Evolution of L2 Motivation in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates how L2 motivation evolves over time in higher education. A motivational-intensity questionnaire was developed, tested for stability and validity, and then administered to a sample of 145 first-year male students studying in the foundation year of Jubail Industrial College, a higher education institution in Saudi Arabia. The statistical analysis showed that the motivational intensity of second-semester students was significantly lower in terms of daily studying and preparation for major exams. The results also showed a worrying pattern of Saudi L2 learners exhibiting little inclination to practice the reading skill. Teachers should recognize decline of study interest pattern and accordingly adjust teaching methodologies and motivational strategies.

Key Words: Autonomy, English Skills Practice, Loss of motivation.

INRODUCTION

Motivation is a subject of interdisciplinary interest, cutting through such diverse fields of knowledge as education, psychology, sociology, economics, and political science. Motivation, commonly defined as "the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" (Gardner, 1985: 10). It is an intricate and multidimensional concept that has been described as "one of the most elusive concepts in the whole domain of social sciences" (Dörnyei, 2001: 2). Although educational motivation is already a complex concept, some scholars have argued that it becomes even more complex when considered in relation to second language (L2) motivation. Other school subjects, on the one hand, include aspects of, or perspectives from the learner's cultural heritage even in a subject that might at first seem as neutral as history. "Anyone who has had the opportunity to discuss some 'historical fact' with a member of another ethnic community will easily recognize that facts have different perspectives" (Gardner, 1985: 6). L2 learning, on the other hand, is not merely learning facts *about* the target language; instead, it includes further cultural and social elements. "The learning of a foreign language involves far more than simply learning skills, or a system of rules, or a grammar; it involves an alteration in self-image, the adoption of new social and cultural behaviors and ways of being" (Williams and Burden, 1997: 115).

Theoretical framework

The approach adopted here to examine L2 motivation focuses on its evolution, or how it changes over time. This is because high motivation may look like a stable attribute of one learner, while low or lack of motivation might appear characteristic of another. This is often implied in the motivational literature when certain tools, e.g. a one-time questionnaire, are used (Dörnyei, 2001). Various motivational factors can influence one's motivation, positively or negatively, directly or indirectly, in variable levels in a time-sensitive and dynamic fashion (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008). Unfortunately, this temporal aspect of motivation is under-investigated. Some researchers examined this aspect in relation to the *micro*-temporal dimension. For example, German psychologists Heckhausen and Kuhl's (1985) Action Control Theory is concerned with the pre-decisional and post-decisional phases of a single action. Similar interest was shown for micro-temporal aspect by Williams and Burden (1997), and Dörnyei and Ottó (1998). On the *macro*-temporal side, "hardly any research has been done on analyzing the dynamics of L2 motivational change

and identifying typical sequential patterns and developmental aspects" (Dörnyei, 2001: 82). The current study addresses this macro-temporal dimension of motivation—that is, how motivation evolves over time? An area that falls under the temporal aspect of motivation, together with the above-mentioned micro perspective.

There are a few studies specifically targeting the nature of motivational evolution, but the big picture seems rather gloomy: There is a general consensus that motivation declines over time. One study found that the motivation of Japanese 7th graders learning English first decreased over a period of seven months and then seemed to stabilize when the learners started to develop realistic goals (Koizumi and Matsuo, 1993). In another study, interest in learning English was found to decline from junior high, to high school in both Japan and China (Tachibana et al., 1996). Ushioda's (1998) primary focus was on effective motivational thinking, demotivation, and self-motivation. Two other studies showed a decline in the motivation of British students between Year 7 and Year 9 (Chambers, 1999; Williams ., 2002). Ushioda (2001) interviewed 20 Irish young adult learners of French twice with a 16-month gap. Ushioda found that the goal-orientations of these learners evolved as they formed clearer definitions of L2 related personal goals. A study of Jewish learners of modern spoken Arabic showed a small, but consistent and significant, decline in motivation for all groups for all motivational measures (Inbar, et al., 2001). Gardner, et al., 2004 concluded that the attitudes and motivation of Canadian university learners of French decreased during one academic year from the fall to the spring.

A number of theories have been developed to explain this declining pattern. According to Ushioda (2001) motivation does not really decrease, but learners reevaluate the importance of learning English and then consciously adjust their effort accordingly. Some researchers observe a discrepancy between the learners' initially high motivation

and their generally low achievement, and conclude that the reported motivation does not reflect genuine motivation but mere positive attitudes (Moskovsky and Alrabai, 2009; Alrabai, 2010). Other researchers blame the unexpected reality that learners face (Chambers, 1999; Brophy, 2010). Learners may underestimate the amount of effort they would be required to do. The 'rude awakening' they experience may negatively influence their self-efficacy.

