The Contextual Motivational Conditions for L2 Pedagogy: A Case Study from the Arabian Gulf

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Abstract: This article reports on a mixed-method research study into situated motivational conditions available for the English language (L2) pedagogy at a university in Saudi Arabia. The current study evaluated the L2 Learning Experience of the students by focusing on the key contextual factors that included teachers' pedagogical practices, group dynamics in the classrooms, and English language course. Framed within the interpretive paradigm, the study utilised a structured questionnaire, followed by open-ended interviews with purposefully chosen language learners for data collection. The conceptual framework of the study was based on Dornyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System – one of the latest socio-dynamic perspectives on L2 motivation. Overall, the results revealed that motivational conditions available on the site for L2 pedagogy were inadequate. The findings of the research emphasised a need for recruitment of professional teachers through a rigorous selection process, and recommended the provision of more in-service teacher training opportunities with a special focus on developing motivational strategies for L2 classrooms. The study also stressed a participatory role for students in planning and pedagogical processes.

Introduction and Rationale for the Study

The roots of English language in the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf can be traced back to Colonial period in the early 19th century (Weber, 2011), but in Saudi Arabia (KSA), English language teaching first began as a high school subject in the late 1950s (Al-Haq & Smadi, 1996). However, a major shift in the status of English language in KSA came with the post 9/11 (2001) political scenario when the English language was acknowledged, probably under social and political pressure from some quarters, as a necessity for development and modernization in the country, thereby declaring it a compulsory subject across all school levels (see Karmani, 2005a/b; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). With the privileged status of English as a compulsory foreign language in the country already established, the launch of the late King Abdullah's vision 2020 for his country in 2007 led to the adoption of English as a medium of instruction for all science departments in the Saudi universities. Consequently, this development led to the establishment of specific departments, institutes, or centres in the Saudi higher education institutions to run a mandatory Foundation Year Programme (FYP) with a major focus on EFL/TESOL. Hence, the English language teachers working in the Kingdom are assailed by challenges of this highly professional discipline (TESOL, 2003). Among the challenges they

face, students' lack of motivation for learning the English language is at the top of the list (Al-Buainain, 2010; Norton & Syed, 2003). The low level of L2 (English language) motivation is particularly of serious concern due to the unsatisfactory academic performance of the students: The students' tendency for absenteeism, nonchalant attitude towards assignments and deadlines, and poor classroom participation further accentuate the indispensability of motivation for learning the English language. Despite all state-of-the-art facilities for academic growth and learning in Saudi educational institutions, this obvious lack of motivation to learn English, which is now an established international language and a vehicle for learning medical sciences, technology and business management, is strange and intriguing (Jenkins, 2008).

In the backdrop of this situation, the current study aimed to conduct a student-oriented evaluation of motivational conditions available for L2 pedagogy at the research site and suggest measures for further planning and development. Keeping in view the urgency of reform in the research context, the study only focused on the contextual factors with the understanding that it was easier to transform the language learning context and classrooms and provide a rich and motivating atmosphere to the students. In contrast, it would have been simpler to evaluate the students' intrinsic, integrative or instrumental motivation, but more difficult to influence and improve upon these motivational orientations as they involved numerous variables beyond the scope of university teachers and administration. Another factor that underscored the need for such a study was the fact that notwithstanding the vital role and influence of the contextual factors in language learning, the number of studies conducted to evaluate these factors in L2 motivation was extremely small. Hence, the current study, conceptually based on Dornyei's (2005, 2009) latest *L2 Motivational Self System*, evaluates the learners' *L2 Learning Experience* that includes three key contextual motivational factors: i) teachers' pedagogical practices, ii) group dynamics in language classrooms, and iii) English language course.

The Context of the Study

The site of the current study is the male campus of an English Language Institute (ELI) of a public-sector Saudi university. The English language program at this university was originally established around 40 years ago by the British Council. Since the introduction of the Foundation Year Programme (FYP) in the academic year of 2007-2008, the University has made it a prerequisite that all freshmen students successfully complete six credit units of general English before starting their desired course of studies in any department or college of the university. At present, the ELI English language programme, accredited by the renowned US Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA), has a large faculty of around 200 English language instructors hailing from 25 different countries. The programme caters to the EFL needs of around 7000-8000 male university students each year.

The Foundation Year English Language Program comprises four core language courses. With the beginning of each module, faculty are provided with a detailed curriculum and course description with expected Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for courses they are assigned to teach at the ELI. Following Common European Framework (CEFR), the ELI offers courses starting from Beginner (A1) to Intermediate (B1) to the enrolled students, who are admitted into an appropriate language level class based on their language proficiency assessed in a placement test (see Table 1). The four-level intensive English language course is a content-based, integrated-skills programme, delivered through a system of modules. The duration of each

module is 7-8 academic weeks, with 18 contact hours per week. Presently, the English Unlimited Special Edition is being used as main syllabus resource which replaced the Oxford Headway series (special edition) that was used for five years from 2010-2015.

