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**Curriculum and Instruction**



**A comparative and evaluative study of motivational  
techniques used in the second intermediate level EFL  
classroom in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.**

Graduation Project

CI 598

**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of TESOL**

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## **Abstract**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the degree to which second intermediate EFL teachers in Riyadh use the motivational techniques preferred by their students and if this practice had a significant effect on their achievement in English. This study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the motivational techniques most preferred by second intermediate EFL students in Riyadh?
2. What are the most common motivational techniques used by second intermediate EFL teachers in Riyadh?
3. How consistent are the motivational techniques used by second intermediate EFL teachers in Riyadh with those preferred by their students?
4. Does the degree to which second intermediate EFL teachers in Riyadh use the motivational techniques have a significant effect on students' achievements in English?

The population of this study consists of 33 second intermediate EFL teachers and 65 students, selected from some schools in Riyadh during the academic year 2011-2012. A questionnaire was used to investigate the motivational techniques used by second intermediate EFL teachers and another questionnaire was used to investigate the preferred motivational techniques by second intermediate EFL students. Results showed there was not a significant match between the motivational techniques preferred by second intermediate EFL students and what their teachers really practiced in the English classroom. Results also showed that the more teachers used those motivational techniques, the higher the level of their students' achievement in English was. Therefore, the researcher recommended that more effort should be made to match students' motivational techniques with those practiced by their teachers. It was also recommended that students' perception of motivation techniques should be measured, developed and implemented on an on-going basis or at the beginning and end of the language course. Finally, the researcher hopes to turn the attention of the English teachers to the vital role they play inside the classroom.

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.2 Introduction and Background**

As a second language teacher and educator, I believe that a common problem for EFL teachers is how best to motivate their students to maximise their sense of responsibility for their own learning and so participate more actively in English classes. Motivating students to learn in school is a topic of great concern for educators today. Consequently, this study focuses on Saudi Arabian students' perception of motivational techniques and investigates the degree to which second intermediate EFL teachers use those

preferred by their students so as to provide them with the appropriate learning material and strategies which may enhance their language learning. Although to date no studies in Saudi Arabia have dealt with this subject, research undertaken in the course of writing this paper it has been revealed that this distinction is not unique to the Arab world. In a study by Al-Hyassat (2006), the researcher identifies a significant mismatch between the motivational techniques preferred by tenth grade EFL students and actual teacher practice in the English classroom. Results also show that as more teachers use motivational techniques, the higher the level of students' achievements in English. Moreover, Baloto (1991) believes that if motivation is present, learning can be facilitated; conversely, in its absence effective learning becomes difficult. Research and experience to date show that strongly motivated learners can achieve highly, regardless of circumstances (Daskalovska et al, 2012). The importance of motivation in language learning achievement has been proven by empirical studies. Many researchers considered motivation to be one of the main indicators of potential success in learning a second language. Certainly the most demanding question in foreign language learning is how to motivate students to learn a foreign language. It should be emphasised that there is no single magical formula for motivating students to learn a foreign language.

## **1.2 Significance and Purpose of the study**

This study will investigate the degree to which second intermediate EFL teachers in Riyadh use the techniques preferred by their students, so as to determine if this practice significantly affects their achievements in English. Consequently, the findings of this study may be considered as important for the following groups:

- EFL teachers wishing to match their motivational techniques with the techniques preferred by their students in order to positively impact on their students' achievements in English.
- EFL curriculum planners and authors wishing to incorporate more motivating materials and teaching techniques into EFL curricula, so that students can develop their appreciation of learning English as a foreign language.
- EFL researchers empowered by the findings of this paper and seeking to investigate other aspects of their needs, interests and preferences as learners.