So, what is the importance of studying macro-temporal motivation? The answer lies in the commonly observed problem in classrooms where teachers tend to blame their students for lacking motivation, while these same students lay the blame on their teachers (Chambers, 1993). The importance of studying the macro-temporal dimension of motivation springs from that fact that it offers a possible solution to this problem: Each party needs to come to an understanding of the other. Teachers' understanding of students, my concern here, could make classroom instruction more effective as teachers will have realistic expectations of their students' dynamic motivation and readiness for learning in relation to different times of the day, week, semester, or academic year. This knowledge may allow teachers to expect typical motivational patterns and accordingly adjust their motivational effort and teaching methodology.

Motivation in higher education

Part of this temporal dimension is how motivation evolves over the years in higher education. One might be tempted to believe that the higher education student is naturally more motivated than a schoolchild. Based on the assumption that adult learners are different—and consequently require different treatment—from schoolchildren, Knowles (1968) introduced the term andragogy, as opposed to pedagogy, to refer to this distinction. In this view, adults are assumed to be more independent, more experienced, more interested in knowledge application in real life, and more

intrinsically motivated than schoolchildren. Therefore, they need andragogical, instead of pedagogical, methodologies to make learning and teaching effective.

Andragogy has generated much debate over its theoretical validity and its applicability to all, and only, adult learners. For example, not all adult learners are teacher-independent, nor all children teacher-dependent. This also applies to being intrinsically motivated to learn the subject matter and to have readily applicable real-life experience related to it. This debate led Knowles (1984) to revise his pedagogy–andragogy dichotomy and reformulate a more flexible view of these two concepts being in a continuum, consequently relating the whole point to the particular details of the learning situation rather than the learner's mere age.

Still, the higher education student, due to his/her maturity, is expected to hold more responsibility and accountability for the learning process than the schoolchild is. "When it comes to adults, the foundation of higher education must assume that the adult learner has primary responsibility for their own motivation.... Knowing the difference can mean the success or failure of higher educators in conveying to students learning skills that are permanent and student owned" (Pew, 2007: 18). The implication of this position is that some research findings on schoolchildren may not be readily applicable to adult learners. Therefore, findings related to schoolchildren need to be replicated on higher education learners before generalizing.

The Saudi context

Because the current study was conducted in Saudi Arabia, this literature review will focus on the studies conducted in the Saudi context. Another study (Al-Otaibi, 2004) examined the relationship between use of language learning strategies and L2 motivation among Saudi students at the Institute of Public Administration in Riyadh. The study found that motivation correlated with all strategies examined.

Motivation studies conducted in the Saudi higher education context generally focused on a number of issues other than the macro-temporal aspect. For example, Congreve (2005) compared students' attitudes toward English and Arabic at King Fahd University for Petroleum and Minerals. The results revealed that the participants had positive attitudes toward both languages, but their motivation tended to be instrumental with regard to English, and integrative with regard to Arabic. However, there is a general shortage of empirical studies of L2 motivation in Saudi Arabia (Alrabai, 2010). The number of higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia has greatly expanded recently, and English is taught in most, if not all, of these institutions. Despite this, I am aware of only one study (Makrami, 2010) that tapped into the macro-temporal dimension of motivation in Saudi higher education students. Makrami surveyed L2 students at Jazan University twice with a 12-week gap and the results showed a decrease in their attitudes. This study lends support to the 'gloomy picture' the studies reviewed above found in other contexts: Motivation tends to decrease over time. Maherzi (2011) studied the relationship between female students' perceptions of the classroom climate and their motivation to study the L2 at Effat University. The analysis of the questionnaire data showed that the students who perceived the classroom climate as autonomy-supportive tended to report intrinsic motivation as well as the more self-determined types of extrinsic motivation (i.e., introjected and identified regulations). Another Saudi study examined a similar issue but it was concerned with Saudi students studying at a U.S. university (Al Zayid, 2012). The researcher interviewed seven participants and found that their motivation fluctuated based on factors such as the learning environment, their teachers, their economic status, the results of their standardized tests, and the availability of a person who encouraged them.

Some studies that examined L2 motivation

in higher education were conducted in neighboring countries. It is reasonable to assume that higher education students in neighboring countries, being within the Arabian Peninsula, share some similarities with Saudi higher education students. In one study, Malallah (2000) compared the L2 attitudes of Kuwaiti university students. The questionnaire results showed that science students had the most positive attitudes, followed by Arabic students, and then by Islamic Studies students. Malallah attributes this pattern to exposure to the language and to its perceived instrumental value. In Yemen, Tamimi and Shuib (2009) investigated the motivation of petroleum engineering students at Hadhramout University of Sciences and Technology. The analysis of their data, collected through questionnaires and interviews, revealed that instrumental reasons were the major factor in learning English, followed by personal reasons, and finally by integrative reasons.

From the above review, it is clear that there is a gap in studying L2 motivation in terms of its evolution over time in Saudi higher education. This study is an attempt to fill this gap. However, this study will approach this issue from a different perspective, namely motivational intensity.