ELI Course Code	Course Level	CEFR Level	Credits
101	Beginner	A1	0
102	Elementary	A2	2
103	Pre-Intermediate	B1	2
104	Intermediate	B1+	2

Table 1: Courses Offered to EFL Learners at the ELI

Literature Review
An Overview of Motivation Research

Motivation bears on the depth and breadth of human behaviour. It equips an individual with 'a heart to resolve, a head to contrive, and a hand to execute' (Gibbon, 1776, p. 2066). In the L2 context, motivation provides an initiative for language learning, sustains the learning process and leads to success. Over the years, motivation has been established as a principal determinant of second language acquisition by a wide range of research studies (see Dornyei, 2005). Until recent past, motivational research mainly focused on describing, measuring, and classifying language learners' motivational orientations (Ushioda, 2008). However, with Vygotsky's (1978) growing influence and the increasing realisation of the fact that human actions are always embedded in various physical and psychological settings, L2 motivation research has begun to recognise the influence of contextual factors as independent variables. Endorsing the growing trend towards an integration of motivation and context in a dynamic way, Dornyei and Ushioda (2011, p. 33) posit that 'although sociocultural theory is essentially a theory of learning, it has recently begun to inform approaches to understanding motivation as a socially mediated and culturally situated phenomenon'.

Evaluating the historical development of L2 motivation research since the late 50s, Dornyei and Ushioda (2011) observe that L2 motivation research has passed through various phases, namely the Social Psychological Period (1959-1990), the Cognitive-Situated Period (during the 1990s), and the Process-Oriented Period (the turn of the century). At this point in time, the L2 motivation research has entered a new phase which is being called, the Socio-Dynamic Period. The current socially grounded and dynamic period to date comprises three major conceptual perspectives (see Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011). The most researched perspective among these is the *L2 Motivational Self System,* with approximately 'one-third of the empirical papers' on L2 motivation, published during 2005 to 2014, relying on this conceptual approach (Dornyei & Ryan, 2015, p. 90).

The L2 Motivational Self System

Dornyei (2005, 2009) proposed the L2 Motivational Self System after an in-depth study and synthesis of the past research on language learning motivation in the fields of L2 and psychology. More importantly, Lamb's (2004) large-scale research on ESL motivation in Indonesia and Irie's (2003) survey of EFL motivation in the Japanese context struck a decisive blow to the already questioned construct of *integrative* motivation. Consequently, with the idea

of integrative motivation getting out of favour, Dornyei (2005) came to the realisation of a dimension broader than integrativeness, which eventually triggered the development of the L2 Motivational Self System. The new motivational system is composed of three components: (a) Ideal L2 Self – a learner's personal desire to become a successful L2 user, (b) Ought-to L2 Self – social pressure on or external expectation from a learner to become an efficient L2 user, and **(c) L2 Learning Experience** – the (de)motivational impact of the actual learning experience as a participant in the L2 learning process (Dornyei & Chan, 2013).

The Significance of the 'L2 Learning Experience'

The present study is delimited to the 'L2 Learning Experience' – the third component of the L2 Motivational Self System (for the reasons mentioned in the Intro). It is worth mentioning that there is considerable empirical evidence, which substantiates the motivational strength of the L2 Learning Experience (Lamb, 2012). Of the three components of the L2 Motivational Self System, numerous studies have found the strongest correlation between the L2 Learning Experience and learners' motivated learning behaviour (see Papi & Teimouri, 2014). Although difficult to operationalize, the L2 Learning Experience can be defined as a *situated* type of motivation that L2 learners gain in the language learning process (Moskovsky et al., 2016). In a plenary address at the 40th CATESOL conference, Brown (2009) also highlighted the significance of the situated language learning and declared it a TESOL issue as important as the issues of alternatives in assessment and social responsibility that need serious attention.

L2 Learning Experience encompasses the potential influence of students' immediate learning environment and experience, which includes teacher's pedagogical role, group dynamics in the classroom, and English language course (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011). In other words, the L2 Learning Experience is contingent upon teacher-specific, group-specific, and course-specific motivation. In the following sections, I present a succinct exposition of these three motivational aspects the L2 learning experience.

Teacher-Specific Motivation

The fact that teachers can make a difference in fostering language learning motivation in students has been endorsed by a large number of research studies (Cheng & Dornyei, 2007; Dornyei, 2001; Dornyei & Csizer, 1998; Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Guilloteaux and Dornyei's (2008) large-scale classroom-based research study also confirmed a significant relationship between teacher's motivational teaching practices and students' language learning motivation. While highlighting the inextricable link between teachers' potential to motivate and students' ability to blossom, Dornyei and Kubanyiova (2014) assert that the 'transformation of classroom practice has to begin with the teachers…teachers can become transformational leaders, and the engine of this transformational drive is the teacher's vision for change and improvement' (p. 3). Certainly, when motivation is considered such a crucial characteristic of success in language learning, it is natural to view teachers' motivational skills and strategies as vital to teaching effectiveness (Hadfield & Dornyei, 2013).

