The Role of Learner's Attitude and Motivational Environment in Mastering Vocabulary-A Case Study, Faculty of Arts, Missallatta.

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Abstract

Mastering vocabulary is all about the attitude and the aptitude of the EFL/ESL learner, in all cases. Intrinsic motivation always remains the X factor in the course of possessing any non-native language. This research focuses on the learners' personal ability and choice of learning outside native language learning environment. This study attempts to investigate the hidden psychological obstacles that have been standing between the language learners and their goal in Libyan context as the study population for this survey has been carefully chosen from the EFL Department, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Missallatta, Al-Mergib University. However, language learning is intimately related to *intrinsic motivation*, in other words *learner's attitude* . Apparently, it will create a 'win-win' situation for all levels of learners in the class. Therefore, the current work focuses on the language motivational level among the Libyan EFL UG students. The researchers have taken up the traditional task of paper based questionnaire, comprising very comprehensive questions (10) distributed among (25) respondents, randomly selected from all levels of EFL undergraduates in order to gather the data on the scale of four options, such as: Agree/Strongly Agree/ Disagree/ Strongly Disagree. Eventually, the subsequent result analysis produced the desired result, more or less, close to the early assumptions of the survey that learner's individual interest and internal motivation play a considerable role in grabbing language and mastering powerful vocabulary. It could also expose the fact that there was not much gap among the respective academic levels of Under Graduation (I,II,III & IV years) in realising the significance of the motivation at any level to achieve the highest goal of mastering vocabulary, as most of their responses, overwhelmingly, wedged to first two options of 'Agree/Strongly Agree', which are predominantly emphasising the learners' inclination to be masters of words.
Key words: Language - Attitude – Environment - Intrinsic Motivation – Mastering Vocabulary

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1. Introduction

Vocabulary building always remains a crucial step of learning a new language with a tiny difference between children and adults in their ability of reception and reinforcement. Richard and Renandya (2002) have ascertained that vocabulary is the core constituent of any language proficiency since it enables the learner to use four primary language skills reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Regarding adult learners, most of them may be struggling under a fantasy that after passing their twenties they quickly and certainly lose their ability of learning vocabulary. According to *Edward Thorndike (1931)*, " Ability to learn drops very, very slowly up to the age of thirty five, and drops a bit more but *still slowly* beyond that age". Hence, in any background and situation, if the learner has 'the strong urge to learn' with positive outlook would be likely to achieve his/her target at a phenomenal rate. Because, 'the urge to learn words' will work with the personality of the learner. Indeed, motivation is widely acknowledged as a revealing factor in L2 learning (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Furthermore, one of a number of psychological theories of motivation, Deci and Ryan's (1985, 1995) self-determination theory (SDT) describes individual motivation as the degree of autonomy that individuals demonstrate all through the activity of learning, and subdivides it into two motivational orientations. Intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because contentment is innate in the course of action, while extrinsic motivation refers to doing something in order to attain the result external to it. Therefore, the emphasis of this paper, to explore a very new integrated approach of viable language learning, remains with the learner's attitude to think laterally with a clear objective of attaining superior vocabulary.

2. Literature Review

Motivation in learning a foreign language is regarded as the sum of students' positive attitudes towards learning a language as well as the desire and effort to achieve their goals (Gardner, 1985). In addition, success is influenced by motivation and motivation is influenced by the attitude in foreign language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Similar to attitude, there are various studies to examine motivation levels of students in English in different educational levels in the literature, and they reached different findings.

Students' attitudes towards foreign language learning influence their achievement in the course and concurrently they are affected by their achievement (Dörnyei, 1998;Gardner & Lambert, 1972). In addition, whereas positive attitudes affect speaking skills, negative attitudes lower interest and motivation (Brown, 2007).

2.1. Intrinsic motivation: the performance of a task for its own sake. It values rewards gained through the process of task completion, regardless of any external rewards.

— In general, motivation falls into two categories: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation (Huitt, 2001)

Intrinsic	Extrinsic
— Explain or show why learning a particular content or skill is important — Create and/or maintain curiosity — Provide a variety of activities and sensory stimulations — Provide games and simulations — Set goals for learning — Relate learning to student needs — Help student develop plan of action	— Provide clear expectations — Give corrective feedback — Provide valuable rewards — Make rewards available

2.2. Language building blocks

2.2.1. Language and attitude.

- ➡️ Acceptance: An act of embracing the essential techniques of language learning.