MOTIVATIONAL INTENSITY

According to Gardner's (1985) integrative motive, L2 motivation encompasses three components: motivational intensity (effort), desire to learn the language (cognition), and attitudes towards language learning (affect). Gardner (1985) also operationalized his theory into an extensively tested and highly reliable self-report instrument to measure motivation, and called it the Attitude/ Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). Despite the reliability of the AMTB, Dörnyei (1994 and 2005) raised two validity issues. First, the three components of motivation (effort, cognition, and affect) have rather overlapping items to the extent that it might be tricky to reassemble them if they were pooled together. This can also be an explanation

as to why these three scales intercorrelate highly. Second, the AMTB—in addition to assessing the underlying, unobservable mental aspect of motivation—also measures the actual behavioral outcomes through the effort scale. This might play a key role in increasing the predictive validity of the instrument. In reality, two of the above motivational components (cognition and affect) may be a prerequisite for the third (effort), which results in a final product of a continuum with autonomy at one end and procrastination at the other.

Many L2 motivation researchers investigate motivation in terms of attitudes or reasons for studying the language, e.g. integrative vs. instrumental, intrinsic vs. extrinsic, or ideal vs. ought selves; others also examine the relationship these attitudes and reasons might have with achievement or intended effort (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009). Although this is not a common approach, it is no less valid. This approach offers a different perspective to examine motivation because it does not rely on why learners study the language, but how much they do so, which Gardner (1985) calls motivational intensity. Therefore, provided that the necessary conditions are available, if a student autonomously practices the L2 outside the classroom, does not regularly procrastinate course assignments, and habitually spends a longer time studying the subject, we would expect that this behavior is an outcome of a higher level of motivation than that of another student who does the contrary. Thus, the student who goes home to study and practice the L2 as much as s/ he can, is expected to be more motivated than the student who goes home to engage in other *priorities* which are never over until a day or two before the test.

It must be emphasized here, though, that the effort referred to above is *voluntary* effort. "Focusing only on intensity does not completely describe the concept of motivated behavior" (Gardner, 1985: 53). This is because "Effort alone does not signify motivation. The motivated individual

expends effort toward the goal, but the individual expending effort is not necessarily motivated" (ibid.: 10). However, this still implies that the learner who does *not* expend effort would likely be less motivated than, everything being equal, another learner in the same classroom who expends effort voluntarily and habitually. Procrastination— or lack of voluntary effort—therefore seems to be an expected outcome of low or lack of motivation. In fact, some researchers have tried to help learners decrease procrastination with different motivational incentives (e.g., Tuckman, 1998). Tuckman (1991) also devised a Procrastination Scale to measure self-efficacy. With respect to autonomy, Ushioda (1996) also agrees that it is a result of motivation. "Autonomous language learners are by definition motivated learners" (Ushioda, 1996: 2).

THE PRESENT STUDY

The uniqueness of this study stems from the fact that it addresses an area that has not received sufficient attention. This area is the evolution of the Saudi student's L2 motivation in higher education. Another unique aspect of this study is that it examines this issue from a different perspective: motivational intensity. The present study will therefore focus on the amount of student's effort to learn the L2. However, since effort alone does not necessarily signify motivation, it is voluntary effort that will be examined. The questionnaire will repeatedly stress that the items are concerned with the usual amount of spent effort. This is intended to ensure that a high level of effort intensity is an outcome of genuine motivation. On the other hand, a low level of voluntary effort, everything else being equal, would most likely be a result of low motivation. To be more specific, the current study will examine the motivation of higher education students in terms of the following two research questions:

1. Is there a difference between 1st-semester and 2nd-semester freshmen in reported exam procrastination?
2. Is there a difference between these two groups in reported autonomy in studying and practicing the L2 outside the classroom?

MATERIALS AND METHODS
Participants

The participants ($N = 145$) were male freshman students of an elementary to pre-intermediate level of proficiency and with an age range of 18–20. They were studying at Jubail Industrial College (JIC), Saudi Arabia. JIC is an all-male English-medium college, where students primarily study English and mathematics in the Foundation Year (Preparatory Year). After successful completion of this first year, they qualify to proceed to their technical or business majors. The first group of the participants ($n = 86$) were in their first semester and the second ($n = 59$) in their second semester. All participants were in their first year studying either English alone or both English and mathematics.