Wentzel (1997), in her longitudinal study on the impact of perceived support and caring from teachers on students' motivation, has brought to attention yet another dimension of teacher-specific motivation. She has provided empirical evidence that students' perception of teachers'

pedagogical care can generate learning motivation. The teachers' pedagogical caring practices that could be derived from her data included teachers' care about teaching, teachers' care and concern about students' needs, and teachers' informal and formal evaluations of their students' progress. As teachers' care for their students makes them really likeable, in some cases loveable, personalities, Ushida (2005, p. 68) maintains that when 'students like the teacher, they enjoy the class, are satisfied with their learning experiences, and have positive attitude towards the study of the target language regardless of the instructional format'.

Group-Specific Motivation

Lewin (1947) was the foremost psychologist to postulate that 'group dynamics' play a major role in shaping the behaviour of members in a group (By & Macleod, 2009). For Lewin, any attempt to change the behaviour of individuals is futile as the individual is constrained by group pressures. Therefore, a change must be effected at the group level by focusing on group norms, learners' roles, interactions and socialisation processes to foster cohesion among learners (Burnes, 2004). In L2 context, Clement, Dornyei and Noels (1994) were the first to study group cohesion. They discovered that group cohesion contributes significantly to L2 motivation in language classrooms, which eventually led them to postulate that group cohesion 'emerges as a motivational subsystem independent of integrative motivation and self-confidence' (p. 442). Endorsing it further, Senior (2002, p. 397) underscored the need to transform language learners in a class into 'communities of learners, or as unified groups of learners' to nurture cohesion and fellow feeling.

The cohesion of L2 learner groups is one of the most important classroom factors that influence students' L2 motivation (Dornyei, 1997, 2005; Dornyei & Murphey, 2003; Ehrman & Dornyei, 1998; Senior, 1997, 2002; Ushioda, 2003). Realising the significance of these group dynamics in L2 classrooms, Chang (2010, p. 151) suggests that 'future research needs to further examine the relationship between group processes and language learning, to unveil the intricate layers yet undetected'. Notwithstanding the agreement of the L2 seminal researchers and professional practitioners that the 'social unit of the classroom is clearly instrumental in developing and supporting the motivation of the individual' (Ushioda, 2003, p. 93), the construct of classroom group dynamics still remains an under-researched subject (Dornyei & Ryan, 2015).

Course-Specific Motivation

L2 learners' attitude towards their language course or curriculum also appears to be a crucial factor in their L2 motivation. The way a course or curriculum is designed and implemented has considerable influence on student L2 motivation (Nation & Macalister, 2010). Emphasising the vital role of active engagement with course materials, Bolstad et al. (2012) assert that '[l]earners have to *want* to learn the material. They have to be able to see a *purpose* to learning it…seeing how learning this material will allow them to contribute to something beyond themselves' (p.12).

Several empirical studies have found a correlation between students' attitude towards their language course and their L2 motivation. For instance, Ushioda's (2001) study on students learning French at an Irish university gives evidence for this tendency. Donitsa-Schmidt, Inbar and Shohamy's (2004) study also reveals that despite an experimental group of Hebrew students'

negative associations with Arabic culture and language, their motivation for learning the Arabic language was due to their satisfaction with the language course. In other words, if a learning context or a language programme is able to generate enough motivation among the students, they will feel inclined to learn a language they are otherwise not interested. Another factor negatively affecting students' L2 motivation is institutional resistance to listen and redress their grievances (Kubanyiova, 2006). If students' voices about the course and teacher-related issues are freely heard and seriously considered, they are likely to continue their language learning activities with increased motivation and high morale (Oxford, 1998).

Past Research on Motivation and the 'L2 Learning Experience' in the Study Context

In the vast literature on motivation research, the research studies done to evaluate different components of the L2 Learning Experience of the students can be counted on one hand. For example, Bernaus and Gardner's (2008) study in Spain considered teachers' strategy use and student motivation, Donitsa-Schmidt, Inbar and Shohamy's (2004) study found out connections between the quality of language programme, students' attitude towards the language programme and student motivation, Guilloteaux and Dornyei's (2008) classroom-oriented study investigated the effect of teachers' motivational strategies on student motivation, Wu (2003) explored the influence of learning environment, and Hinger (2005) evaluated instructional time and its impact on group cohesion.

An extensive review of the literature on L2 Motivation available in major research databases revealed that there was a dearth of international research on factors affecting the *L2 Learning Experience*. Worse still, it is hard to find any empirical studies worth citing on the *L2 Learning Experience* of the Saudi Arab students. Previously, a few studies done on L2 motivation in Saudi Arabia focused on either integrative or instrumental motivational orientations or investigated the extrinsic/intrinsic motivation in light of Deci & Ryan's *Self-Determination Theory* (e.g. Al-Zahrani, 2008; Moskovsky & Alrabai, 2009; Sulaiman, 1993). One considerable study was conducted by Moskovsky et al. (2016) that explored the relationship between the Dornyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System and the L2 achievement of the Saudi EFL learners. To the best of my knowledge, the current study is the first major endeavour to extensively explore the *L2 Learning Experience* of the Saudi English language learners.

Research Questions

1. How effective is the role of English language teachers' pedagogical practices in generating (intrinsic & extrinsic) motivation in the language learners?
2. How do pedagogical (and institutional) practices help in developing cohesive language learners' groups in the TESOL classrooms?
3. How do the students feel about the English language course?

