

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN SAUDI EFL STUDENTS' MOTIVATIONAL AND ATTITUDINAL BEHAVIORS AND THEIR PERFORMANCE AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE



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ABSTRACT

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Research demonstrates that language learners' motivation and attitudes are a standout amongst the most imperative factors that can impact the success or failure in learning that language. Along these lines, the principle point of the present study is to investigate Saudi EFL learners' motivation for learning English and their attitudes toward learning the language and toward its native speakers. It also looks at the correlation between their motivational and attitudinal behavior and their performance and academic achievement in English language. In addition, it makes some pedagogical implications, based on the findings. A questionnaire and an interview were developed and used to collect data from participants. A total of sixty Saudi students, who were enrolled in intensive English courses at different universities in Canada, participated in the questionnaire, and thirty (half of the specimen) of them were arbitrarily chosen to partake in a subsequent meeting. The aftereffects of the survey and the meeting demonstrated that most of the Saudi EFL understudies had high inspiration to learn English, uplifting states of mind toward learning English and inspirational dispositions toward the local English speakers. They also revealed that there was a clear positive correlation between Saudi EFL students' motivational and attitudinal behavior and their performance and academic accomplishment in the language.

Contribution/ Originality: This study is one of very few studies that have investigated language learners' motivation and attitudes among Saudi students, particularly the impact of their motivational and attitudinal behaviors on their performance and academic achievement in English language.

1. INTRODUCTION

Amid late years, advanced education openings have expanded for Saudi students (Al-Seghayer, 2011). As a major aspect of their further education, Saudi students must learn the English language, develop capability in it for many fields of study, and in addition utilize materials generally derived from Western contexts view. Students' motivation and attitudes are considered as key factors in foreign/second language learning and teaching process because these factors can have an effect, either positive or negative, on a learner's desire to learn and use English. Dornyei (2001) told that motivation remains the most important elusive concepts in the field of the social sciences.

Learners' motivation has been extensively accepted as a key factor that influences the rate and the success of foreign/ second language learning (MacDonough, 1983; Ellis, 1994). MacDonough (1983) confirmed that, "motivation of the students is one of the most important factors influencing their success or failure in learning the language". Motivation is fundamentally the main thrust, which pushes a person to play out some activity. For the last five or six decades, the psychologists and linguists have been examining this inner drive. The shift has turned over a past few decades from psychology to second language acquisition (SLA) and education. In this regard, Oxford (1994) indicated that "language learning motivation is now in the spotlight as it has perhaps never been before".

Karahan (2007) clarified that the positive language attitudes let the learner have a positive introduction toward the English language. To study the intricacies of motivational factors, Dornyei (1994) thought it was necessary to examine the mutual relationship of social attitudes and motivation for learning foreign/second language. English language instructing and learning is a shared activity between the instructors and the instructed, which encourages the students' English learning, enhances and refines their capacities with a positive attitude towards the language and towards its native speakers. A language student's motivation for learning the language is influenced by his/her attitudes towards learning that language and towards its native speakers. Attitudes can be seen as a propensity to react decidedly or contrarily towards a specific thing, thought, individual, circumstance, and so forth. Gardner (1985) characterized attitude as an evaluative response to some referent, derived from the premise of the person's convictions or viewpoints about the referent. Concerning education, Brown (2000) noticed that language instructors ought to perceive that all learners have positive and negative attitudes in different degrees. He, further pointed out that the negative attitude can be changed by insightful instructional strategies, for example, utilizing materials and exercises that assistance learners accomplish a comprehension and appreciation of foreign culture, a fact that might be reflected in the process of learning the foreign/second language.

The connection amongst motivation and attitude has been viewed as a prime concern in language learning research. Gardner and Lambert (1972) for example, specified that the student's motivation "to learn is thought to be determined by his attitudes towards the other groups in particular by his orientation towards the learning task itself". Lifrieri (2005) also asserted that "attitudes are necessary insufficient indirect condition for linguistic attainment. Only when paired up with motivation proper due attitudinal tendencies relate to the levels of the students engagement in language learning, and to attainment".

Improving learners' motivation and attitudes towards learning a language is thought to be a standout amongst the most essential issues that ought to be considered while talking about elements influencing the process of teaching and learning. Winne and Marx (1989) noticed that motivation and attitude are the two conditions for, and consequences of, effective instruction; subsequently, research were carried out in different educational fields to inspect procedures and methods that could add to improve learners' motivation and attitudes towards learning. Furthermore, a better understanding of student's motivation and attitudes may help EFL/ESL curriculum and instruction designers to device language teaching programs that generate the motivation and attitudes most conducive to the production of more successful EFL/ESL learners (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Midraji, 2003). Thusly and given the significance of recognizing students' motivation and attitudes towards learning English, this study had been undertaken to explore Saudi EFL students' motivation, attitudes and the correlation between their motivational and attitudinal behaviors and their performance and academic achievement in learning English as an outside dialect.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

It is equivalent and critical to EFL instruction that Saudi University students have not been given the enough time and chance to get their own needs, motivation, and attitudes in their EFL preparation program (Al-Seghayer, 2011). Furthermore, language instructor recognizable proof of learners' needs and motivation in language

instruction and educational modules planning is noteworthy, learner input pertaining to their self-assessed (Fayer and Krasinsli, 1984). Midraji *et al.* (2008) thought that it could assist material writers create and teachers choose activities and task that “tap students’ motivation and attitudes”. For example, Pendergrass *et al.* (2001) showed that English is a critical and fundamental in the apparatus in the engineering education and, in this manner, “Integrating English into engineering, science and math courses is an effective way to improve the performance of engineering students in oral and written communication” (p. 1).

Considering the above concerns, the researcher conducts the present study. It is an attempt to improve English language instruction process in the Saudi Arabian context.