## **1.3 Statement of the problem**

Students' achievements in a second language are typically affected by several factors. Numerous studies have aimed to provide second language teachers with possible ways of facilitating second language learning and discover factors involved in second language learning such as motivation, achievement, age,

sex, emotional factor, etc (Chang, 2005). My experience of teaching in elementary school, made me aware that many L2 teachers are more inclined to apply the teaching methods described in teachers' books rather than designing their own methods or activities in response to their students' needs and preferences. Students who are uncomfortable with these methods are therefore likely to lag behind. Keeping students interested and engaged in learning the English language can be seen as a real challenge to most teachers in Saudi Arabia, where, students are generally demotivated or unwilling to use English in real life situations and rarely think of English as necessary except for passing school tests. Therefore, it is essential that teachers seek ways to encourage their students to be active users of language instead of passive recipients of language rules. It is thus important to investigate if the degree to which Saudi EFL teachers' implementation of motivational techniques preferred by their students significantly affect achievement outcomes in English.

## **2. Literature Review**

Studies regarding the relationship between teachers' employment of motivational techniques, and students' preferences when learning English as a foreign Language are scarce (Al-Hyassat, 2006). There is, however, no clear reason why this type of study could not be undertaken. Therefore, over time students' motivation and perceptions when learning L2 have changed and with them, their English learning strategies and preferences. The material presented here does show a gap in former research in terms of studies examining use of different motivational strategies in a comparative context. However, some of the studies discussed do cover the fact that teachers and students tend to agree on when a strategy is to be employed and how effective it is for extending the scope of students' motivation and learning achievements.

### **2.1 Studies focusing on the relationship between motivation and language learning in general**

Al Maiman (2005) conducted an initial study in an Arabic setting, which examined whether formal English language learning has an effect on 1<sup>st</sup> level intermediate students' motivation when learning English. He collected his data using a questionnaire of 54 items, which was distributed to 301, 1<sup>st</sup> intermediate students in Saudi Arabia before they undertook any formal language learning and then again after thirty-two weeks of formal language Learning. The results from this study showed that students initially had a high level of motivation to learn English, but that this high level reduced after the students had been studying English for thirty two weeks. Al Maiman suggested the reasons for this diminishment were that the students in all parts of Saudi Arabia use the same English curriculum and the same methodology regardless of individual needs. In his study; Sandoval Pineda (2011) examined the relationship between students' motivation and their attitudes towards learning English as a second language

through the use of quantitative and qualitative research instruments and techniques. The sample group for the study consisted of Mexican university students on three undergraduate academic programs. The results showed that student participants displayed positive motivation and attitudes toward learning English as a second language in general.

## **2.2 Studies regarding the relationship between motivation and students' achievement in English**

The studies discussed above examined students levels of motivation in regards to a number of factors in a general way; those in this section look more specifically at the possibility of there being a correlation between motivation and achievement. For instance, C.-L. Wang (2005), conducted a study that explored the effects of learning motivation in 33 eighth graders of EFL classroom, which found a significant correlation between motivation and achievement. Another study was conducted by Abdel Fattah, (2010) to investigate the relationship between motivation and achievement in low-stakes examinations. A sample of ninth-grade students sat either a mathematics or a science examination. It was found that a high level of motivation with regards to taking the examination invariably increased mean performance in both examinations, and the correlation was significant.

## **2.3 Studies about the relationship between students learning preferences, teachers' practices and students' achievement**

Al-Hyassat ( 2006) conducted a study to examine the degree to which tenth grade EFL teachers in Jordan apply the preferred motivational techniques of their students and if this practice had a significant effect on their achievements. The sample of the study consisted of 90 teachers and 310 students. A questionnaire was used to investigate the motivational techniques used by tenth grade EFL teachers and another questionnaire was used to investigate the motivational techniques preferred by Tenth grade EFL students. Results showed there was a significant mismatch between the motivational techniques preferred by tenth grade EFL students and what their teachers actually practiced in the English classroom. Results also showed that the more teachers used motivational techniques, the higher the level of their students' achievement in English was. Gardner and Bernaus (2008) conducted a survey studying 31 English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers and their students ( $N= 694$ ) in Catalonia, Spain. Their intention was to explore language teaching strategies, as reported by teachers and students, and the effects of these strategies on students' motivation and English achievement. The results indicated that the teachers and students agreed on the relative frequency of some strategies but not on the frequency of other strategies and that, although the teachers' reported use of motivational and traditional strategies was not related to the students' English achievement, attitudes, motivation, or language anxiety, the students' perceptions of

these strategies tended to be related to their attitudes and motivation at both the individual and class levels.