- ➡️ Self – Esteem: A feeling of worthiness to hit the books of a foreign language. It is the foundation of 'intrinsic motivation'.

- ➡️ Respect/willingness: Learning is invaluable and irreplaceable. Respect carries reciprocal energy.

- ➡️ Pleasure: The physical manifestation of joy. The amount of pleasure that a language learner allows himself to experience it.

- ➡️ Positive environment rewards :

  - All pleasing personalities will be around.

  - Energizes language learning.

  - Increases the enjoyment of learning.

  - Inspires the learners to foster the teamwork in a congenial atmosphere.

  - Makes the learner a self-contributor to the language.

  - Learners productivity will be high.

  - Quality learning.

  - Reduces the stress of inferiority complex.

2.2.2. Vocabulary building and nourishment
Wide reading and read aloud

Extensive vocabulary can be attained through wide reading. A voracious reader of various materials of different subjects, apparently, can grab more vocabulary easily and swiftly. Hence, any vigorous and precise exposure to written language found in novels, books with images, poetry, and informational texts could be encouraging for learners. Aside from wide reading, the practice of 'loud reading' technique would contribute in the reinforcement and sustainability of vocabulary. "Exposure to words in stories and discussions around the words help students expand their vocabularies" -(Elley, 1989; Penno, Wilkinson, & Moore, 2002; Robbins & Ehri, 1994). "Stopping to explain or discuss the words, as well as reading the stories several times, helps consolidate this word knowledge." -(Biemiller, 2004; Elley, 1989; Penno et al., 2002; Robbins & Ehri, 1994). Independent reading is also important.

According to the earlier studies, "Word consciousness is an appreciation and understanding of the power and uses of words as tools of communication. It is the meta-cognitive or meta-linguistic knowledge that a learner brings to the task of word learning" - (Anderson & Nagy, 1992; Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002/2008; Scott & Nagy, 2009). Developing an appreciation for the power of expression and awareness of words is an attitude and stance that permeates our interactions regarding language each and every day.

The rate of vocabulary building increases, if students pay attention to the words they come across in reading, in listening, and in the world around them. This conscious attention can be promoted by teachers and parents

when they nurture students' awareness about words as tools of communication. However, there are elements of morphology, syntax, and the understanding of linguistic characteristics of words that can help students learn about sets of words and how to identify particular linguistic patterns. Scott & Nagy, (2009) described word consciousness as "Learning words in sets by becoming conscious of these patterns will help students acquire not just specific words but also a facility to learn words in general". Evidently, developing word consciousness requires the coaching of students in order to understand how words function and how different words function differently to convey meaning.

If language learning and nourishing vocabulary is a game the following factors are key players in vocabulary enrichment:

- ➤ Awareness – becoming conscious of the up to date patterns of acquiring terminology and other expressions such as focusing on the root words (etymology), collocations, idioms, and buzz expressions.
- ➤ Acknowledgement – admitting that there is a need to take input through voracious reading and listening to share the ideas vigorously in chat rooms and on talk shows.
- ➤ Choice – the learner's active word choice keeps him high spirited.
- ➤ Strategy – creating a realistic plan to obtain new jargon. Sharing is the best and the easiest strategy to build vocabulary.
- ➤ Commitment – taking action, aided by external accountability. An enthusiastic language learner needs to make a commitment to himself to learning and mastering vocabulary.

> ➤ Celebration – rewarding oneself every now and then for the successful assortment of the numerous vocabulary for sustainable language learning.

Development is a progression of carrying out tests, a chain of trials, errors, and periodical success. The futile researches are as much a part of the process as the experiments that work.

3. Context

This paper is exclusively based on a study of the real learning situation in the classrooms of UG students of the department of English and Foreign Languages, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Al-Mergib University, Al-Khoms, Libya. The environment and the attitudes of the learners have been focused on several occasions. Because, attitude is the most important word in the English language as it is applicable to every sphere of life, including one's personal and professional life.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) found that the attitude and motivation of L2 learners had significant influence on language learning. If the student is highly motivated, the probability of success is larger and vice versa. *William James (1845-1910)* of Harvard University said, "The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind." In addition, the 'environment' has been found as a key constituent in shaping the attitudes of the learners towards understanding the dynamics of language in a scientific way. As a result, the skill of language learning can be effectively exercised in a suitable environment with a positive attitude towards learning, creating, practicing and reinforcing. *Horwitz (1990)* also defines motivation, on the other hand, as the feelings of the learner toward a

particular target language and its culture as well as learner's pragmatic reasons for acquiring a foreign language more broadly.