The Design of the Study
Methodology

The present study is centred in Interpretive Research Paradigm with an understanding that reality is relative and socially constructed, while humans are gregarious by nature and their actions are influenced by physical environment and behaviour of their fellow beings. On the one hand, I understand that Interpretivism confers *investigative depth*, *interpretive adequacy*, and *illuminative fertility* on research endeavours (Shank & Villella, 2004), but on the other hand, I emphasize that use of any data collection method, qualitative or quantitative, should not be interpreted as an indicator of an ontological or epistemological position (Troudi, 2010). Therefore, for data collection, I adopted a mixed-method approach utilising two instruments, a close-ended questionnaire and open-ended interviews.

Questionnaires are one of the most frequent instruments for data collection in educational research (Oppenheim, 1992), and these are considered useful for establishing opinions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). However, according to numerous research studies, self-reporting questionnaires are not entirely reliable and can lead to incomplete understanding of the situation (see McDonald, 2008). Hence, Pintrich and Schunk's (2002, p. 11) line of argument in favour of using qualitative research 'for raising new questions and new slants on old questions' seems persuasive. Considering this advantage of the qualitative research approach, I also conducted interviews to gain in-depth understanding of the questionnaire data and avail myself of the opportunity to understand the situation from the students' point of view in a non-controlling and open way (Patton, 2002). The data collected through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods helped me develop rich and elaborate descriptions of the phenomena under study (Ernest, 1994), leading to broader understanding of motivational conditions in the language classrooms of the ELI.

Research Methods
Questionnaire

Dornyei (2001) has made the most systematic attempt so far to develop comprehensive lists of motivational practices for language teachers to employ in language classrooms (Guilloteaux, 2013). He proposed a 'Framework for Motivational Strategies' with four main dimensions: i) creating the basic motivational conditions, ii) generating initial motivation, iii) maintaining and protecting motivation, and iv) encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation. The dimensions of this motivational strategies framework served as a foundation for the instruments of data collection in my investigation.

The 28-item questionnaire was primarily based on the Dornyei's (2001) 'Framework for Motivational Strategies' and partly adapted from Guilloteaux and Dornyei's (2008) large-scale classroom-oriented research study on motivation. Specifically, all the eight questions in Table 4 of the questionnaire (course-specific motivation) were selected from Guilloteaux and Dornyei's (2008) research instrument. The questionnaire covered most of the key motivational teaching practices focussing on strategies used for creating the basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation, and encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation.

The questionnaire, translated into Arabic by a professional translator, was administered bilingually (English & Arabic) to avoid any misunderstandings on the part of the students. The

questionnaire took its final shape after piloting on nine students in a level 4 (intermediate) class. The students' responses were recorded on Scantron sheets using a five-point Likert Scale. On completion, the data sheets were processed by a computer expert on the Scantron data processing machine and results were transferred onto an Excel sheet.

Interviews

I conducted open-ended, exploratory interviews (Cohen et al., 2007) with eight individual male language learners. Each interview took about 20 minutes to complete and was recorded on a digital voice recorder. The purpose of the interviews was to further explore the issues investigated in the questionnaire and gain deeper understanding of the already collected quantitative data. Students' opinions were elicited about their attitude towards the language course, the teachers' classroom practices, and group dynamics of the class. I focused more on the major findings in the questionnaire data. For example, for their ideas about different practices of the teachers, I explored further about the questionnaire item number 1, 3, 11 (see Table 2) and obtained as well their overall impressions about learning experience with different teachers. To learn more about the group cohesiveness in the classes, I asked questions about group-work and fellow feeling (see Table 3) among the students. For course-specific motivation, I specifically invited their opinions about item number, 21, 27 and 28 in the questionnaire (see Table 4).

Participants

The participants of this study were the male university students studying in the Foundation Year (2011-2012). The participants' ages ranged between 19-22 years approx. As data were collected towards the end of academic year and thousands of students had already graduated in previous modules, there were 2381 students left in the classrooms of the ELI, who were enrolled in four different levels. The data for the questionnaire were collected from 300 students (*n=300*) studying in level 3 and 4 (lower-intermediate & intermediate). The number of students studying in level 3 and 4 was 87% of the total strength. I used a mix of convenient and purposive sampling for the collection of questionnaire data. Only those students were involved who had spent close to a full academic year in the university, and they had been taught English by 3 or 4 different teachers in the university. Two factors were considered for the quantitative data collection sample: The participants should be easily approachable for the researcher, and they should exhibit considerable awareness of the motivational practices inquired in the questionnaire.

For the open-ended interviews, eight male students (S1 to S8) were selected again from level 3 and 4 (lower-intermediate & intermediate). They belonged to the same age group as engaged for the questionnaire data. However, only purposive sampling was utilised for the interview data collection. The participants were selected from different classes based on their linguistic ability and willingness to share their ideas about language learning and teaching in the ELI.