To summarize, there have been many studies that have investigated the relationship between motivation and second language (L2) achievement. The results of the previous studies discussed, have demonstrated that motivation is one of the most important factors in language learning and achievement. This means that if students are more motivated, their achievement is likely to increase. Moreover, results have also showed that teachers need to focus on students' preferences when planning to embark on teaching.

### **3.Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design:**

This is a descriptive survey and a correlational study intended to identify the practices of second intermediate EFL teachers', based in schools in Riyadh during the academic year 2011-2012, and the motivational techniques preferred by their students.

#### **3.2 Population and Sample of the Study:**

In the present study, the sample population consists of 33 second intermediate EFL teachers and 65 students. They were chosen randomly.

#### **3.3 The Instruments of the Study**

Two instruments were used for the purpose of data collection:

1. A questionnaire to investigate the motivational techniques used by second intermediate EFL teachers.
- 2- A questionnaire to investigate the motivational techniques preferred by second intermediate EFL students.

The researcher used the questionnaires from Al-Hyassat's (2006) study and developed them into two questionnaires so that they were suitable for this research.

#### **3.4 Validity and Reliability of the questionnaires:**

The validity of the questionnaires was determined by a jury of 2 Doctors in general Curricula and teaching methods and 2 editors for the translated edition of the questionnaire. As for the value of the alpha reliability coefficient Cronbach Alpha Coefficient Cronbach was 0.89 for students and 0.93 for teachers which were considered to be appropriate to conduct the study.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

Spearman correlation coefficient used to measure if any differences are statistically significant between motivational techniques used by second intermediate EFL teachers in Riyadh with those preferred by their students . Simple linear regression used to study the impact of the motivational techniques used by teachers on the academic achievement of students.

### 4.Results of the Study

#### 4.1 Answer Question 1

What are the motivational techniques most preferred by second intermediate EFL students in Riyadh?

Table (1)

Averages and standard deviations for the degree of students' preferences of motivational techniques

No	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Arrange
7	I like my teacher to give me enough time to finish my answers.	4.754	0.662	1
10	I prefer my teacher to use a variety of teaching aids to keep me interested while she is teaching.	4.646	0.672	2

12	I like my teacher to respond positively to my comments and suggestions during the lesson.	4.569	0.81	3
5	I like the teacher to give us clear instructions before we do anything.	4.492	0.921	4
16	I prefer to see examples to infer the rules by myself.	4.477	0.92	5
Total		3.8329	.43852	

Table ( 1 ) shows the motivational techniques most preferred by second intermediate EFL students in Riyadh. The preferences are favourable and over the average point in general, the value is (3.83), which demonstrates that the students have motivation techniques that they prefer to use when learning.

**The data analysed from the previous table to sample opinions on motivation techniques and responses were as follows:** The technique (7) "I like my teacher to give me enough time to finish my answers" received the most consistently positive response from the sample (“always”). Suggesting a mean of (4.75) and a standard deviation of (0.66)( 0.67).

#### 4.2 Answer Question 2

**What are the most common motivational techniques used by second intermediate EFL teachers in Riyadh?**

**Table (2)**

**Averages and standard deviations for the degree of use of teachers for motivation techniques**

No	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Arrange
21	I ask different types of questions to check students' understanding.	4.8485	.44167	1
18	I teach grammar in my English class inductively.	4.7576	.56071	2
13	I respond positively to my students' comments and suggestions during the lesson.	4.6667	.59512	3
28	I praise my students' successes when I meet the school staff or their parents.	4.6364	.69903	4
8	I encourage my students to ask questions while I am teaching.	4.5758	.70844	5
Total		4.0063	.44373	

Table (2) shows that the most common motivational techniques used by second intermediate EFL teachers in Riyadh for the questionnaire are above average in general; based on the arithmetic average of the items of the questionnaire for the sample as a whole 4.0063, indicating that teachers prefer to use the motivational techniques when teaching to a significant degree.

**The data from the previous table analysed to sample opinions about the motivational techniques most used are as follows:** Technique (21) I ask different types of questions to check students' understanding an above average number of the sample responded (always), placing it first with an arithmetic average of (4.8485) and a standard deviation of (.44).

### 4.3 Answer Question 3

**How consistent are the motivational techniques used by second intermediate EFL teachers in Riyadh with those preferred by their students?**

To answer this question the author applied a Spearman correlation coefficient. Spearman correlation coefficient results for the relationship between the motivational techniques used by second intermediate EFL teachers in Riyadh with those preferred by their students are as follows.

**Table (3)**

Students		Teachers		R	Sig
Mean	sd	Mean	Sd		
115.3385	13.17108	116.1818	2.24007	0.41	0.017

Table 3 shows a weak positive correlation between the motivational techniques favoured by students and those used by teachers (0.41). This indicates that there are differences between the motivational techniques most favoured by students and those used by teachers.

### 4.4 Answer Question 4

**Does the degree to which second intermediate EFL teachers in Riyadh use the motivational techniques have a significant effect on students 'achievements in English?**

To answer the fourth question, the researcher used a simple linear regression to study the impact of the motivational techniques used by teachers on the academic achievement of students.

**Table (4)**

**Simple linear regression to study the impact of the motivational techniques used by teachers**

Independent variable	B	F	Sig
Constant	47,17	2,27	0,14
Motivational techniques	0,26		
Correlation coefficient	0,26		

Table (4) shows the results of regression analysis to study the effect of the motivational techniques used by teachers at the level of the students to a value of ( $f=2.27$ ) is not statistically significant at a level of (0.14); indicating a significant impact of motivation techniques on teachers at the level of the students under study.

This means that there is no effect from the motivational techniques used by teachers on the academic achievement of their students.

In summary, the results in this chapter show that the most preferred motivation techniques for second intermediate EFL students were **"I like my teacher to give me enough time to finish my answers"**. Whereas , the most preferred motivational technique for second intermediate EFL teachers was **"I ask different types of questions to check students' understanding"**.

Results also showed that, although there was a match between the motivational techniques preferred by second intermediate EFL students and what their teachers really practiced in the English classroom; this was low (.41) which means it was not a significant match.

Finally, the results also showed that there was not a significant effect resulting from the degree to which teachers' practice the motivational techniques on their students' achievements in English. In other words, if teachers' practice of motivational techniques were to increase, students' level of achievement would then improve.

## **5. Discussions, Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Discussion of the results related to the first question:**

Table 1 shows that the most preferred motivational technique was number 7: **"I like my teacher to give me enough time to finish my answers."** This may reveal that EFL students have strong a desire and motivation to learn a second language, but because they over-monitor themselves as producers of English, they need enough time to think and to express their ideas accurately. However, they also need their English teachers to understand this and give them a chance to learn. Another possible explanation is that in spite of the fact that EFL students are new learners, they are strongly motivated to learn the English language, and need time to understand the question before answering. The second most preferred motivational technique by students was number 10: **"I prefer my teacher to use a variety of teaching aids to keep me interested while she is teaching."** This expresses the effect of technology on students, and teachers should release the importance of using such technology.

The advantage of this approach is the effect it has on facilitating the learning of English and making it fun. Furthermore, the use of different techniques, such as drawing, PowerPoint presentations, audio-visual aids or computer games, may not only make students more comfortable in their learning, but also help them to develop their language skills. The third students' preferred motivational technique was number 12: **"I like my teacher to respond positively to my comments and suggestions during the lesson."** In the area of teaching and learning a second language, there has been increasing interest in altering the focus of the teacher-centred classroom to a learner-centred classroom by shifting from the product of language learning to the process of language learning. This approach views the learner as an active participant in the teaching-learning act, and thus the effects of teaching depend partly on what the learners like, what they know (i.e. their prior knowledge), what they think about during learning (i.e. their comments and suggestions) and their active cognitive processes (Dansereau, 1985; Weinstein & Underwood, 1985; cited in AlMaiman, 2005).

To sum up, teachers may do their students many favours if they make language learning a fun process. Teachers could simply use checklists at the beginning of the year to establish the students' likes and dislikes in order to meet as many of these varying needs and preferences as possible, by varying their teaching methods, learning tasks and evaluative measures. In fact, teachers who teach English according to their own beliefs and students' preferences have classrooms where gains in students' achievement are significantly greater than those in the classrooms of teachers who fail to do this (Mastrini, 1997).

## **5.2 Discussion of the results related to the second question:**

Table 3 reveals that the most common motivational technique used by EFL teachers was number 21: **"I ask different types of questions to check students' understanding."** This expresses the fact that EFL teachers are aware of students' different learning styles and individual differences, and they are concerned

with making sure that their students learn well. These outcomes are in line with prior research conducted by Park (2005). Also, it is important for teachers to realise that by focussing on one motivational technique, such as the relevance of the subject, they may well affect implementation of other motivational techniques. They should vary their techniques according to students' perceptions, needs and concepts. The second of the EFL teachers' preferred motivational techniques was number 18: **"I give my students examples and let them infer the rules while I'm teaching."** This technique shows that most teachers try to use the indirect technique to help their students to think, and they try to vary the usual learning routine. The third of EFL teachers' preferred motivational techniques was number 13: **"I respond positively to my students' comments and suggestions during the lesson."** This shows that EFL teachers are concerned with receiving feedback from their students in order to improve their techniques in the future. In fact, these teachers want to create a positive, safe and cooperative environment so as to help make learning easy, fun and beneficial. All these techniques refer to the improvements in teaching technique in KSA. These teachers shift the teaching process from teacher-centred to student-centred. According to Burnett, (1999); cited in Awan et al., 2011), as mentioned above, teachers must praise students' achievements, whether inconsequential or important, as children whose teachers say positive things to them have higher self-confidence. Therefore, there must be a close relationship between the teachers and the students, because when the students like their teachers they experience motivational and achievement benefits (Montalvo, Mansfield and Miller; cited in Awan et al., 2011). Moreover, the remainder of the techniques show that EFL teachers are concerned with their students' interests; they ask them questions, monitor their progress, praise, encourage and motivate them. These findings are not the same as those of Al-Hyassat (2006). This may be because in the modern age, teachers are more aware of their students' needs, interests, preferences etc, and are aware that the more they use motivational techniques, the higher the level their students' achievement in English is likely to reach. The EFL curriculum can also affect the way in which teachers are concerned with their students, because authorities always attempt to improve the curriculums to meet the students' and society's needs.

### **5.3 Discussion of the results related to the third question:**

As shown in Table 4, the students preferred certain motivational techniques which were commonly used by their teachers, such as items 13, 18, 21 and 28. The results of this study differ from some studies, such as those of Al-Hyassat (2006), Brown (2006) and Bernaus (2008). The results showed that there was a significant mismatch between the motivational techniques preferred by EFL students and what their teachers actually practiced in the English classroom. However, this difference can be explained by the time at which the present research was undertaken (i.e. 2012). The processes of teaching and learning English as a second language can be argued to have improved. Rather than being teacher-centred, it has

moved to being student-centred. The society, the technology, the students themselves, the curriculum, the teachers and many other factors have affected this study and made it different to other studies mentioned previously. Because the researcher distributed the questionnaires herself, she noticed that the average age of the teachers who answered the questionnaire was around 23-35, and it is thought that this young age helps teachers to get closer to their students and to determine their preferences. Another reason may be that teachers have learned how to elicit their students' preferences, and they feel that these are important for classroom teaching. Moreover, the results of this study may have implications for both everyday teaching and for educational research. For teachers, it is important to realise that a safe environment, characterised by close proximity to their students (through helpful/friendly and understanding behaviours and limiting the amount of dissatisfied and correcting behaviours) is important in strengthening students' motivation for their subject.

This means that teachers can affect the amount and quality of the effort and pleasure experienced in all of their classes to the same degree, but they can affect their students' perceptions of relevance more in some classes than in others (Brok, 2006).

#### **5.4 Discussion of the results related to the fourth question:**

Prior research shows strong positive associations between the degree to which second intermediate EFL teachers in Riyadh use the motivational techniques and significant effects on students' achievements in English (e.g. Chang, 1999; Love, 2001; Al-Hyassat, 2006). One possible reason for this may be that the higher the degree to which the teachers practice motivational techniques, the higher their students' achievement levels will be. These results are similar to those of other studies, such as those conducted by Guilloteaux et al. (2008), Weger-Guntharp (2008) and Brown (2006), who found a significant correlation between teachers' practices and students' level of achievement. Therefore, teachers may simultaneously improve student outcomes.

An important attribute of this study, with practical implications, is the use of students' perceptions of motivational techniques. Teachers' knowledge of students' perceptions regarding motivational techniques may help the teachers to gauge the effect of the students' behaviours. Given the strong link between students' perceptions and their educational achievements, such perceptions may even be of more practical use than teachers' own perceptions. For example, prior research has shown that there are links between the degree to which EFL teachers use the motivational techniques and students' achievements in English (e.g. Peacock, 2000; Love, 2001; Gardner and Bernaus, 2008).

#### **5.5 Conclusions:**

It can be concluded that improvement in learning and achievement is the basic agenda of every education system. One of the fundamental results of this study is that EFL teachers do not use motivational techniques preferred by their students. Another result is that there is not a relationship between teachers' use of the motivational techniques preferred by their students and the students' achievement levels. Based on these results, the study therefore suggested that teachers try to understand students' learning motivations and their use of strategies, in order to provide them with the appropriate learning materials and learning techniques that may enhance their EFL language learning. The findings of this research will potentially turn the attention of Saudi teachers and university faculty members toward students' motivational and attitudinal needs. During the learning process, teachers will become more aware of their students' needs, interests and perspectives. Hence, teachers will be more effective in helping students become proficient in the English language. As an English teacher in Saudi Arabia, the author noticed that very little effort was made to understand the learners' preferred motivational techniques when learning a second language. In order to improve students' language learning proficiency, the Ministry of Education made some changes, revising the English language curriculum and creating a training session for teachers in order to train them how to deal with students. The Ministry added pedagogical courses for university English students, such as classroom management, educational psychology, teaching methods and the design of instructional materials, enabling them to better address their students' preferences. Therefore, teachers should develop professionally, so that the more they teach, the closer they can adhere to their students' needs, interests and preferences. However, English language teachers and educators, parents and even Ministry of Education officials have continued to express their concerns about Saudi students' abilities to use the English language proficiently.

## **5.6 Recommendations:**

Based on the results of this study, the researcher recommends the following:

- “motivation is in fact a dynamic and unstable construct that tends to fluctuate and change over time depending on the present context and is influenced by immediate factors” (Ofra, Smadar and Schmidt, 2001:308). In other words, motivation is considered to be one of the main determinants of second language success (Gardner, 1985).

For these reasons, it is recommended that students' perceptions of motivational techniques should be measured, developed and implemented on an on-going basis or at the beginning and end of the language course. Teachers can use classroom observation, interviews, questionnaires etc in order to do this, so that both teachers and their students can attempt to adapt to each other's preferences. This, in turn, is expected to improve the teaching practices and students' learning.

Finally, the researcher hopes to draw the attention of English teachers to the vital role they play in the classroom. In addition to their role as facilitators, teachers need to think as researchers, and reflect on what is happening inside the classroom. They need to obtain feedback from their students almost daily, and keep a periodic (at least weekly) journal of what is happening in the classroom. This would provide valuable information regarding students' needs and expectations about learning the English language.

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