INSTRUMENT

Due to the scarcity of studies that tested motivational intensity, a new instrument was developed. In order to measure exam procrastination (first research question), the instrument included items about the time the participants first started preparing for their tests in the semester of the study. The participants were asked three questions concerning the weekly Wednesday quizzes and the two major exams that they had had before completing the questionnaire. for example, "When did you start preparing for Major 1 this semester?" with the rating scale: I didn't study, one or two days before, 3–5 days before, a week before, 2 weeks before, 3 weeks before, or more than that. In order to measure autonomy (second research question), the instrument included items about their everyday study habits. The instrument asked the participants seven questions about general studying, learning vocabulary, and practicing the four skills (for example, "Do you usually practice speaking English outside the classroom?" with the

rating scale usually–never). There were two reading items related to reading online and offline. The offline reading item asked about how many pages, instead of words, the participants read daily since the participants were not accustomed to counting words. Although this questionnaire relies on single-item scales, this does not question its validity because the items require factual information as opposed to measuring an abstract construct (Oppenheim, 1992; Dörnyei and Taguchi, 2010). As a measure to raise the likelihood of eliciting truthful answers, the instrument did not require the participants to reveal their identities and so all questionnaires were answered anonymously. The questionnaire also had a dummy introduction that informed the participants that the management of the College was considering establishing a speaking club for students, which was true, and then asked the participants about their opinions about this project. The questionnaire clearly informed the participants that of the research purpose that is to survey their study patterns and how they improved their L2 for research purposes. In order to avoid any language interference, the questionnaire was administered in Arabic, the participants' L1.

Before the main study, the instrument was piloted with a group of students at the same institution and the results were not included in the final analysis. In order to check the participants' comprehension, the pilot questionnaire had an additional open-ended question after each item asking the participants to explain their choices and give examples. This pilot questionnaire revealed that the participants found some items ambiguous. In particular, the items about reading and writing practice generated unrelated responses, such as "I write graffiti". These two items were elaborated to obtain responses related to improving the L2. The participants in the pilot study also seemed confused by the rating scales of some items. They found it uninformative to use a scale from always to never without explaining what each anchor meant. Therefore, this type of rating scale was elaborated to be "*Never*,"

"*Rarely*; *only when I can*," "*Usually*; *most days of the week*" and "*Always*; *every day, or almost every day*." They also had other minor suggestions about the rating scales of some other items, such as ordering and rephrasing, and their suggestions were accepted and implemented. Finally, these participants were not sure whether the items were concerned about the recent or the habitual amount of their study time. To clarify this point, the word *usually* was added and underlined in order to stress that the required answer was the usual amount, i.e. not the latest or the ideal.

PROCEDURE

The teacher of each class of the Foundation Year was asked to choose four students. The teachers were instructed to choose one student they considered above-average, two average students, and one below-average. This subjective procedure was only intended to maintain a normal distribution by preventing the teachers from exclusively favoring their best students. This subjective choice was not considered in the data analysis and the participants were not categorized according to it. Finally, very few participants did not go beyond the first page in answering the questionnaire and so they were excluded, leaving 145 questionnaires for the data analysis.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

There were two scale types in the questionnaire. For the first type, the responses were coded as follows: 'Never' = 0, 'Seldom' = 1, 'Usually' = 3, and 'Always' = 4. For the second type, 'I don't' was coded as zero and the other anchors were coded into increasing numerals. Because the instrument was concerned with motivational intensity, which implies persistence and consistency, it was decided to code '*Irregularly*' as zero also.

Most of the items were analyzed using the Student's *t*-test because their scales were sufficiently continuous. However, four items—related to the two major exams, the

weekly quizzes, and the amount of daily studying—had to be analyzed using the Mann–Whitney U test because the rating scales were ordinal in nature, which violates a condition of parametric tests such as the t-test. Using a t-test requires interval data, where there is an equal distance between the scale anchors. The Mann–Whitney test ranks the data in each condition in order to check for systematic differences (see Brace *et al.*, 2012: 133).

In contrast to the t-test, the Mann–Whitney test is a nonparametric test, and therefore the descriptive statistics presented will include medians (*Mdn*) and ranges, instead of means and standard deviations. For inferential statistics, in addition to the Mann–Whitney test results (U) and their probabilities (p-values), effect sizes (r) will also be presented. Effect sizes can be calculated by dividing standard scores (Z) by the square root of the sample size ($r = Z / \sqrt{N}$). The hypotheses were two tailed, and the analysis was performed at the .05 level of significance.

RESULTS
Procrastination items

There were three procrastination areas probed by the instrument: preparing for the weekly quizzes and preparing for each of the two major exams the participants had had before the study. For the first area, the results of the Mann–Whitney test showed that there was no significant difference between the time the two groups started preparing for the weekly quizzes, *Mdn* = 2, *Range* = 6 for both groups, $U = 2476$, $p = .794$, $r = .02$. For the second area, however, the results showed that the 1st-semester group (*Mdn* = 3, *Range* = 6) started preparing significantly earlier than the 2nd-semester group (*Mdn* = 2, *Range* = 6) for the first major exam, $U = 1727$, $p = .001$, $r = .27$. For the last area, the 1st-semester group (*Mdn* = 3, *Range* = 6) also started significantly earlier than the 2nd-semester group (*Mdn* = 2, *Range* = 6) for their second major exam, $U = 1601$, $p < .001$, $r = .32$. These results are illustrated in Figure 1. Thus, based on these procrastination criteria, the 1st-semester group tended to be more motivated.