Ethical Concerns

All the necessary ethical conventions were followed in the course of data collection. The permission to conduct research on the site was obtained from the Dean of English Language Institute. All the participating students were given detailed information about the objectives of the study. They were briefed about their right to withdraw from the research at any time and assured of total anonymity and confidentiality in the whole process of the research. The participants in the interviews were also asked to sign a consent form.

Limitations of the Study

First, the results of this study might not be conveniently generalizable outside the Arabian Gulf. However, the findings of the study have an element of transferability, and L2 teachers and researchers elsewhere may connect their own experience with the import of the study. Second, this was a student-oriented study and presented a one-sided view. Therefore, further class observation-based investigation was warranted for more comprehensive understanding of the situation.

Finally, there is an absence of female gender representation in the data. The data for the current study are collected only from male participants primarily due to the constraints dictated by the conservative nature of the research context, where mixing of unrelated men and women is strictly forbidden. Being an expatriate researcher, I was expected to be extremely careful about such culturally sensitive issues, which, in fact, obliged me to include only the conveniently accessible male participants in the study.

Data Analyses and Results

For the questionnaire data, the frequency of the participants' responses was distributed into percentage and analysed with the help of descriptive and exploratory statistics (Cohen et al., 2007). The interview data were examined in light of Miles, Huberman and Saldana's (2014) framework for qualitative data analysis, which comprises three simultaneous flows of activity: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Additionally, I utilised Krueger and Casey's (2014) criteria for interpreting qualitative data, which include internal consistency, frequency and extensiveness of comments, specificity of comments, intensity of comments, and big ideas. I utilised this framework during the data analyses and duly considered the context, frequency and extensiveness of comments, specificity of comments, intensity of comments, and big ideas. I transcribed the recorded interviews in order to sort out vital information from the data. Then the highlighters of different colours were used to divide the information into three different sections. Finally, the data were carefully perused to mark key ideas that expanded on the questionnaire data and informed the research questions.

Questionnaire Data on Teacher-specific Motivation

The students' positive response about teacher-specific motivation ranged between 37% and 72% (see Table 2). Little over half of the students (51%) felt that their experience of learning English was rich and meaningful. 61% students in the sampling pool declared that their teachers

were enthusiastic about their profession. According to 70% students, the teachers were able to build a strong rapport with them. However, the teachers' concern for students' progress was positively rated by only 49% students. The teachers' success in creating a positive atmosphere was acknowledged by 65% students, while the teachers' ability to give an encouraging feedback to the students was recognised by just 53% students.

	Teacher-specific motivation	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %
1	My teacher has made learning English a rich and meaningful experience for me.	23	28	27	11	11
2	My teacher shows enthusiasm for teaching English.	31	30	22	10	7
3	My teacher has a friendly behaviour towards the students.	36	31	19	8	6
4	My teacher is concerned about my progress in the English language.	16	33	29	14	8
5	My teacher listens and pays attention to me.	33	37	16	9	4
6	My teacher creates a pleasant atmosphere in the class.	25	40	20	9	6
7	My teacher's feedback encourages me to give more time to the English language.	19	34	27	12	8
8	My teacher relates the lesson activities to our everyday life experiences.	26	38	22	10	4
9	My teacher highlights the importance and role of English in the modern world.	35	37	19	7	2
10	When my teacher introduces an activity, I expect something interesting and important.	24	31	30	9	6
11	My teacher often summarises the progress already made towards the course objectives.	16	21	23	20	20
12	My teacher gives clear instructions and provides examples to help us complete language learning activities successfully.	34	33	19	8	5
13	My teacher praises my effort for learning the English language.	27	35	21	8	8

Table 2: Teacher-specific Motivation Data (*n*=300)

The teachers' skill to establish relevance by connecting the lesson activities to everyday life was noticed by 64% students, and their efforts to promote instrumental motivation got the highest positive rating (72%) in this part of the questionnaire. In the course of the presentation of a new activity by the teacher, 55% students expected that the upcoming activity was going to be interesting and important. However, the teachers' responsibility to signpost by summarising the progress already made towards the course objectives received the lowest positive rating (37%) of the students. For scaffolding, 67% students agreed that their teachers gave clear instructions and provided appropriate strategies or examples to help them complete an activity successfully. The teachers' knack and expertise in offering effective praise for an effort or achievement, no matter how small that might be, was admitted by 62% students.

In this section, the teachers' ability to generate motivation through their pedagogical practices ranged between 49% and 72%, except for the signposting of the progress made towards course objectives, which was rated as low as 37%.

Interview Data on Teacher-specific Motivation[1]

The interviews aimed to dig deeper and elicit the students' views about the English language course, their opinions about the teachers' classroom behaviour and teaching methodologies, and their feelings about the group dynamics in the language classrooms. The students' views about their teachers varied from module to module. The data showed that the students seemed to have quite objective opinions about different teachers' pedagogical approaches, professional behaviour, and rapport with their students.