The current qualitative survey questions (10) on 'the role of motivation' meticulously designed, considering the background of the respondents, to be able to reach the learners' mindsets to figure out 'Where does the tangible problem lie?' and 'How to overcome it as a Non-Native Language Learner?. In the Libyan context it is quite necessary to focus on the learners' poor English language background, since there has been a period of 'anti-English language policy implemented by the previous administration.' As a result, generations together, most of the language aspirants have been deprived of English language acquisition and usage. Thus, how the language learners have become so apathetic and turned away from a global language. Eventually, there has been little room left to spread the language and relevant vocabulary, which is very important to build an environment for the prosperity of any language. ***Cortazzi and Jin (1996)*** find that EFL students place particular emphasis on vocabulary acquisition in comparison with other elements of language learning. A series of studies by Noels and her colleagues in Canadian contexts, for example, found that intrinsic motivation was an important indicator of students' motivational intensity, persistence, and final grades, with a small to medium effect size (Noels, Clement, &Pelletier, 2001; Noels, Pelletier, & Vallerand, 2000). Therefore, it is quite important to brood over the socio-political hurdles faced by the contemporary language learners in Libya.

This paper focuses on the following research questions:

1. How much awareness do the learners have about the importance of possessing strong vocabulary?

2. What are the obstacles in the path of the Under Graduate (UG) language learners preventing them from mastering the vocabulary?

3. How the superior word power, in a Foreign Language, could boost the confidence levels of learners in a positive environment?

4. Methodology and Data Analysis

Method

The researchers adopted the very traditional method of paper based questionnaire for its descriptive study, to collect the data from randomly selected group of subjects (25) from the Department of English and Foreign Languages in the college of Arts and Sciences, Missallatta. The questionnaire is made up of (10) fairly straight questions focussing on "The Role of Learner's Attitude and Motivational Environment in Mastering Vocabulary-A Case Study, Faculty of Arts, Missallatta" from different dimensions to reach out all levels (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th year UG students) of the personalities of the respondents precisely and genuinely. The questions on the scale of Four options (**Agree / Strongly Agree / Disagree / and Strongly Disagree**), presumably helpful to find the desired results.

Data analysis

The questionnaire employed to carry out this study focussed mainly on the attitudes of the young participants regarding the mastering of English vocabulary. The questions are to expose the relevance of the study to the Libyan context. The focal point of the data analysis remains with the choices made by the subjects. The frequency of results is so accurate and impressive that most of the choices made between 'Agree' and Strongly Agree' for all given questions by all respondents with multiple academic levels of knowledge and experience
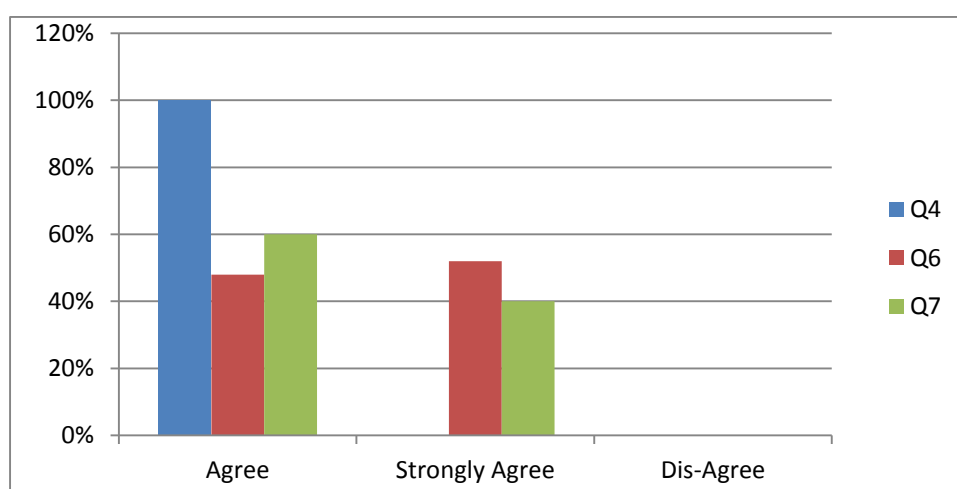
as language learners. The respondents also agreed 100% upon – **Q4)** the need of strong vocabulary for effective comprehensive levels (A-48% & SA-52%), **Q6)** the lack of enough input behind the weak vocabulary (A-60% & SA-40%) and **Q7)** more interactive sessions with the EFL faculty as well as their peer participants would help them to become more fluent (A-32% & SA-68%).