Figure (1): Median Responses of 1st-Semester and 2nd-Semester Groups to Items Analyzed with the Mann–Whitney Test
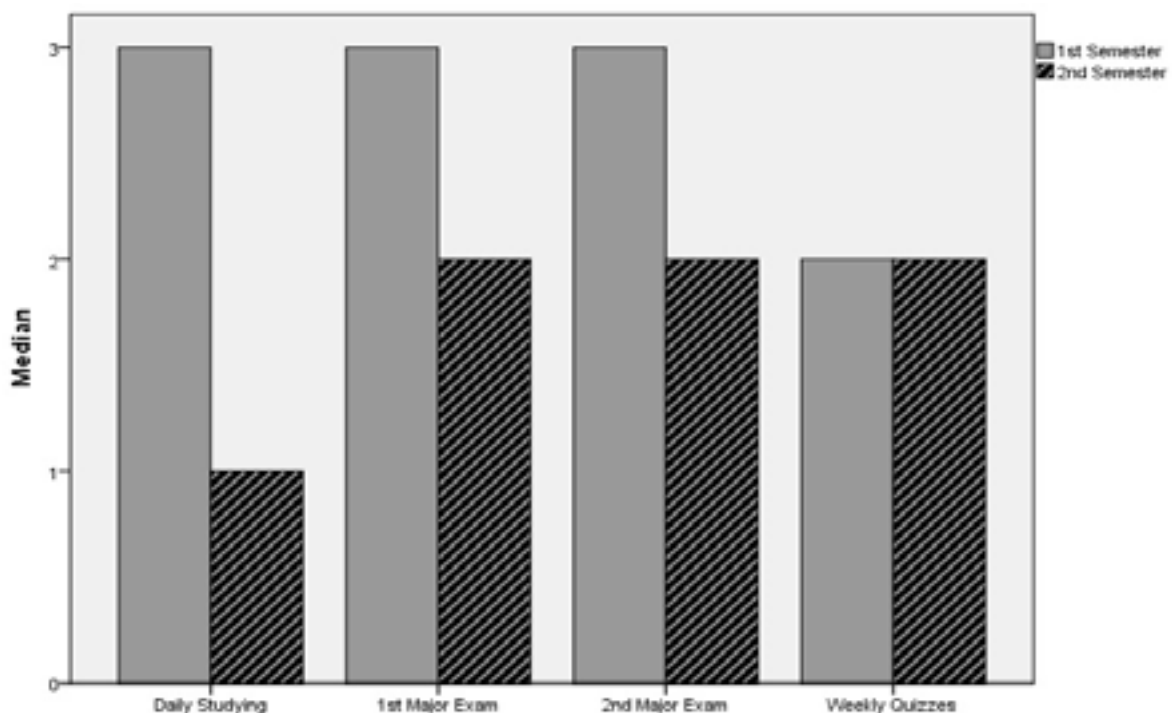
AUTONOMY ITEMS

To examine the participants' autonomy, several areas were surveyed including daily studying, learning vocabulary, and practicing the four skills. For daily studying, the 1st-semeter group (*Mdn* = 3, *Range* = 5) reported studying significantly more than the 2nd-semester group (*Mdn* = 1, *Range* = 5) on a daily basis, $U = 1926$, $p < .010$, $r = .21$. Examination of the medians shows that the 1st-semester group reported studying for about an hour daily, while the 2nd-semester group reported studying for only about a quarter of an hour. Because it was analyzed with the Mann–Whitney test, the daily studying item was included in Figure 1 together with the other items analyzed with this test. With respect to daily study, thus, the 1st-semester group seemed more autonomous.

For the remaining items, there were not significant differences between the two groups in either vocabulary, $t(111) = .079$, $p = 0.937$, $d = 0.01$; listening, $t(143) = 1.06$, $p = 0.291$, $d = 0.18$; speaking, $t(143) = 0.917$, $p = 0.361$, $d = 0.16$; writing, $t(106) = 0.008$, $p = 0.994$, $d = 0$; online reading, $t(143) = .307$, $p = 0.553$, $d = 0.10$; or offline reading, $t(143) = 0.977$, $p = 0.330$, and $d = 0.16$. However, examination of how much attention the participants devoted to each of these areas revealed an interesting pattern. Because it was not planned to investigate this aspect from the beginning, however, it will be discussed only briefly here. It can be noticed from the means in Figure 2 that vocabulary was the area on which the participants reported placing the most emphasis while the area with the least emphasis was offline reading. That offline reading ranked at the bottom of the list was rather unexpected in a foreign language context, where learners do not have frequent contact with L2 speakers outside the classroom. It was expected that reading and writing would be the most practiced skills.