Teachers' Professional Resourcefulness

The participants praised the teachers who were resourceful as they exerted themselves to make the English language learning a rich and meaningful experience for their students. It is certainly motivating for the students when they find the curriculum and the teaching materials relevant to their culture and interests. As a matter of fact, professional language teachers have advanced adaptive skills, and they can handle pedagogically challenging situations through level-appropriate and context-relevant development and scaffolding of resource materials. They usually endeavour to find out about their students' interests, needs and learning objectives and relate their resource materials to day-to-day experiences and learning needs of the students (Dornyei, 2001). In the current context, the students were quite cognizant and appreciative of their teachers' efforts to create a variety of relevant handouts and worksheets, and personalise their students' learning experience:

> S3: The teacher in Module 4 gave a lot of handouts, he was very helpful, smiling, and he cared for his students.
> S5: I love to go to the class, the teacher brings a lot of activities, we talk about life, and we don't feel shy in his class.

The teachers' creativity and personal efforts were highly valued, and the students did enjoy collaborative learning activities in their classes. However, they looked down upon the teachers who solely relied on the course books:

> S5: Most boring was the Module 3 because the teacher was always 'in the book', nothing else. There was no participation of the students in the class.

Teachers' Professional Behaviour

Teachers' own enthusiasm for their professional practices is of key importance. Teachers are supposed to exhibit that they value L2 learning and teaching as a meaningful and satisfying experience of their life. Still, some teachers fail to do so and they display their lack of interest in their profession, which is easily picked up by their students (Dornyei, 2001). In this case, the students were also well aware of some of their teachers' lack of enthusiasm or otherwise for their profession:

> S4: Module 2 teacher was not ok. He was always angry. He didn't like the students, and he didn't like the job too.
> S7: My teacher in Module 1 was great because he took care of the whole class.

It is commonly observed in the research context that a number of students usually request their teachers to let them leave the class before time; however, such students in their hearts have little respect for such 'obliging' teachers who pander to students' entreaties:

S1: Bad teachers are so much fun; they let you go anytime.

Teachers' Rapport with Students

It is indeed one of professional teachers' key priorities to build a strong rapport with their students. To that end, they make an optimum effort to create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere in the class, and thereby build a bond with their students:

S5: I enjoyed a lot in Module 2… The teacher was very lively…there were no barriers in the class.

However, teachers should display firm behaviour if needed (Dornyei, 2001). Some teachers' efforts for building a bond with the students were counter-productive and resulted in poor classroom management and discipline, which led to uncongenial conditions in the classrooms. The students disapproved of the teachers' lax and lenient attitude:

S2: I like a friendly teacher, but he should be tough when needed.

In some cases, the situation was just the opposite, and teachers were too strict and unfriendly to build any kind of rapport with their students:

S8: In module 2, the teacher was very strict; he never smiled.

The students' uninhibited comments about their teachers' classroom behaviour and practices tend to offer holistic understanding of the pedagogical processes in the classrooms on-site.

Questionnaire Data on Group-specific Motivation

As this study was conducted towards the end of the academic session when maximum class size was 15 students, it was expected that students would know the names of all their classmates. Nevertheless, the results showed that 26% students were yet not sure about the names of their fellows in a small class, which somewhat reflects a lack of cohesiveness at the class level (see Table 3). While 74% students felt no hesitation in sharing their personal experiences with other students, group-work, a regular feature of a learner/learning-centred language classroom, was only acknowledged by 56% students. The feedback of more than 39% students suggests that they had a rigid seating pattern in their classrooms. The teachers' practice of designing cooperative learning activities for developing group cohesiveness was recognised by 56% students whilst 60% students were aware of the group norms prevalent in their classrooms. Only 39% students agreed that they had class applause to celebrate the effort or success of other classmates.

	Group-specific motivation	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %
14	I know the name of every student in my class.	45	28	14	7	5
15	I always feel free to share my personal experiences in the class.	37	37	18	5	3
16	I regularly have group-work where I mix up with other students.	24	32	21	13	9
17	I usually sit on the same seat and with the same student in every class.	18	21	26	21	14
18	We regularly have cooperative learning activities where we help one another.	23	33	24	11	8
19	We have specific rules for group-work, which we cannot violate (e.g. speaking Arabic is not allowed).	29	31	19	9	12
20	We often celebrate a student's or group's success or effort by cheering or applauding (e.g. clapping).	19	20	31	11	17

Table 3: Group-specific Motivation Data (n=300)

Interview Data on Group-specific Motivation

The teachers' pedagogical practices to develop cohesive language learner groups were also evaluated in light of the students' comments. Teachers usually prepare a number of group tasks to facilitate collaborative learning in the language classrooms, which result in cohesive learner groups (Dornyei, 2001). The students viewed pair/group work activities as an important part of learning process, and the classes destitute of such collaborative learning activities were considered boring and unproductive:

S3: In module 1&2, we didn't do a lot of group work. But in Module 4, we had a lot of group activities and I made many friends in that class.

In some classes, the ice was never broken and the students felt alienated and experienced a lack of confidence and fellow feeling. In such situations, usually students' affective filter is high and they feel anxious and reserved:

S1: Some students are shy. Shyness is a big problem here. Our teacher should give confidence to the students because they feel shy and don't participate in the class.

Another probable factor that impedes the formation of cohesive language learner groups is reshuffling and splitting of the students into different classes after every 7/8-week module in the research context. This administrative practice was personally observed by the researcher, and it was also highlighted by the interviewed students:

S6: We should have same students in the classes when we move to next level, so that we can make friendships.