(Figure 1. Demonstrates the Learners' awareness about the importance of vocabulary)

This is, in deed, the clear evidence for how strongly superior vocabulary and learner's attitude towards the acquisition of a foreign language are interdependent. Similarly, ***Krashen and Terrel (1983)*** state that vocabulary is the main factor of interpersonal communication with other people. In case of Libyan young language learners, they have been de-motivated both extrinsically and intrinsically, since these two key factors are fundamentally interdependent.
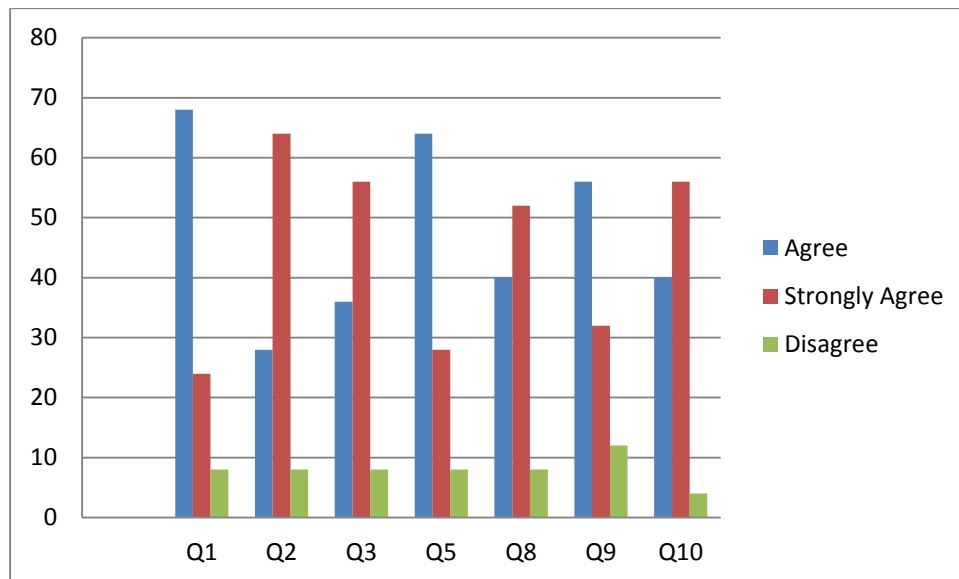
The respondents are obviously aware (**Q3**. A-36%, SA-56% & DA-8%) of the role of advanced vocabulary in boosting the confidence level of the learner. In addition, the positive learning environment contributes more to increase the learner's productivity of language (**Q8**. A-40%, SA-52% & DA-8%). Therefore, positive learning environment always proves that the external and internal motivations are compatible and apparent indicators of learner's motivation level. This relationship has been defined respectively by *(Schmidt, Borale, &Kassabgy, 1996*) as the motivation for external reward and motivation to obtain sufficient reward from the activity itself.

Vocabulary is a powerful tool to enhance the learners' thought process (**Q9**. A-56%, SA-32% & DA- 12%) in order to achieve their language acquisition goal through the appropriate use of glossary **(Q10**. A-40%, SA- 56% & DA-4%). In addition to the above findings, more or less, all participants unequivocally agreed that the learning a foreign language (FL) is purely a personal skill (**Q1**. A- 68%, SA-24% & DA-8%) and apparently it reflects the attitude of the learner , which is a key element in the language acquisition successfully (**Q2**. A-28%,

SA-64% & DA-8%). Eventually, this brief research could find out the apathetic attitude of learners would obviously hinder the pace of language acquisition in all cases, which most of the respondents (**Q5.** A-64%, SA-28% & DA-8%) agreed up on.

5. Discussion

Foreign Language learning is a skill and it requires a certain level of intelligence and inclination to work hard. Learner's level of confidence and motivation, apparently, would be key binary elements in order to nurture the language with the help of vocabulary, which is very vital for both input (Reading & Listening) and output (Speaking & Writing). The present study has been conducted after a thorough observation of the EFL UG learners Academic Linguistic Character (ALC) to find out the following paucities existing in common in and around the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom:

➢ The level of language learners is rather disappointing, despite their long-time
   learning of functional grammar, grammatical structures and other fundamental area
   of linguistics.
➢ Weak comprehension at first hand.
➢ Lack of intrinsic motivation to know more as there is no provision for co-curricular activities such as scheduled academic workshops, symposiums and other programs .
➢ Apathetic Attitude is prevalent among the UG students in the faculty due to the poor foreign language environment for speaking practice.