1.2. The Study Aims

The present investigation goes for:

- Investigating Saudi EFL learners' motivation for learning the language.
- Investigating Saudi EFL learners' attitudes towards learning the language and towards its native speakers.
- Exploring the correlation between Saudi EFL students’ motivational and attitudinal behavior and their performance and academic achievement in English language.
- Providing some pedagogical implications to motivate Saudi students toward learning English.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

Language learners’ motivation and attitude is a central area of investigation in the field of foreign/second language, and many researchers from various countries have analyzed language students' motivation and attitudes in various settings. However, few studies have examined these issues among Saudi students, particularly the impact of their motivational and attitudinal behaviors on their performance and academic achievement. Furthermore, according to Song (2013) Saudi students are considered to be the fourth largest group of international students in the U.S.A., Canada and UK and many of them are enrolled in English programs. The huge number of Saudi students who study in these countries makes it crucially important to investigate their type of motivation for learning English and attitudes toward learning the language and toward its native speakers. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore Saudi students’ motivation for learning English, attitudes toward learning English and toward the native English speakers, and the correlation between their motivational and attitudinal behavior and their performance and academic achievement in English language.

1.4. Significance of the Study

Researchers, such as Gardner (1979); Krashen and Terrell (1983); Brown (1987) and Gardner (2006) throughout different periods of time confirmed the role of motivation and attitudes in foreign/second language acquisition. In a foreign language learning setting, learners rarely have not had enough involvement with the community of the target language to develop attitudes for or against that language or its community. The student’s affective attributes, for example, motivation and attitudes, signally affect his/her language learning (Hammerly, 1986). In addition, Csizer and Dornyel (2005) confirmed attitude as a significant factor in language learning. The student's motivation and attitude toward learning a language will influence the result of the learning process. In EFL circumstances, affective tendency (i.e. the student's convictions, emotions, aims) towards English language community are probably going to explore an extent of language accomplishment (Olshtain *et al.*, 1990). These affective variables deal with social and political contexts from which motivation and attitudes are derived (Gardner, 1982b).

1.5. The Study Questions

1. What is the motivation of Saudi EFL students for learning English?
2. What is the attitude of Saudi students toward learning English as a foreign language and toward the target language community?
3. What is the correlation between Saudi students' motivational and attitudinal behavior and their performance and scholastic accomplishment in the English language?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The idea of language learning has psychological and social viewpoints and depends basically on the students' motivation and attitude towards learning the target language (Padwick, 2010). Gardner and Lambert (1972) concluded that the ability of students to master a foreign/second language is not only influenced by their mental competence or language skills, yet additionally their motivation for and attitudes towards the language they are going to study. They also advocated that attitude concepts could enhance the process of language learning, influencing the nature of student's behaviors and beliefs towards the other language and its culture and native speakers, and that this will distinguish their inclination to secure that language. Tahaine and Danna (2013) specified that motivation and attitudes assume a famous part in deciding one's behavior, as they have a driving force that empowers the behavior and directs it in a particular direction. Motivation and attitudes are, thus indirectly related to foreign/second language achievement. We can state that enhancing the positive motivation and attitude of the learners towards a specific scholastic subject may expand their want to learn the subject and to develop the ability to apply what they have been taught, as well as leading to an improvement in remembrance.

The importance of motivation with respect to learning is widely acknowledged within the literature (Gardner and Lambert, 1959; Dornyei, 1990; Wu, 2003) and specifically in connection to language learning. MacDonough (1983) stated that "motivation of the students is one of the most important factors influencing their success or failure in learning a language" (p. 42). However, the complex nature of the concept of motivation makes it difficult for researchers to find a consensus on the exact meaning of motivation (Dornyei, 1998). In fact, all definitions of motivation "attempt to explain nothing less than why humans behave and think as they do" (Guilloteaux and Dörnyei, 2008). As far as learning a language is concerned, Dornyei and Ottó (1998) defined motivation in foreign/second language learning as:

"the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalized and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out".

Dornyei and Ottó's definition includes the most important aspects that we need to know in order to understand motivation and its major role in learning a foreign/second language.

Motivation is further affected by the attitude which as often as possible affects a student's motivation to learn, and may anticipate success or failure in learning a language (Al-Tamimi and Shuib, 2009). Attitude is broadly perceived as being persuasive to language learning and as a key segment in scholarly investigations of motivation (Gardner and Lambert, 1959; Lambert, 1980; Gardner, 1985). According to Oller (1979) attitude is merely one of types of factors that give rise to motivation, which eventually results in attainment of proficiency in a foreign/second language. A number of researchers have defined the attitude toward EFL/ESL. As indicated by Likert (cited in Gardner (1980)) the term attitude alludes to "an inference which is made on the basis of a complex of beliefs about the attitude object". Gardner (1980) explored on Likert's definition by defining attitude as "the sum total of a man's instinct and feelings, prejudice or bias, preconceived notions, fears, threats, convictions about any specific topic". Ajzan (1988) described attitude as "a disposition to respond favorably to an object, person, institution, or event". Baker (1992) characterized attitude as "a hypothetical construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behavior". Gardner (1985) considered attitudes as segments of motivation in language

learning. He expressed: "motivation ... refers to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language".

2.1. The Related Previous Studies

A lot of studies have been conducted in the field of foreign and second language learning to measure language learners' motivation and attitude. However, few empirical studies have examined Saudi EFL students' motivation and attitudes toward learning English in Saudi Arabian context, and even fewer have explored these issues among Saudi students studying abroad (in the English language contexts). What follows is an overview of the relatively few studies that have examined Saudi students' motivation and attitudes toward learning English as a foreign language. Since some of these studies were conducted in Saudi Arabian context while others were undertaken in western contexts, this overview is divided into two sub-sections:

2.2. Studies Conducted in the Saudi Arabian Context

Akram (2015) investigated Saudi students' motivation for learning English. The study attempted to interpret what important factors affect the Saudi EFL students' motivation. It additionally shed light on the connection between the students' motivation and their accomplishment in learning the language. The researcher used quantitative approach for data collection. The major finding of the study was that students did not want to be looked down upon as ignorant. The students preferred to learn English due to its international hype and they wanted to look like English people because they were very impressed by the western culture. The results of the study likewise indicated that there was a positive relationship between Saudi EFL learners' motivation and their accomplishment in learning English. The study demonstrated intriguing impacts of motivational factors in learning English.

