medium		215	30.71
English Medium		298	42.57
Both English & Urdu		187	26.72
Place of residence during the last 10 years			
Metropolitan		196	28
Town		225	32.14
Village		279	39.86

Sample Distribution, Pilot Study

This table shows a detailed description of the participants engaged in the study. It shows that both genders have been included to give an equal representation of the participants. It also showed the places from where the participants of the study belonged.

Case processing summery reliability of pilot study			
Case		N	%
	Valid	25	100
	Excluded ^a	0	0
	Total	25	100

a: List wise deletion based on all variables in the procedures

Reliability statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.933	60

III. DATA ANALYSIS

		Correlations													
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14
Q1	Pearson Correlation	1	.207	-.041	.148	-.018	.452*	.409*	-.035	-.115	-.130	-.275	-.067	-.282	-.336
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.320	.845	.481	.933	.023	.042	.867	.585	.537	.184	.751	.173	.101
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Q2	Pearson Correlation	.207	1	.020	.430*	.526**	.145	.328	.020	.213	.268	.540**	.346	-.013	-.020
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.320		.926	.032	.007	.489	.110	.926	.307	.195	.005	.091	.952	.926
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Q3	Pearson Correlation	-.041	.020	1	.221	.089	-.244	-.336	.145	.118	.168	.123	.289	.351	.128
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.845	.926		.289	.672	.239	.101	.488	.573	.422	.557	.162	.085	.541
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Q4	Pearson Correlation	.148	.430*	.221	1	.399*	.127	.109	.333	.018	.335	.544**	.714**	.201	.162
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.481	.032	.289		.048	.546	.605	.103	.933	.102	.005	.000	.334	.440
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Q5	Pearson Correlation	-.018	.526**	.089	.399*	1	.206	.097	.303	.370	.497*	.736**	.389	.343	.189
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.933	.007	.672	.048		.323	.643	.141	.068	.012	.000	.055	.094	.365
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Q6	Pearson Correlation	.452*	.145	-.244	.127	.206	1	.687**	.240	.315	.238	.087	.125	.077	.143
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.489	.239	.546	.323		.000	.248	.126	.253	.680	.551	.713	.495
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Q7	Pearson Correlation	.409*	.328	-.336	.109	.097	.687**	1	.269	.276	.211	.080	.053	-.245	.113
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.042	.110	.101	.605	.643	.000		.194	.182	.312	.705	.800	.238	.592
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Q8	Pearson Correlation	-.035	.020	.145	.333	.303	.240	.269	1	.613**	.451*	.353	.349	.355	.623**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.867	.926	.488	.103	.141	.248	.194		.001	.024	.084	.087	.081	.001
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Q26	Q27	Q28	Q29	Q30
-.225	-.065	.175	.035	.529**	.231	.345	.338	.269	-.038	-.123	-.025	.152	.104	.046	-.079
.280	.759	.402	.867	.006	.267	.091	.099	.194	.856	.558	.905	.469	.622	.827	.708
25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
.022	-.126	.159	.127	.188	.222	.199	.305	.431*	.476*	.263	.002	.398*	-.230	.389	.273
.916	.546	.447	.546	.369	.286	.341	.139	.032	.016	.205	.991	.049	.268	.054	.186
25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
-.011	.049	.050	.007	-.155	.014	-.363	-.277	-.062	-.323	-.354	-.397*	-.411*	.049	.031	-.153
.957	.817	.811	.972	.459	.949	.075	.180	.770	.115	.083	.049	.041	.817	.884	.465
25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
.078	.189	.487*	.424*	.419*	.490*	.226	.591**	.516**	.139	.212	-.189	.265	-.205	.144	.323
.710	.365	.014	.035	.037	.013	.278	.002	.008	.507	.309	.365	.201	.325	.492	.116
25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
.157	.059	-.056	-.114	-.057	.268	.116	.254	.288	.258	-.149	-.338	.040	-.431*	-.034	.384
.454	.780	.781	.588	.787	.195	.581	.220	.163	.211	.476	.098	.849	.032	.872	.058
25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
.076	.414*	.153	-.111	.425*	.330	.586**	.394	.443*	.271	-.078	.220	.347	-.079	.236	.133
.719	.040	.464	.598	.034	.108	.002	.051	.027	.190	.711	.291	.089	.708	.256	.527
25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
.079	.401*	.248	.138	.412*	.242	.526**	.434*	.551**	.422*	.153	.284	.494*	-.221	.196	.133
.708	.047	.232	.511	.041	.244	.007	.030	.004	.036	.467	.327	.012	.288	.347	.525
25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
.092	.357	.311	.459*	.478*	.400*	.308	.318	.437*	.112	.075	-.056	.017	-.133	.108	.092
.661	.080	.130	.021	.016	.047	.134	.122	.029	.595	.722	.792	.934	.526	.809	.661
25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25

A very few results of the study have been discussed here. The results of the study showed a significant relationship between self-efficacy, learner autonomy and motivation in learning a second language. It also showed a significantly high impact of these variables in the study of English language on a sample of Pakistani universities undergraduates' students.

IV. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The study showed that the students with high self-efficacy beliefs had stronger learner autonomy control and motivation was sought by all students. They were of the view that these concepts are important as discussed by Bandura (1977, 1986, 1997), Learner autonomy (Little, 2007) and Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System theories in learning English as a second language. The study recommended that students should realize their self-efficacy beliefs in fostering their academics. Learner autonomy can have multiple benefits if used expertly and with a reasonable check by the teachers while motivation was all times favorite concept of the students and teachers as there was a consensus that it can help nurturing the better future of the nation.

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