The interview data on group-specific motivation expanded on the questionnaire results and broadened the scope of the research. The students not only highlighted some good and bad pedagogical practices of the teachers, but also alluded to some administrative issues adversely affecting the group cohesiveness in the language classrooms.

Questionnaire Data on Course-specific Motivation

In terms of motivation generated through the English language course, the data reflected the students' mixed feeling about the course (see Table 4). Only 21% students agreed to the idea of having more English lessons despite the fact that majority of the students liked English language: only 24% students did not have English among their favourite subjects. However, a large number of students felt tired or bored towards the end of English lessons and only 17% of them could maintain a constant interest in English lessons. While 74% students acknowledged that the lessons were helpful in developing their English language skills, only 26% students did not seem to enjoy their lessons as they considered them either too challenging or too easy. Notwithstanding the fact that most of the students (74% to 91%) considered English lessons as enjoyable, interesting and beneficial, they felt overwhelmed and were disinclined to devote more time to the English language learning.

#	Course-specific motivation	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %
21	I wish we had more English language lessons in this term.	6	15	17	26	36
22	The English language is one of my favourite subjects in the university.	23	31	22	10	14
23	When the English language lesson ends, I often wish it could continue.	3	14	22	23	37
24	The English language lessons are very helpful in developing my language skills.	42	32	17	4	4
25	I enjoy my English language lessons because these are neither too hard nor too easy.	12	35	27	12	14
26	I would rather spend time on other subjects than English.	25	25	27	16	8
27	Learning English at the University is a burden for me.	18	15	22	20	26
28	In our English language lessons, we are learning things that will be useful in the future.	42	33	15	4	5

Table 4: Course-specific Motivation Data (n=300)

Interview Data on Course-specific Motivation

The students seemed to have a kind of love-hate relationship with the English language course. On the one hand, they acknowledged the importance of learning English in modern times, appreciated the learning outcomes of the course, and valued the benefits they would gain from studying the English language at the ELI as the following illustrative quotes show:

S1: When I came here, I couldn't speak English. I think now I'm ready to speak with other people. I have gained confidence now.

S5: I had a huge improvement in my language skills, and I have developed a lot.

On the other hand, they seemed unhappy, rather annoyed, with the course timings and scheduling of their classes. They vehemently expressed their displeasure for the long study hours stretched until late afternoon:

S2: Class timings are very tough. This is a big problem. They [the administration] should change the timings of the classes.

The students were particularly unhappy with the long study shift in the afternoon that started at 11:00 am and continued until 4:00 pm in the afternoon. For the students who worked part-time in the evening, class timings were even more challenging: They had no time left for an afternoon nap, which was so deep-rooted in the Arab culture:

S4: Four and half hours of language learning [in a day] is too much; it is really boring, and when students feel bored, they don't understand anything. Our classes usually start at 8:00 am in the morning and continue until 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon. Some people work in the evening; they don't have time for rest.

An interesting fact that sprang up in the interview data was the course-specific negative feelings of those students who actually loved English language and wanted to develop their language ability to the highest possible level. These brilliant students also experienced bouts of boredom due to long study hours:

S6: I love the English language, but sometimes I feel bored because of the long hours.

The interview data on course-specific motivation shed further light on the questionnaire results. It clarified why only 21% of the students agreed to have more English lessons even though more than 74% of them liked English language and acknowledged the usefulness of the English course.

Discussion

The results set forth above reflected the motivational conditions prevalent in the language classrooms of the *ELI* and helped inform the research questions formulated for the current study. The results about the teachers' pedagogical practices to generate motivation were somewhat alarming. Like the results of Bernaus and Gardner's (2008) research on teachers' motivational strategies, a considerable number of teachers' use of motivational strategies as part of their everyday teaching practice seemed to be inadequate. Based on Lewin, Lippitt and White's (1939) analysis of leadership styles, Oxford (2001) has categorised teachers in terms of three teaching approaches: *Autocratic approach, Laissez-faire approach, and Democratic /participatory approach*. While the students appreciated their teachers' participatory approach reflected in their efforts for student engagement in the learning process, the results of the study also indicated the prevalence of *Autocratic approach and, Laissez-faire approach* in the classrooms on-site. More importantly, the findings highlighted that some teachers showed slackness in making learning English a rich and meaningful experience, had lack of enthusiasm for the profession or indifference towards the progress of the students; others were not capable enough to arouse curiosity and excite attention of their students or give an encouraging feedback on students' performance in various tasks; still others neglected the importance of *signposting* in the course of teaching or exposed their disregard for developing cohesive learners' groups. In all likelihood, these findings flagged the need for further professional learning and development of some teachers in the research context.

According to Dornyei (2001), more than half of the demotivating factors could be attributed to the language teachers. However, if teachers are professionally skilled and teach with enthusiasm, they will find the same passion transmitted to the students, eventually increasing

their motivation to learn (Deci et al., 1997). With the empirical evidence of a strong correlation between language teachers' motivational pedagogical practices and students' learning motivation, it is natural to expect teachers to develop and utilise motivational skills and strategies requisite for (highly) effective teaching (Hadfield & Dornyei, 2013).