Figure (2): Mean Responses of the Two Groups to the Skills and Vocabulary Items
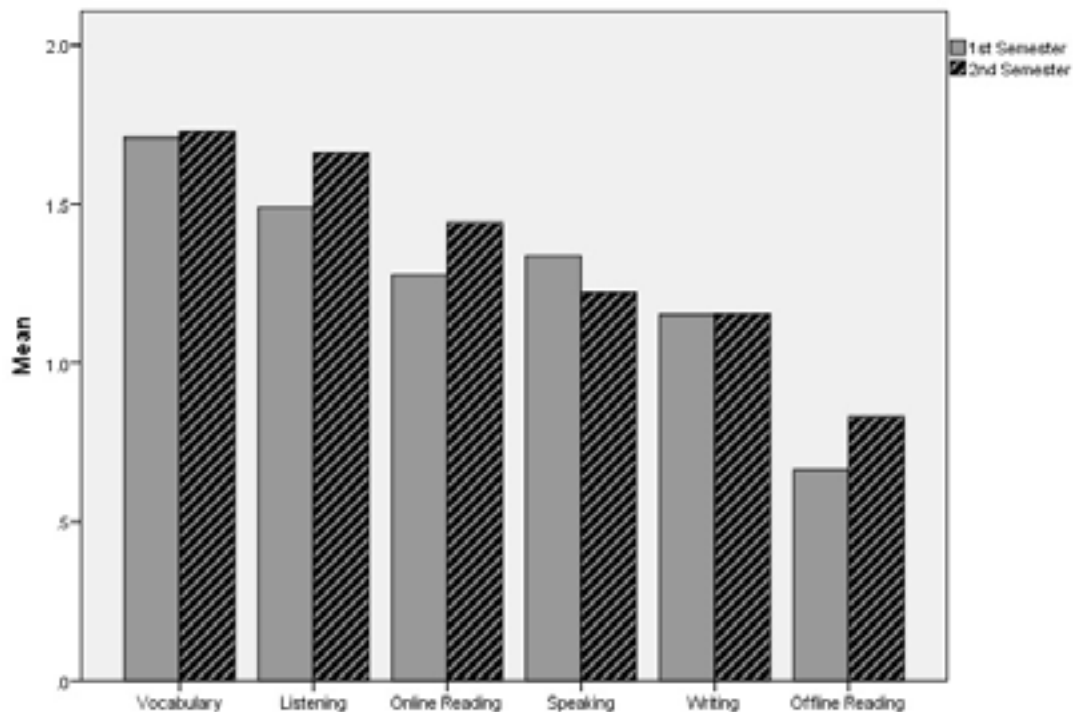
To summarize the results, the 1st-semester group appeared to be more motivated in that they procrastinated less in preparation for major exams than did the 2nd-semester group.

The 1st-semester group also outperformed the 2nd-semester group in daily studying. There were no significant differences in the other areas investigated. Finally, the results

revealed an unexpected pattern where offline reading ranked at the bottom for both groups.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study seem to lend some support to the other studies reviewed above that painted a 'gloomy picture', where there is a pattern of motivation to decline over time. In the present study, this pattern was revealed specifically in exam procrastination and daily studying, but not in the other areas. As discussed above, there are three possible explanations in the literature for the observed declining pattern. The first is related to the distinction between attitudes and motivation, the second to the deterioration of self-efficacy, and the third to the formulation of more realistic goals. These explanations will be discussed in relation to the findings of this study.

Some researchers attributed L2 learners the decline of initial high attitudes and motivation throughout the distinction between attitudes and genuine motivation (Alrabai, 2010; Moskovsky and Alrabai, 2009). These researchers were reluctant to explain the highly positive responses obtained as a representation of motivation. Instead, they interpreted these findings as positive attitudes and "global motivation" for L2 learning (Moskovsky and Alrabai, 2009: 4) in order to accommodate the generally low L2 achievement of the responders. The results of the current study seem to dispute this explanation. The 1st-semester group in this study also reported expending *effort* to learn the L2, which goes beyond mere positive attitudes. It may make more sense to attribute low achievement to poor self-regulation needed to sustain effort over time, rather than to lack of genuine motivation in all of these responders. Moskovsky and Alrabai's logic would have been acceptable if high motivation automatically led to high achievement, while in fact it is self-regulated effort—facilitated by high motivation—that leads to the desired achievement. In higher education, it may also make sense to blame

the decline in both L2 motivation and effort on overconfidence in one's ability, rather than the lack of real motivation, especially at institutions that offer intensive English programs. Learners in such cases may believe they have reached a sufficient level of L2 proficiency and do not need to work hard anymore. Distinguishing between enthusiasm and real motivation gives the impression of a difference in kind not in degree, an idea that seems conceptually problematic.