Alsamadani and Ibnian (2015) conducted a study in the Saudi Arabian context to explore the attitudes of Saudi university students towards learning English as a foreign language, and in addition to examine factors influencing their attitudes towards learning English. The study likewise researched the connection between the students' attitudes and their achievement grade (GPA). A questionnaire was designed to measure students' attitudes. The researchers also conducted a number of interviews with some students to investigate the elements that influence their attitudes. The participants in the study comprised of 112 English major students. They were at different levels (second, third and fourth-year), and the outcomes of the study demonstrated that the students had general inspirational attitudes towards learning English. The outcomes likewise demonstrated that the students with high GPAs have the most astounding positive attitudes towards learning English, trailed by the medium GPA ones and finally the low GPA students.

Aldosari (2014) illustrated and summarized the relationship between personality and foreign language learning. He only used the questionnaire as a method for collecting data where he distributed it to a number of students who study English as a major field. The participants were randomly selected from the campus for both men and women. The number was 25 each. The results of the study showed that females were better language students being more motivated than males were, and having more inspirational attitudes towards language learning than male students.

Elsheikh *et al.* (2014) investigated the causes of demotivation among university students who study English as a university requirement in Saudi Arabia and proposed a motivational strategy according to the results. They hypothesized that pedagogical, social, cultural and economic factors may have caused the problem. One hundred students were subjected to the administration of the questionnaire, which is designed to test the four major types of motivation (intrinsic, extrinsic, integrative and instrumental). The results showed that the respondents were intrinsically, extrinsically and integratively demotivated whereas, positive results were obtained on the instrumental type of motivation, which indicated a badly need for a motivational strategy.

Hagler (2014) analyzed the attitudes that Saudi university students hold toward Western culture. The researcher used a questionnaire that comprises of five open-ended questions. The analysis displayed survey reactions from 210 male and female university students in Saudi Arabia. The analysis found that the majority of these students are integratively motivated and in this manner demonstrate a positive attitude toward Western culture. It additionally demonstrated a connection between instrumental motivation and students who enroll in science and engineering fields. The analysis showed that a clear majority of students like some aspect of the West or Western culture. The analysis inferred that these Saudi students are inclined to collaborate positively with the West.

Alasmari (2013) comprehensively investigated the attitudes of Saudi freshmen towards various dynamics of English language teaching/learning process. The researcher designed a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire to measure learners' attitudes towards some factors regarding the English language. These factors are the culture of English speaking nations, English language instructing and learning, the instructors' role, the learners' role, and the role of the learners' native language (Arabic) in English language teaching. The participants in the investigation were 176 students who study at the first year in the university Preliminary Year Program. The findings of the investigation indicated that the participants had inspirational attitudes towards English language, its native speakers and the culture of its people where they demonstrated that they bear intrinsic motivational introductions alongside solid extrinsic ones. The findings also revealed that the participants preferred to have intensive practice of the target language instead of simple memorization and did not like that Arabic is utilized as a part of their ELT classes.

Alkaff (2013) led an investigation to explore the attitudes and impressions of foundation year Saudi students towards learning English at the Language Institute. The specimen of the investigation were 47 female students chosen randomly from pre-intermediate and intermediate levels. A questionnaire was used to collect data from participants. The investigation demonstrated that most of the participants had an inspirational attitude towards learning English and that they endeavored to enhance their English knowledge and usage, despite the fact that there were many demands on their time and few opportunities to practice their English.

2.3. Studies Conducted in Western Contexts

Alkaabi (2016) examined and investigated Saudi students' types of motivation for learning English as a second language in the U.S.A., Saudi students' attitudes toward learning English and toward the native English speakers in the U.S.A., and their desire to put exertion and money in learning the language. She also explored the relation between students' motivational and attitudinal behavior and certain selected demographic characteristics, namely gender, length of stay in the U.S.A., and academic level (ESL, undergraduate, graduate). A questionnaire and an interview were developed and used to collect data from participants. A total of 181 Saudi students who were studying at different schools and universities in the U.S.A. took part in the questionnaire. The researcher then chose seven of them for a subsequent oral interview. The results of the questionnaire and the interview showed that the majority of the participants, regardless of their gender, length of stay, and academic level, had high extrinsic motivation to learn English, positive attitudes toward learning English, positive attitudes toward the native English speakers in the U.S.A., and a high eagerness to learn English. In contrast with male students, female ones demonstrated higher inherent motivation to learn English and a higher positive attitude toward learning the language and toward its native speakers in the U.S.A. The students who did not have grants were all the more ready to put exertion and money in learning English than the ones who had grants. In spite of the fact that the interviewees had a total positive vision of the U.S.A. and its people before going to it, their vision had changed after coming to the U.S.A., and they had developed some negative attitudes toward the native English speakers in the U.S.A.

Drbseh (2015) examined the orientation of Arab University students, who came from different countries including Saudi Arabia, for learning English as a foreign language. The examination recognized students' motivation for learning the language. It also surveyed their attitudes toward the language and its learning and the target community. The researcher used and employed questionnaire as an instrument for collecting data from Arab University students at Leeds University in the UK. The study revealed that for motivation and attitude toward learning English the mean value of the responses for the Saudis' group felt in the "agree" category (responses between 1.5 and 2.5) while for their attitude toward British people and the UK, the Saudis participants were neutral: the average in their responses was 3.0. The participants' groups had pointed that English was significant for their future and the future of their countries.