Group cohesion is seen as a crucial factor in learners' motivation and performance (Hinger, 2005). Senior (1997) argues that professional teachers define the quality of their classes in terms of group dynamics. Language learning is now increasingly viewed as a collaborative enterprise, and group work has become an integral part of a language classroom (Madrid, 2002). Some of the pedagogical and administrative practices in the research context did not support the formation of strong learners' groups: lack of collaborative and group-share activities, absence of group norms, limited opportunities to celebrate students' success or effort, and rigid seating patterns in some cases were among the prominent factors adversely affecting the level of students' group-specific motivation. What is worse, the administrative practice of splitting and reshuffling the students into different classes after every module was also a hindrance in developing cohesive language learners' groups.

As far as the students' feelings about the English Language Course were concerned, the results showed some conflicting trends: The students fully realized the efficacy of the English language course, instrumental benefits of learning English language, and the effectiveness of the course books and materials, but they felt overwhelmed, sometimes bored, and were least interested in having more English language lessons. The likely cause of the students' boredom and lack of interest vis-à-vis English Language Course seemed to be the long teaching sessions stretched till late afternoon. In some cases, these feelings were exacerbated by the unpreparedness or incompetence of some teachers. Strangely enough, the students taught by most competent teachers expressed their dissatisfaction over the scheduling of their classes from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, which could be an evidence of the situation being tough and unfavourable for the pedagogical practices at times. Research shows that low level of accomplishment during less favourable hours further adds to a negative attitude towards the relevant subject or course (Klein, 2004).

Teachers' disposition and teaching methodologies, group cohesiveness, and students' attitude towards the course have a significant impact on students' achievement in the classroom. The success of second language pedagogy depends on the optimal functioning of all these variables.

Implications and Recommendations

In light of the findings of the current study, the following measures may lead to the provision of a rich and motivating language learning experience for the L2 learners on-site or in other identifiable contexts:

Professional Development of Teachers

Coombe (2014) asserts that effective language teaching not only requires strategic career planning, but also a lifelong commitment to professional learning. To equip teachers with evidence-based motivational strategies for language classrooms, a faculty development programme should be implemented with teachers' participation not only encouraged, but also

incentivised. With an ongoing professional development programme, teachers will proceed towards the ultimate goal for teachers: 'To become professionals who are adaptive experts' (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 359), which will, in due course, enable them to design, develop, and adapt their teaching materials in order to effectively meet the context-specific, pedagogical needs of their students. Additionally, knowledge of motivation theories and experience in creating classroom environments that foster student motivation and engagement in the learning process should be made an important component of both pre-service and in-service teacher training programs for (L2) language teachers worldwide (Tollefson, 2000).

Creation of Cohesive Language Learners Groups

Group cohesion has come to be considered a crucial factor in language classrooms (Chang, 2010). The ELI already offers intensive English language courses, which are naturally conducive to the formation of cohesive language learners groups (Hinger, 2005). To facilitate group cohesion, the practice of reshuffling the students in every module should be stopped, and the students should be allowed to progress to next module as a class, with the exception of failure cases.

English Language Course

Oxford (1998) stresses the significance of students' grievances. She suggests that we give heed to our students' important teacher/course-specific concerns and immediately address them if we really want to strengthen their motivation for learning the English language. The students' legitimate grievances, such as the scheduling of the English language course and other pedagogical and administrative practices in the research context, should be settled sooner rather than later.

Recruitment of Teachers

'English language learners…have the right to be taught by qualified and trained teachers (TESOL, 2003, p.1). Hence, English language teaching, being a highly professional discipline, requires the teachers who possess 'a high degree of professional consciousness that is informed by relevant specialist knowledge and explicit values' (Leung, 2009, p. 55). Aware of the complexities of the teaching profession, the renowned researchers, Bernaus and Gardner (2008), call for a stricter selection of applicants to faculties of Education. Specifically for L2 teachers, the criteria for selection should include personality attributes and motivation to become a teacher as well as a vast knowledge of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory and practice.

Scope for Further Research

The motivational conditions in the language classrooms at the research context warrant further investigation. A research-based planning and development will definitely ensure a more congenial learning context for the future generations of the nation (Norton & Syed, 2003). For

profound understanding of different motivational orientations, more qualitative and quantitative studies from the perspectives of both teachers and students should be conducted at different times of the years.

Final Word: Teacher as a 'Good Enough Motivator'

Of all the factors contributing to a student's positive or negative evaluation of a subject, the teacher comes out on the top. Hence, a teacher carries an enormous burden of responsibility (Chambers, 1999). All the same, a teacher has to pay attention to so many things in the classroom that it is almost impossible to be on a constant 'motivational alert' (Dornyei, 2001, p. 135). That is why, a teacher should initially aim to become a 'good enough motivator'. Gradually, they may endeavour to gain the status of a 'super motivator' and create a highly charged and motivating atmosphere in the classroom (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 134).

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Endnotes

[1] For the sake of clarity, minor grammatical corrections have been made in the oral responses of the students.