➢ Absence of literary activities that should be catered by the management.

➢ Relatively zero application of language for general communication even among the EFL undergraduates.

➢ Lack of time to interact with the EFL teachers, who have higher communication skills and knowledge as well.

➢ Lack of substantial library for extensive reading in order to empower themselves with sizable word power (Vocabulary).

Despite the fact that there have been umpteen shortcomings in the system, the EFL UG learners at Missallatta are, in deed, well aware of the role of their attitude and stimulating effect of the environmental motivation in acquiring and mastering the language from many dimensions. Students who are intrinsically motivated understand what it means to learn; actively seek out useful resources that could help with their learning; manage the pace of their own learning; and take pleasure in meeting challenges and solving problems that arise as part of the learning process (Reeve, Ryan, Deci, & Jang, 2012)

6. Conclusion

Above cited real-time observations are wide spread grievances in all places not only among the EFL UG learners of Faculty of Arts, Missallatta. However, wherever a foreign language is expected to be learnt, certain psychological and sociological perspectives must be thoroughly analysed in order to implement diverse teaching methods and techniques in and around the classroom. Language learners as well as resource personnel should also avail the given time, making the best use of the labs, props and other tools of cutting-edge technology on hand and online as well. A

teacher or instructor has got a very big role to play here. In this regard, Harmer (2001) points out that one of the main tasks for teachers is to provoke interest and involvement in the subject even when students are not initially interested in it. It is by their choice of topic, activity and linguistic content that they may be able to run a class effectively and successfully.

Henceforth, the language building blocks mentioned under different strap lines relevant to the attitude, the perception, the need, the purpose and the environment of the language learner, would be irrefutably accommodating a quantum leap in the acquisition of FL/SL in terms of vocabulary, within a fixed time-frame.

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Appendix – A

Questionnaire designed for student survey on "The Role of Learner's Attitude and Motivational Environment in Mastering Vocabulary-A Case Study, Faculty of Arts, Missallatta."

This questionnaire has been designed to help you to identify your attitudes towards mastering English vocabulary. Read each statement and mark each statement on a scale from Agree to Strongly Disagree. Please answer the

following questions about yourself and your learning experience in your English class. Make sure that your responses might correspond to your feelings, according to the following scaling order (Agree/Strongly Agree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree).

Name:………………………………………………… UG Level: **1ˢᵗ / 2ⁿᵈ / 3ʳᵈ / 4ᵗʰ**

SL NO	QUESTION SEQUENCE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1	Learning a foreign language is a personal skill.				
2	The attitude of language learners is a key in FL acquisition.				
3	The use of advanced vocabulary would boost the confidence level of FL learners.				
4	Strong vocabulary would help increasing compressive levels of FL learners.				
5	Apathetic attitude of FL learners would hinder the pace of language assimilation.				
6	Lack of enough input through Listening and Reading is also a reason behind weak vocabulary.				

7	More time for interaction with the teachers and the fellow learners would help to develop fluency.				
8	Learners' productivity will be high if the learning environment is positive.				
9	Vocabulary is a powerful tool to enhance the thought process.				
10	Appropriate use of vocabulary would be a sign of the learner's achievement of his language goal.				

Appendix – B
1. Overall Results Table

| SL NO	QUESTION SEQUENCE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1	Learning a foreign language is a personal skill.	17 68%	6 24%	2 8%	-
2	The attitude of language learners is a key in FL acquisition.	7 28%	16 64%	2 8%	-
3	The use of advanced vocabulary would boost the confidence level of FL learners.	9 36%	14 56%	2 8%	-

4	Strong vocabulary would help increasing compressive levels of FL learners.	12 48%	13 52%	-	-
5	Apathetic attitude of FL learners would hinder the pace of language assimilation.	16 64%	7 28%	2 8%	-
6	Lack of enough input through Listening and Reading is also a reason behind weak vocabulary.	15 60%	10 40%	-	-
7	More time for interaction with the teachers and the fellow learners would help to develop fluency.	8 32%	17 68%	-	-
8	Learners' productivity will be high if the learning environment is positive.	10 40%	13 52%	2 8%	-
9	Vocabulary is a powerful tool to enhance the thought process.	14 56%	8 32%	3 12%	-
10	Appropriate use of vocabulary would be a sign of the learner's achievement of his language goal.	10 40%	14 56%	1 4%	-