Alfawzan (2012) surveyed 40 male and female Saudi students who were enrolled in an intensive English program at one of the public universities in the U.S.A. The purpose of his study was to investigate their attitudes toward learning English and their willingness to make an effort in order to learn it. The outcomes showed that most of the students had instrumental motives processes to learn the language. In addition, participants were highly willing to learn English and to carry out independent learning outside classrooms. The study also showed that most students valued English learning on personal, professional, and social levels. The positive attitude toward English and learning it was very significant among Saudi students.

Irish (2012) carried out a study to explore Saudi students' types of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) and to explore the relation between their motivational type and their length of remain in the U.S.A. The study sample was from various scholastic levels in a state funded school in the U.S.A. The gender variable was eliminated in this study by limiting the participants to male Saudi students. According to the findings of this study, male Saudi students displayed a mixture of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations, regardless of their academic level and their stay time in the U.S.A.

Suleiman (1993) conducted an investigation at Arizona State University in the U.S.A. Suleiman's study included 22 Arab undergraduate and graduate students who came from different Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia. The study intended to investigate Arab students' motivation to learn English and their attitudes toward learning the language and toward its native speakers in the U.S.A. Two types of data collection were used in the study: a questionnaire and an interview. In order to build his questionnaire, Suleiman used and adapted Gardner's Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) to measure students' motivation and attitudes. He also built his interview based on Meloni and RochErkaya's interview guide approach (1990). The results showed that the students had instrumental motivation to learn English before they arrived to the U.S.A., and they kept on keeping up their instrumental motivation after they landed at the U.S.A. Even though the comparison between students' type of motivation to learn English before and after they arrived to the U.S.A. did not show a major difference, the integrative motivation after arriving to the U.S.A. was higher than it was before the arrival to the U.S. In addition, the results of the students' attitudes revealed a mixture of attitudes ranging from positive, neutral, to negative depending to some degree on their encounters with the host culture.

Overall, most studies that were carried out in the Saudi Arabian context to investigate Saudi students' motivation and attitudes have suggested that EFL Saudi learners possess instrumental motivation as compared to integrative motivation. With regard to their attitudes, they tend to have more positive attitudes toward learning English and toward the native English speakers. On the other hand, the review of the previous studies conducted in Western contexts suggested that Saudi students who study in the U.S.A. and The U.K. continue to maintain their instrumental motives for learning English and continue to have a positive attitude toward learning English and toward the native English speakers. The studies that were conducted in the Western context to investigate Saudi students' motivation and attitudes have very similar results to the results of the studied that carried out in their nation of origin setting. This means, to some extent, that studying English in a foreign or a second language setting doesn't impact Saudi students' motivation and attitude.

Having surveyed various studies identified with the point of the present study, it appears that a large portion of the past studies were gone for investigating students' motivation and attitudes towards the learning procedure generally and EFL specifically. A few studies tried to highlight the impact of students' motivation and attitudes on their performance and academic achievement. Therefore, the present study was set to explore and investigate Saudi students' motivation for learning English as a foreign language, their attitudes towards leaning English and towards native English speakers, and the correlation between Saudi EFL students' motivational and attitudinal behaviors and their performance and academic achievement in English language. Moreover, the previous studies carried out in the Saudi Arabian, American and British context. This study, however, was carried out in the Canadian context, which is an alternate setting from others.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. The Study Sample

The sample investigated was drawn from Saudi male students who were taking intensive English courses at the three universities in Toronto, the largest city in Canada; University of Toronto, Ryerson University, and York University. The aggregate number of Saudi students taking an interest in this study was 60 male students: 20 students from each university of the three. The study participants were familiar with Arabic, which is their primary language. It was considered valuable to collect data from students, who enrolled in English programs in a Western context, so that they may better express their motivation and attitudes towards the language and towards its community.

3.2. Data Collection Instruments

In order to address the study questions two major instruments for collecting data were used in this study; a questionnaire, which represents the quantitative piece of the study, and an oral interview, which exemplifies the qualitative piece of the exploration. In spite of the fact that the quantitative and qualitative information were analyzed independently, they supplemented each other. The qualitative data were utilized to support, clear up, and contextualize the quantitative data.

3.3. Questionnaire

Keeping in mind the end aim to measure language students' motivation and attitudes, Gardner made the Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). The AMTB is a questionnaire that is made of a set of statements, and learners need to rate these statements using a scale. The AMTB has been widely used and translated into different languages (Gardner, 2004).

The questionnaire, used in the present study, aimed at reviewing motivation of Saudi EFL students for learning English and their attitudes toward learning English as a foreign language and towards the language community. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. In the three sections, the participants were asked to respond to a Likert-format scale questionnaire for measuring their motivations and attitudes. They were requested to rate the items of the questionnaire in light of a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The items in the questionnaire were adapted from previous questionnaires in previous studies (Suleiman, 1993; Alfawzan, 2012) and had therefore been piloted and validated.

To establish the reliability of the scale, it was administered to a sample of 15 students other than the sample of the study. Then, the same scale was administered to the same group after 15 days, under relatively the same conditions in terms of the time and place. The reliability coefficient was estimated using the Cronbach's Alpha Formula with the help of SPSS. The estimated value was (0.89), which is considered reliable for the purpose of the current study. The questionnaire was anonymous so that participants would not feel pressured into answering in a certain way, thus lending more reliability to the data.

To ensure a full understanding of the statements in the questionnaire and to reduce any language anxiety that may have affected the way the participants responded to the questionnaire, the questionnaire was available for participants in both English and Arabic (participants' mother tongue). The questionnaire items were written in English first and then were translated into Arabic, and the accuracy of the translation was reviewed and verified by the researcher himself and an English-Arabic bilingual member of staff.

3.4. Interview

The second instrument used in this study was an interview where the researcher conducted a number of semi-structured interviews with some students chosen randomly from the original population right after they completed the questionnaire. The purpose of the interview was to provide insight into the participants' perception of learning English and the native English speaking community. Furthermore, it reinforced and elaborated the information that was obtained by the use of the questionnaire. The interview was presented in both English and Arabic to ensure a full understanding of the interview questions and to avoid any barriers that may have restricted participants or made them feel uncomfortable to speak during the interview.

3.5. Procedure

The questionnaire was piloted on students other than the study sample. Through piloting the questionnaire, the researcher obtained information about the time students needed to answer the questionnaire questions, whether the instructions were clear or not, whether the questions were clear or ambiguous, and students' opinions and comments about the questionnaire. This enabled a more 'student friendly' final version.

The questionnaire, in its final version, and the interview were administrated at the beginning of the fall 2016 semester, during the first semester of the academic year 1437/1438 according to Saudi Arabian academic calendar. Confidentiality and anonymity was promised to all participants and the participants were informed explicitly that no names would be revealed under any circumstances.

For the questionnaire, the researcher attended the English classes to distribute the questionnaire personally with the teacher present. By attending personally, the researcher could answer students' questions about the questionnaire and explain any items students did not understand. As the questionnaire was written in English and Arabic, students were instructed to respond in either English or Arabic depending on which language they felt would best express their opinions. They were asked to answer all the questions as accurately and as fully as possible. They were informed that all answers would be anonymous and totally confidential. The time taken to complete the questionnaire was typically 40-45 minutes.

For interview, a digital recorder was used during the course of the interview to ensure careful interpretation afterwards. Participants were informed that a digital recorder would be used, and they were informed also that the digital recording would be deleted upon the completion of the study. Since the researcher shares the same first language with the participants, the interview was administered in either English or Arabic, depending on interviewees' English proficiency. After the interview was completed, the recorded data were analyzed and examined carefully to obtain answers for the study questions.

3.6. Data Analysis

The data acquired from the questionnaire was coded and gone into the SPSS program. Then, descriptive statistical analysis was used to identify Saudi students' type of motivation for learning English, attitudes toward learning English and toward its native speakers in Canada. It was hypothesized, in this study, that participants' performance and academic achievement in English language might be related to their motivational and attitudinal behaviors. Therefore, the researcher used Cohen (1988) classification of correlation strength. Cohen (1988)

suggested that a correlation is considered small when $r = .10$ to $.29$, medium when $r = .30$ to $.49$, and large when $r = .50$ to 1.00 .

The interview aimed to address the research questions from a different angle to provide more details and a deeper understanding of participants' motivation, attitudes toward learning English, and attitudes toward people in Canada. Interview data were recorded, transcribed, analyzed, and reviewed in order to find common and recurring patterns and correlations between the motivation and attitudes of Saudi students and their performance and academic achievement in learning English as a foreign language.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Quantitative Results

Descriptive analyses were used in order to examine the participants' motivation for learning English and their attitudes toward learning English and toward its native speakers in Canada. The first question of the questionnaire served to provide participants' performance and academic achievement (Grade Point Average, GPA). The first part of the questionnaire aimed at identifying participants' motivation for learning English, while the second part of the questionnaire aimed at discovering and identifying Saudi students' attitudes toward learning English and toward the native English speaking community in Canada.

4.2. Students' Motivation for Learning English

The study first question:

What is the motivation of Saudi EFL students for learning English?

The first part of the questionnaire approached students about their motivation for learning the language. To answer the study first question, descriptive statistics were obtained to decide students' mean motivation and their mean performance and academic achievement in English language. Most of the students mentioned that it is important for them to learn English to continue their education in English speaking countries. They also expressed that learning English is important for them because it enables them to read and understand what is written in English and to communicate easily with other English speaking people as well. They also confirmed that learning English is important because it will be useful in getting a good job. A sizable number of students suggested that learning English is important because it makes them more educated. They also think that knowledge of English is important for them to make Canadian friends. They said that learning English is important because it allows them to integrate more with English speakers when they travel. Moreover, students felt that learning English enables them to participate more freely in the activities of English speaking cultural groups. Table 1 below shows the mean value of the students' motivation for learning English as a foreign language.

Table-1. Descriptive statistics

xxxxx	N.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Motivation	60	3.786	1.7305
Achievement	60	2.56	0.78

The mean value of the Saudi EFL students' motivation, mentioned in Table 1 above, indicates that students are highly motivated for learning English language. In this regard, this study goes in line with the findings of Akram (2015); Aldosari (2014); Alkaff (2013); Alkaabi (2016); Alfawzan (2012); Irish (2012) and Suleiman (1993) but they seem to contradict the results of Elsheikh *et al.* (2014) who found that the respondents are intrinsically, extrinsically and integratively demotivated.

4.3. Students' Attitudes

The study second question:

What is the attitude of Saudi EFL students toward learning English as a foreign language and toward the target language community?

To answer this question, descriptive statistics were obtained to decide students' mean attitude towards learning English and towards its native speakers and their mean execution and scholastic accomplishment in the English language. Among Saudi EFL students, there is a definite degree of positivity towards the English language and towards learning it. For most of them, the English language is seen as interesting, easy, prestigious, and likeable. Learning English is also seen as useful, enjoyable, likeable and important. Students thought that learning English is useful for them and they would like to learn English as much as possible. They also confirmed that learning English is an important part for their education and they love and enjoy learning it. Students are generally supportive of learning the English language. Regarding the target language community, students' responses showed that Saudi EFL students have favorable attitude towards native speakers of English. They like native English speakers and see them as sociable, friendly, polite, kind, cheerful, democratic, hard workers, intelligent, and educated. This mirrored a level of positivity towards the Canadian people.

The overall results implied that the overwhelming majority of participants had a positive perception of learning English, and thus, a positive attitude toward learning it. The participants also demonstrated a positive attitude toward the native English speakers in Canada. Table 2 shows the mean value of the students' attitudes.

Table-2. Descriptive statistics

xxxxx	N.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attitudes	60	3.546	1.08
Achievement	60	2.56	0.78

In light of the above table, it is obvious that Saudi EFL students have positive attitudes towards learning the language and towards its native speakers in Canada. These results go in line with findings of [Alsamadani and Ibnian \(2015\)](#); [Aldosari \(2014\)](#); [Hagler \(2014\)](#); [Alasmari \(2019\)](#); [Alkaff \(2019\)](#); [Alkaabi \(2016\)](#) and [Alfawzan \(2012\)](#) which indicated that most students have positive attitudes towards learning EFL and towards the English language community. On the other hand, the current study's findings slightly disagreed with results of [Drbseh \(2015\)](#) and [Suleiman \(1993\)](#) which revealed that the Saudi participants, in their attitude toward British people and the UK, are neutral or ranged from positive, neutral, to negative depending to some degree on their experiences with the host culture.

4.4. The Correlation between Students' Motivational and Attitudinal Behavior and Their Performance and Academic Achievement

The study third question:

What is the correlation between Saudi students' motivational and attitudinal behavior and their performance and academic achievement in English language?

To answer this question, the researcher applied 'Pearson Correlation Coefficient' measurement. First, he conducted a preliminary measurement to guarantee no infringement of the suspicions of ordinariness, linearity, and homoscedasticity. The researcher used [Cohen \(1988\)](#) classification of correlation strength. [Cohen \(1988\)](#) suggested that a correlation is considered small when $r = .10$ to $.29$, medium when $r = .30$ to $.49$, and large when $r = .50$ to 1.00 . In this first measurement, there was a solid positive correlation between the two factors (Saudi EFL students' motivation and attitudes towards learning the language and their achievement) $r = .62$, $n = 60$, $p < .01$ for motivation and $r = .75$, $n = 60$, $p < .01$ for attitudes, with high levels of motivation and attitude towards learning English associated with high achievement level. These results are shown in Tables 3&4.

Table-3. Pearson Correlation Coefficient between students' motivation for learning EFL and their achievement.

XXXXX		Motivation	Achievement
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	.618**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	60	60
Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.618**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	60	60

** . Correlation is noteworthy at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table-4. Pearson Correlation Coefficient between students' attitude towards learning EFL and their achievement.

XXXXX		Attitude	Achievement
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.754**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	60	60
Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.754**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	60	60

** . Correlation is noteworthy at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Tables 3 & 4 show that there is a positive correlation between students' motivational and attitudinal behaviors and their performance and academic achievement in English language. The coefficient value, for motivation, was found as .618** and .754**, for attitude, and the p value of the correlation was discovered under 0.01 level i.e. the correlation is noteworthy at 0.01 level (2-tailed). This means that the higher achievement in English obtained by students, the higher motivation and the more positive attitudes they have for learning English. For motivation, these results accorded with outcomes observed in Akram (2015) which reported that there is a positive correlation between Saudi students' motivation and their accomplishment in the English language. For attitudes, the findings were supported by Alsamadani and Ibnian (2015) which indicated that students with high GPAs have the highest positive attitudes towards learning English, followed by the medium GPA students and finally the low GPA students.

4.5. Qualitative Results

The main purpose of the interview was to get in-depth understanding of Saudi students' responses to the questionnaire and to clarify items emerging from the questionnaire. 30 participants were interviewed using either Arabic or English language, depending on the interviewee's linguistic competence in English. The same questions were asked to all interviewees to make the elicited data comparable and operable for further analysis. Each oral interview endured around thirty minutes and was recorded where the researcher used a small sized-audio-recorder. The researcher began every interview by giving a brief introduction of the study and assuring to the interviewees that their responses will be anonymous and confidential.

The first set of questions aimed at identifying the participants' motivations for learning English. The interviews revealed a keenness of the students to learn English and master its skills, due to its vital role in finding a suitable job in the future. The students noted that English is widely used in various sectors, including business, education, trade, etc., and stressed that mastering English would provide them with a great chance to find a better job easily. Moreover, the students noted that mastering English would enable them to travel abroad and resume their graduate studies. A student stated:

"The English language is a global language and imperative. I like the English language because it provides me with an opportunity to get a better job in the future. The English language also helps me to travel abroad to resume my education".

Another student reported:

“I practice the English language outside the class; I watch movies and read newspapers in English. I also communicate with my friends through the internet”.

The interviews also indicated that students have a larger amount of motivation for learning the English language. They mentioned different external reasons for learning English, such as completing their education, traveling, and getting a good job. The researcher quoted here one of the interviewed students saying:

“It is important to learn the English language since it is considered as the international language, and it is the language, which I will complete my education with. The English language will help me get a better job”.

Another student expressed a similar point of view:

“The English language is very important to complete my education and to get a good job in the future. Speaking two languages can enhance my knowledge because I have the opportunity to look up any piece of information using two languages”.

A language student in one of the universities visited provided this comment, which represents many other students' point of view. He stated:

“The English language is imperative to me. I came here to improve my English language, to complete my education, and to get promoted in my job, as better jobs require better qualifications. I can travel to different countries because the English language is spoken worldwide. I am glad I came here because I think now I understand how important it is to learn the English language in its environment”.

Students, during the interview, compared their current situation with that in home country. They illustrated how they were motivated to do more efforts in learning the language. The researcher quoted one student who said:

“I usually spend 2 hours daily studying the English language. Obviously, I invest more effort studying here than what I used to do in my home country. Here I need to talk smoothly, I need to read so quick, and I need to compose meaningful ideas without spelling or syntactic mix-ups. I also want to understand what I hear in class or outside the class, otherwise I will not be able to study or live here, but in my country I just study the English language to pass the course and that's it”.

Another student talked about this issue where he indicated the importance of practicing the taught language outside classroom. He reported:

“... 2 to 3 hours. Generally, I review lessons that have been taken and prepare for tomorrow's lessons. Some writing homework takes all my weekends. The English language is everywhere in Canada so I can practice anywhere. In my country, the English language is not practiced outside the class. Although my English has improved greatly since I came to Canada, I still feel that my English is not perfect. I cannot follow conversations in my favorite TV shows. I miss the meaning of idioms and jokes that bring the house down”.

Another student confirmed and indicated the importance of the cultural awareness in learning the language. He said:

“It depends but generally 3 to 4 hours. I definitely spend more time here than I did in Saudi Arabia. To be honest, I don't consider learning the English language in Saudi Arabia serious

language learning. Here I use the English language all the time in reading and writing. I talk to others into English and listen to English audio-materials. I feel like my language is improving really fast, and I become aware of how to use the language appropriately in different situations. The cultural awareness of the English language is something I wouldn't learn if I didn't live in an English-speaking country. I feel like I have a more profound comprehension of the English language".

During the interview, the researcher found out that one of the most significant pedagogical implications derived from the interview has to do with the students' attitude toward English teaching process. Generally, the feelings among the participants are that they do not get proper instruction in the English language in their home countries because of the focus on skill, for instance, learning English grammar or vocabulary while neglecting other skills like conversational aspects of language use. The following comment, from a language Saudi student in one of the universities visited, is a typical view:

"Unfortunately, English language was not taught to me in the best way. It was very poor. The teachers came and taught us grammar. We are very good at grammar by the way. In here I was better than many of the Canadian students in grammar, but we were not taught conversation, how to speak and communicate. I believe the methods were very poor. If the teachers taught with good methods, we would be better".

Another Saudi student drew on his experience back in his home country. He reported:

"Well, they [English teachers] brought their own experiences to classroom...and it was difficult in the beginning ... English instruction was not participative or interactive and that was the hardest part ... and you do not learn this way, I believe".

The second set of the questionnaire requested participants to talk about their attitudes toward learning English. All participants with no exception indicated the importance of learning English in their academic, professional, and personal life, which suggests their positive attitude toward learning the language. In the words of a language student at one of the universities visited as he commented:

"I have a scholarship to continue my education for master degree. So the English language is important for me to do well in my study. I can't do anything here even simple things like ordering from a restaurant without knowing English".

Another student expressed his point of view saying:

"There are different reasons that encouraged me to learn the English language. First, it is the most regularly utilized language amongst other languages, and individuals who use English fluently can get a better job and earn more money than the ones who can not. Knowing English will help me to teach English to my children perfectly. My main goal is to get my degree and to learn English from native speakers".

The third set of questions were oriented at discovering and identifying Saudi students' attitudes toward Canada and toward the native English speakers in Canada. The participants were requested to clarify the reasons behind their choice for studying the English language in Canada over other native English speaking nations, for example, the United states of America and the United Kingdom. All of them provided different positive financial, educational, and personal reasons for choosing to study in Canada. The researcher quoted here one of the interviewed students who said:

“... for two reasons, first, it is cheaper than other English-native speaking countries such as the U.K. Second, I have relatives and friends here. Canada is a good country and people here are so friendly. Most of people here do not stare at strangers and they respect your privacy. Some of them respect your religion and they are open- minded, and in business they respect customers and customers are their first priority”.

Another student pointed out:

“My main goal is to get my degree, to learn English from native speakers and to make Canadian friends. I, also, love nature and Canada is perfect because it has so many different types of nature and climate”.

One student described his relation with his Canadian neighbors. He stated:

“In general, Canadians do not want to intrude any one’s life. I have good Canadian neighbors who helped me a lot. Once I have left my car and my house keys with my neighbor when I traveled, and he lent me his car many times when my car broke down. He and his family accepted me. We are still friends. People in street at beach or at mall, they all wear a sweet smile but I cannot say whether they are really good people or it is their culture. Of course, salesmen are doing their job so they must be friendly”.

Another student recounted a similar experience with neighbors and friends:

“Neighbors care about you and your family. I have some Canadian friends. They are good and very nice. When they know you come here to continue your education for MA or PhD, they respect you more. Generally speaking, Canadian people are very kind and friendly. Although my Canadian friends were very busy, they tried to support me all ways”.

Another student elaborated saying:

“In schools they understand and appreciate students’ rights. I get to say my opinion in every thing. I, also, like that most people here respect my privacy and they don’t stare at me in public places. I feel comfortable with my Canadian friends because they understand my opinion, and they don’t expect me to do something special for them. They understand if I don’t want to do something without the need to explain or apologize. However, few of Canadian people have had bad thoughts about foreigners and they are not willing to change their thoughts no matter how good you are”.

As to Canadian culture, some students trusted that they ought to find out about that culture. They also believed English to be more than just a language to learn for purposes of career advancement. The following comment, from one of the interviewed student, is typical:

“I become familiar with the Canadian culture, and I have some Canadian friends. I enjoyed learning about the Canadian culture. It is so fascinating to me. Making Canadian friends is important to me to understand the Canadian culture and to practice English. I believe knowing cultural aspects helps me in how to use the language appropriately in different situations and makes me feel like I have a deeper understanding of the language”.

5. CONCLUSION

The present study aimed at exploring and investigating the Saudi EFL students’ motivation for learning English as a foreign language, their attitudes towards learning English and towards the Canadian community

group, and the correlation between their motivational and attitudinal behaviors and their performance and scholarly accomplishment in the English language. The sample of the study was drawn from Saudi students who enrolled in intensive English courses at the three Universities in Toronto City in Canada; University of Toronto, Ryerson and York Universities.

According to findings of the study, Saudi EFL students in Canadian Context have been found to have higher motivation and favorable and positive attitude in learning English. They displayed high motives to learn English as a foreign language. This result was found in their responses to the questionnaire and was, also, verified by the interview findings. The Saudi EFL students showed a mixture of extrinsic and intrinsic motives to learn the language. Intrinsic motivation, as [Ryan and Deci \(2000\)](#) indicated, alludes “to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable” while extrinsic motivation alludes to doing something to gain external benefits or rewards, such as money, jobs, grades, etc ([Ryan and Deci, 2000](#)).

For attitudinal behaviors, Saudi EFL students displayed positive attitudes towards learning English. This finding was indicated by participants’ responses to the questionnaire and was verified and elaborated by the interview. [Gardner \(1985\)](#) viewed learners’ attitudes as a standout amongst the most imperative segments of motivation when he characterized motivation as “the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language” ([Gardner, 1985](#)). Therefore, Saudi EFL students’ positive attitude toward learning English can be seen as an expected and a normal outcome of their high motivation. The interviewees expressed the usefulness of English language in different educational, professional and personal levels. [Gardner and Lambert \(1972\)](#) also stated that the success in foreign or second language learning is closely related to learners’ attitudes toward its community group. The questionnaire responses revealed that the majority of Saudi EFL students have positive attitudes toward the native English speakers in Canada. This was verified and elaborated by the interview, in which the majority of the interviewees showed positive attitude toward Canada and its community.

Regarding the correlation between students’ motivational and attitudinal behaviors and their performance and academic achievement in English language, the study provided evidence that there was a clear correlation between students’ motivational and attitudinal behaviors and their achievement in English. The high achievement students have a higher level of motivation for learning English and a more positive attitudes towards learning the language and towards Canada and its community.

6. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

This study has substantial implications for the English language teaching and learning as well, taking into account the fact that its findings give a point by point study of psychological underpinnings of Saudi EFL students. Consequently, it is trusted that the findings of this study add to the comprehension of Saudi EFL students’ motivational and attitudinal behavior towards learning the language and towards its community. This understanding might be particularly helpful for the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia and for EFL/ESL teachers who teach Saudi students in Canada and other western countries as well. It could facilitate the educational services that are provided to Saudi students, and clear up any misunderstanding or misconception about them as EFL learners. In other words, the findings of this study may help curriculum developers in designing more technology-based activities with the aim of developing the students’ attitudes towards learning the language. They may also help EFL/ESL teachers to follow different strategies and techniques in the class to motivate students and encourage them to get involved in the learning process. EFL/ESL teachers may also hold further conversation classes for the English major students to help them practice their oral skills; listening and speaking, and develop their motivation and attitudes towards learning English.

The study participants showed high motivation and positive attitudes towards the English language. Another important finding is that it has been mentioned that Saudi students want to learn English even if it were not a

university requirement indicating that they are really motivated to learn English. Thus, it is recommended that this positive attitude of Saudi EFL learners should be exploited properly to enhance and maintain their inclinations in this regard. This could be through getting them involved into language learning activities inside and outside the classroom, as well, to maximize their learning possibilities. This also requires including more interactive activities in addition to following the assigned textbooks so that the learners' motivation can be kept high.

The attitudes of the participants towards the culture of English-speaking countries also showed reasonably high preferences. With respect to teaching implications, it is encouraging to see that most participants hold a positive outlook toward the English-speaking community. Those students who have a positive disposition toward the English-speaking community are better placed to learn English recognizing its usefulness in the global market and wanting to associate themselves with the English-speaking community through its language. Thus, EFL/ESL teachers who find themselves working with Saudi students should take comfort in the fact that many students' preconceived notions of the English-speaking community are favorable. While other students hold negative views about the English-speaking community, teachers should view this as an opportunity to give such students a constructive experience with the language community, in this manner improving the probability of positive relationship with that community. Students should be convinced of the benefit of practicing the target language in real life setting and be guided to use online sites, which provide the facility to chat with their companions from everywhere throughout the world in the target language. They should be encouraged to create and join special interest groups to compensate for the lack of opportunities to use the target language in the Saudi society.

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Appendix-A. Motivation/Attitude Questionnaire

Dear participant,

Thank you for accepting to take part in my study. I want to assure you once again that the purpose of this study is purely scientific and your responses will be kept entirely confidential. Please, take the time to answer each question, honestly, because this is important for the validity of my study.

1. Please write down your Grade Point Average (GPA).

(GPA):

Following are a number of statements with which some people agree and others disagree. We would like you to indicate your opinion after each statement that best describes how you feel about each statement based on the scale provided:

Section-1. Motivation for learning English:

#	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I study English because I need to complete my education in English speaking countries.					
2	I study English because it helps me get a better job.					
3	I study English because my parents encourage me to learn English.					
4	I study English because I like to travel abroad.					
5	I study English because it helps me resume my education.					
6	I study English because it makes me a more educated person.					
7	I study English because I like the Canadian community and culture.					
8	Learning English can help me to watch and listen to English movies and TV programmers.					
9	I study English to know more about Canadian people and how they live.					
10	I study English to make Canadian friends.					
11	I Study English because I would like to speak, think, and behave like native English speakers.					
12	I study English because I would like to live in Canada permanently.					

Section-2. Attitude toward learning English:

#	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	In Saudi Arabia, people who speak English are more respected than those who do not.					
2	I would like to learn as much English as possible.					
3	I think all Saudi students need to learn English.					
4	I think English is great and easy to learn.					

Section-3. Attitude toward the Canadian Community:

#	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	The Canadian people are sociable and friendly.					
2	I like the way Canadian people behave.					
3	The Canadian people respect others and their privacy.					
4	The more I know Canadian people, the more I like to be fluent in English.					
5	The Canadian people are intelligent and hardworking people.					

Thank you so much for your time and effort. It is greatly appreciated.

Appendix B: Motivation/Attitude Interview Questions

1. What is your Grade Point Average (GPA)?
2. What reasons do you have now for studying English?
3. What is your main goal for coming to Canada?
4. Why did you choose Canada and not any other English-native speaking country, such as United Kingdom or the U.S.A.?
5. What is your perception of Canada?
6. What sort of encounters have you had with Canadian individuals?
7. What is your point of view about the Canadian individuals?
8. How much time do you spend studying English per day? What about in your home country, Saudi Arabia?
9. Do you think learning English is easy? Why or why not?
10. How much more effort do you spend studying English in the Canada than in your home country?
11. What is your perception of Canadian culture?
12. Do you think knowing culture helps you learning the language better?

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