Another possible explanation for the observed decline is the deterioration of self-efficacy, which is the judgment of one's ability to succeed in a given activity. Students start learning the L2 with an amount of motivation to explore this new domain without realizing the amount of effort they need to exert and sustain in order to achieve high proficiency. This late realization might constitute a negative experience that takes its toll on self-efficacy. In Chambers's study (1999: 81), "The scene is set for a very positive start. Two years later, the picture is not quite so encouraging. It seems that pupils' expectations are not matched by the reality. The honeymoon is over". In higher education, the transition from high school to university or college may similarly energize one's motivation at first, leading to the same cycle again (for similar views, see Alrabai, 2010; Brophy, 2010). This negative experience may also result from certain institutional practices. For example, finding a gap between coursework and tests, not receiving attention from the teacher due to overcrowded classrooms, and inflexible institutional policies (Ushioda, 2001) can negatively influence self-efficacy. The deterioration of self-efficacy seems a satisfactory explanation for the results of this study.

Both of these explanations implicitly adopt the gloomy picture of motivation abating over time. The third explanation adopts a more positive view. Learners may consciously decide to take up other goals they personally consider more valuable.

The presence of other goals "compete[s] for attention and priority within the learner's overall hierarchy of personal needs and motives" (Ushioda, 2001: 111). Learners may start to regard other subjects as more important for academic and career success. This explanation might be especially relevant to higher education students, who may reevaluate the role the L2 will play in their short- or long-term goals. According to the third explanation, therefore, the picture is not as gloomy and the observed decline is a result of the adoption of more realistic goals after taking into consideration the perceived value of L2 learning. The adoption of alternative goals seems a satisfactory explanation for the results of this study, also.

The other finding of this study was the unexpected pattern of offline reading ranking the lowest in terms of the time devoted to it. Vocabulary was the most emphasized area. This might be explained by the salient nature of vocabulary learning. That is, in order to learn vocabulary, the learner can simply go to the textbook and review the new vocabulary items. Practicing listening, speaking, writing (chatting), and online reading may be facilitated by the accessibility to modern devices and gadgets by the young nowadays. That offline reading came last on the list was rather unexpected because one might be inclined to believe that in foreign language contexts, as opposed to second language contexts, reading is the activity that would always rank the highest. There might be several explanations for this pattern. One explanation might be that the advent of technology that facilitates listening, speaking, writing, and online reading is redefining foreign language contexts. Practicing listening and speaking may not longer be the exclusive privilege of second language contexts. Another explanation is that most of the available reading materials are either authentic or too difficult for the average student's proficiency level. Some learners may find it difficult to obtain materials that are both interesting enough to read and suitable for their current level of proficiency. An alternative explanation could be that the students are simply unaware of the importance and value of reading. It has to be admitted that a reading culture is not characteristic of many Arab societies, particularly in the Gulf.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The major pedagogical implication of studying the macro-temporal motivation is for teachers to have realistic expectations of their students' motivation at different times. Teachers who expect this declining pattern can adjust their motivational effort accordingly. For example, instead of blaming their students and labeling them as 'lazy', teachers would accept this decline as a natural developmental route of their students' evolving motivation. It is also likely that the motivational strategies that might work with students at an early stage may not work at a later one. A particular motivational strategy that used to work may stop working not because the strategy is inherently faulty, but because it may no longer be suitable for the students from a temporal perspective.

Another implication is that it seems reasonable to suggest that it would be more helpful to stream teachers according to their motivational skill. Teachers who have a wide repertoire of motivational strategies are more likely to fare better with low-motivation students. Moskovsky and Alrabai (2009: 7) suggest that their survey results illustrate that "Saudis possess fairly substantial 'dormant' reserves of motivation which in more favorable conditions could be deployed to produce better learning outcomes." Having motivationally competent teachers is most likely one of these favorable conditions.

Higher education administrators can also contribute to the problem of declining motivation by establishing more self-study facilities and encouraging students to utilize them frequently. This may help foster autonomy and sustain motivation. These self-study facilities should be convenient venues for L2 practice, provide both offline and online materials, and offer personalized

guidance until learners become confident in using them independently. The above results suggest that young people nowadays might be more inclined to utilize online reading materials. Although this is a positive sign, offline reading should also be encouraged. Therefore, the self-study facilities should pay special attention to making the reading materials relevant to their users and suitable for their proficiency levels. Many learners simply need to be made aware of the importance of extensive reading. Exhibiting little interest in extensive reading is a worrying problem. It is difficult to conceive how academic knowledge can develop without reading, online and offline, playing a prominent role in it. Instilling a reading culture in these young people must be a primary cause for concern to everybody involved in education, not just higher education administrators.