2. Graph
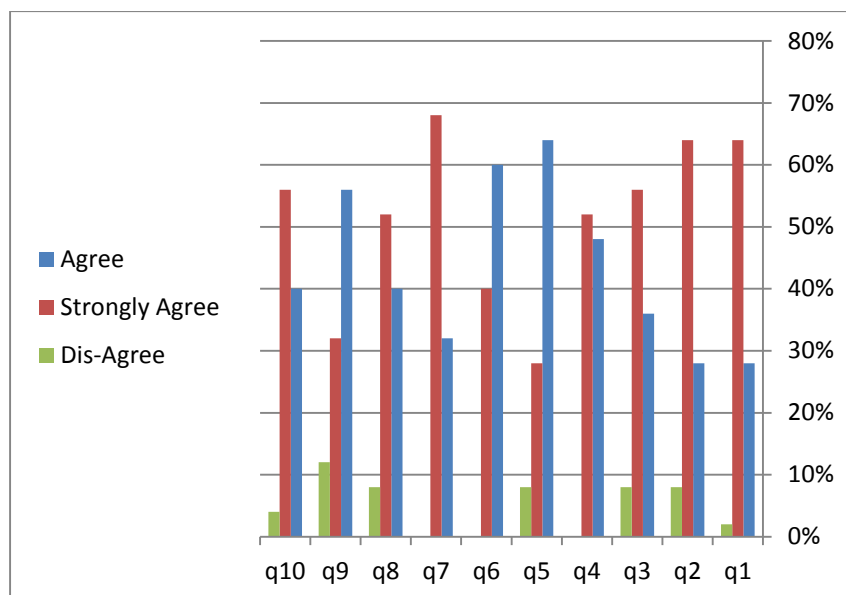
(Figure 3 . Over all questionnaire graph)

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دور موقف المتعلم والبيئة المحفزة لإتقان مفردات اللغة

بشير ميلاد الرعوبي

سوريندرا بابو كاجا

ملخص الدراسة: –

إتقان مفردات اللغة الإنجليزية يعتمد على موقف المتعلم واستعداده، وفي كل الأحوال يمكننا القول إن الدوافع الذاتية تعتبر العامل الأساس في تعلم اللغة الأم، هذا البحث يركز على القدرة الشخصية للمتعلم ونوعية التعليم خارج بيئة تعلم اللغة الام.

تحاول هذه الدراسة التحقق من العقبات النفسية الخفية التي تحول بين متعلمي اللغة وأهدافهم في ليبيا. وقد تم اختيار مجتمع الدراسة بعناية من قسم اللغة الانجليزية –كلية الآداب والعلوم مسلاته – جامعة المرقب.

وعليه فإن تعلم اللغة يرتبط ارتباطا وثيقا بالدوافع الذاتية، وبمعني آخر يعتمد على موقف المتعلم وعلى ما يبدو فإن هذه الدوافع سوف تخلق وضعا مميزا لكل الدارسين في كل المستويات. لذلك فإن هذه الدراسة تركز على المستوى التحفيزي لتعلم اللغة لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعة.

اعتمدت هذه الدراسة على الاستبيان لجمع البيانات وقد احتوى على (10) أسئلة وزعت عشوائيا على (25) طالبا وطالبة بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية وذلك لجمع البيانات على مقياس من أربعة خيارات كما يلي: (أوافق – أوافق بشدة – لا أوافق – لا أوافق بشدة).

وفي نهاية المطاف أظهر التحليل النتيجة المطلوبة وقد كانت قريبة من المسح الذي أجرى على الاهتمام الفردي والدافع الداخلي لأنهما يلعبان دورا هاما في اكتساب اللغة وإتقان مفرداتها كما اتضح أنه ليس هناك فارقا كبيرا في المستوى الأكاديمي للطلاب على مستوى المرحلة الجامعية من السنة الأولي وحتى السنة الرابعة في إدراك أهمية التحفيز من أجل إتقان مفردات اللغة. كما أن معظم المستطلعين كانوا يشيرون إلى الخيار الأول والثاني (أوافق– أوافق بشدة) وهما الخياران الغالبان اللذان يعكسان رغبة الطلاب لإتقان مفردات هذه اللغة.

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