Are Saudi Girls Motivated to Learn English?

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Abstract

This paper is based on data drawn from Ph.D. research investigating the relationship between language and motivation. It specifically describes the motivating and demotivating factors that influence young female language learners in the Saudi context. This study aims to investigate what factors could motivate female learners of ESL classrooms. Further, the author utilizes sociocultural theory to explore what factors could affect participants' motivation as female Muslim Arabs. She also supports her arguments using data drawn from classroom observations, pupil focus group interviews and one-to-one teacher interviews. The current study involves 132 second-year pupils from a secondary public school in Taif city and three Saudi English language teachers. The findings indicate the impact of various social factors relevant to the Saudi identity, culture and everyday life on girls' ESL learning in the Saudi context. Participants' beliefs and practices of ESL appear to be influenced by certain imaginative views towards their local identities and cultures, their possible selves in the future, and the linguistic communities. In addition, findings regarding autonomy indicate that identity and culture attributes affects teachers' and learners' roles in the classroom and their motivation both inside and outside the classroom. Finally, the study recommends extending the setting of the sample for future study to include more than one city in order to compare cultural and social attributes that impact ESL, as cultures and identities vary from one area to another in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: Autonomy, beliefs, culture, identity, motivation, second language learning

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