The reason why vocabulary was more popular might be related to the saliency of vocabulary. This idea is similar to that of 'specific goals' that falls under Locke and Latham's (1990) goal-setting theory. When they learn vocabulary, students may be aware that they simply need to learn the vocabulary items of each new lesson and probably review those of previous lessons. Unfortunately, practicing the other skills is not as straightforward. Because this level of goal clarity might be lacking, teachers need to place greater emphasis on helping students set specific, proximal, and moderately difficult goals. Regrettably, surveys of teacher motivational beliefs and practices have found that it is very unlikely that teachers are aware of the importance of goal-setting or that they practice it (Dörnyei and Csizér, 1998; Cheng and Dörnyei, 2007). Bringing this issue to the attention of teachers and helping them to incorporate it into their daily classroom practice could be an important step in increasing students' motivation.

In addition to goal-setting, another pedagogical implication is to incorporate more frequent testing. Tuckman (2000) found that using frequent testing increased the achievement of college students from a whole grade (a B compared to a C) to a third of a grade (a B- compared to a C+). However, this increase in achievement, though desirable and an indication of less procrastination, reflects external pressure not self-determined motivation. Still, frequent testing may motivate learners to develop self-regulation skills, which may be valuable in the long run. This implication obviously needs empirical validation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Generally, responses elicited by self-report questionnaires are potentially problematic in representing reality due to the possibility of memory bias. Still, some methodologists argue that a retrospective design may yield more valid data when it elicits the amount of past behavior after a relatively short time such as weeks or months—like the case in the present study—as opposed to eliciting attitudes and feelings about past events (Ruspini, 2002). In addition, in their 'grumpy overview' of emotion and memory research, Levine and Pizarro (2004) concluded that emotional memories are malleable and can be shaped by post-event experience and appraisals. "After all, the primary function of memory may be to guide future behavior rather than to keep an exact record of the past" (Levine and Pizarro, 2004: 534). We do not know what emotions were associated with exams for each participant in the sample and what emotions were elicited by the questionnaire. Hence, the tentative findings of this quantitative study need to be confirmed qualitatively as well as longitudinally.

FUTURE RESEARCH

In this study, three possible explanations of the declining motivation were discussed. A future study would shed more light on which of these, or other, explanations is more relevant to which group of learners and why. Future research would also explain why this declining pattern did not apply to the short

weekly quizzes. Further research should also address this macro-temporal motivation in other academic years (i.e., before and after freshman year), as well as trends of motivation within a single semester. Even within one class, attention and motivation to pay attention may fluctuate. Examining this issue and whether it is related to other issues such as time of day would be interesting. It might also be informative to relate these trends to other factors, such as tests, grades, proficiency levels, and inter-semester breaks. Policies and regulations of individual institutions may play a critical role in shaping motivational evolution. Future research should inform us about the effects different policies have and what motivational approaches should accompany each of these policies. In addition, it would be interesting to examine what motivational effects result from changing the class teacher. Teacher's motivation may also change over time. Teacher's micro- and macro-temporal motivation and that of their students might correlate and influence each other. Addressing the interplay of these two patterns should be another area of future research. It would be more intriguing if this interplay is studied from a dynamic systems theory perspective (cf. Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008). Finally, future research should also examine in more detail how teachers could benefit from knowledge of this changing motivational pattern, as well as whether L2 learners themselves can also benefit from this knowledge.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to investigate the macro-temporal dimension of L2 motivation in higher education. The findings might be interpreted as a confirmation of the gloomy picture of motivational decline, or in a more optimistic light where learners formulate goals that are more realistic. In the latter case, their motivation does not actually decline, but enters a new phase. Regardless of which of these two interpretations is adopted, teachers should recognize this

pattern and accordingly adjust teaching methodologies and motivational strategies. The consistency of the current results with others in this area appears to lend support to measuring motivation through motivational intensity when operationalized in terms of voluntariness and habituality.

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تطور دافعية تعلم اللغة الثانية في مرحلة التعليم العالي

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الملخص

يستعرض هذا البحث كيفية تطور دافعية تعلم اللغة الثانية في مرحلة التعليم العالي. أُعدت استبانة لقياس قوة الدافعية وبعد التحقق من الصدق والثبات، وُزعت على عينة مكونة من 145 طالبًا من الذكور الدارسين في السنة التحضيرية في كلية الجبيل الصناعية بالمملكة العربية السعودية.

أظهر تحليل البيانات انخفاضًا ذا دلالة في دافعية طلاب الفصل الدراسي الثاني؛ متمثلة في قلة المذاكرة اليومية، وفي المماطلة في التحضير للاختبارات. كما أظهرت النتائج نمطًا مثيرًا للقلق لدى الطلبة السعوديين يخص قلة ممارسة القراءة.

ويوصي البحث بأن يراقب المدرسون انخفاض دافعية الطلاب، ويعدّلوا طريقة التدريس، مع استخدام استراتيجيات محفزة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الدافعية الذاتية، فقدان الدافعية، ممارسة مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية.