

A Study of Motives and Types of Talk in Learning ESL

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ABSTRACT

People are motivated to improve their communication skills for many purposes; learning and socializing. The different motives for learning can prompt language learners to push themselves to succeed in learning. Secondly, the need to use their talk for interaction pushes the learners to focus on language use. Finally, sometimes, using talk as performance encourages the learner to focus on fluency. This pilot study is done to explore the motives, and challenges faced for different types of talks. The quantitative study is done using questionnaire as the instrument. The questionnaire has 4 sections. The first section is the demographic profile. The next section looks at motives. Motives encompasses the learners push to learn amidst the challenges faced. The next section explores talks as interaction and the last section explore stalk as performance. The findings reveal that there are several driving factors that motivate and demotivate learners to learn a language. On one continuum, learners are motivated by their internal drive to use the language and on the other end of the continuum, learners can be demotivated by the challenges they face as they strive to be better at communication in the target language. Findings also reveal that speakers need to pronounce words properly. They also need to use proper rules and patterns of the language. These skills allow them to express their views and ideas well. The results of this study also bear interesting implications in the teaching and learning of different types of talks for communication.

Keywords: learners, talk, motives, interaction, performance

INTRODUCTION

The fast-developing technology in communication is also encouraging people to be able to communicate more effectively. People are motivated to improve their communication skills for many purposes; learning and socializing. Language learners differ in levels of education, gender, age group, etc. People are embarking on language learning for many reasons. To be a fluent speaker, one has to be able to use different types of talks effectively. The study by Steber & Rossi (2021) has shown the plasticity of adult brain during foreign language learning that facilitates learning. Nevertheless, there are also other factors that can hinder for facilitates language learning. Firstly, the different motives for learning can prompt language learners to push themselves to succeed in learning. Secondly, the need to use their talk for interaction pushes the learners to focus on language use. Finally, sometimes, using talk as performance encourages the learner to focus on fluency.

Among the four language skills, speaking is the one skill that language learners put more emphasis on especially when it comes to social interaction. However, speaking is one of the most challenging abilities that language learners must master (Ork, et.al.,2024). For effective communication, speakers need to master at some types of talk such as talk for interaction and also talk for performance. Talks are used by speakers to communicate effectively. Different types of talk serve different purposes to the speaker so that the message is effectively conveyed. Do different types of talk matter to language learners? This study explores the perception of learners on their motives for learning to speak a language. It is also done to investigate learners' perception on talk as interaction and also talk as performance. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions;

1. How do learners perceive their motives for learning to speak a language?

2. How do learners perceive talk as interaction?
3. How do learners perceive talk as performance?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The product of learning is the ability to use the language to talk. However, learners do face challenges as they go through the learning process.

1. Types of Talk

There are several types of talk and language learners may face difficulties with either one or more types. Richards (2008) presented several types of talk. The first type is talk as Interaction. This refers to conversation and communication for social purposes. The second type is talk as transaction. This type of talk helps to build relationships. It also helps the participants to focus on the content of the message. There are two types on interaction and they are (a) giving and receiving information) and (b) obtaining goods of services. The last type is talk as performance. This type of talk is needed to transfer information to audience, and deliver speech. It is also used for lectures, debates and monologues.

2. Challenges to Speaking

In the process of learning a language, learners often face challenges. These challenges can also be traced to be caused by several factors. According to Chand (2021), some challenges to speaking can be personal problems, social problems, linguistic problem, or even environmental problem. Phuong and Bau (2024) reports challenges such as time constraints, limited English literacy skills, and financial burdens. Mardani, et.al (2024) found that learners face challenges such as language complexity, time constraints, lack of resources, psychological barriers, environmental factors, learning strategies, and sociocultural challenges.

Past Studies

A A qualitative study by Mardani, et.al (2024) explored motivation and difficulties that adult face when they learn a second language. 33 adult learners were chosen for this study. Data was collected from interviews. The thematic analysis of data showed themes for motivation and challenges. There are five categories for motivation and they are Personal Fulfilment, Professional Advancement, Cultural Connection, Social Interactions, and Cognitive and Health Benefits. Next, seven categories of challenges were reported and they are Language Complexity, Time Constraints, Lack of Resources, Psychological Barriers, Environmental Factors, Learning Strategies, and Sociocultural Challenges.

Both Bok (2021) and Mandelize & Sepeng (2024) explored motives and challenges that adults faced when they learn a second language. Bok (2021) particularly looked at adult learners in a university. Participants were interviewed on the challenges they faced while learning. The findings revealed challenges such as work and family commitments as well as adaptation to studying ans also the cost of the education. Similarly, the Mandelize & Sepeng (2024) investigated 12 undergraduates in their study. Findings showed the challenges are time, technological challenges in infrastructural challenges, financial, shortage of teachers and instructors

A study by Chand (2021) looked at difficulties in speaking among undergraduates. This mixed mode study was participated by 15 students. The instruments used were mixed mode questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. Data analysis revealed 2 broad categories which are difficulties and causes. Difficulties were sub-categorized into personal, social, environmental and linguistic. Among some of the causes of these difficulties are teacher and teaching, course content, overuse of mother tongue, poor schooling, and classroom culture. The researcher suggested that further research looked into creating a favorable environment, maximizing learner autonomy, changing teaching practices, revising courses, and conducting speaking activities.

Next, Phuong and Bau (2024) investigated on the challenges Vietnamese students faced to learning English as a

foreign language. This mixed mode study used a questionnaire and interview as instruments. 70 respondents were chosen to participate in this study. Findings revealed that although students were highly motivated to learn, they faced challenges such as time constraints, limited English literacy skills, and financial burdens.

Conceptual Framework

One of the most feared language skills for language learners is the ability to talk. Talking involves more than just communication. Learners need to use different type of talk to show their speaking skills. Problems with using the different types of talk may lead to learners’ future speaking experience (Rahmat, 2020). Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study. This study explores learners’ motives and perception of types of talk. This framework is rooted from Richards’s (2008) types of talk as well as challenges for speaking by Ork, et.al. (2024), and Elbashir (2022). The different types of talk in a language act as symbiotic relationship because one type of talk can facilitate the use of the other type. To begin with, learners are pushed to learn a language by their motives. The motives determine the effort that the learners take to use their talk as interaction and performance. In order to interact, speakers need to pronounce words properly. They also need to use proper rules and patterns of the language. These skills allow them to express their views and ideas well. In order to perform, speaker needs to have good language skills. This involves grammar skills, vocabulary and language use. For effective interaction, speakers need to pronounce words properly. They also need to use proper rules and patterns of the language. These skills allow them to express their views and ideas well.

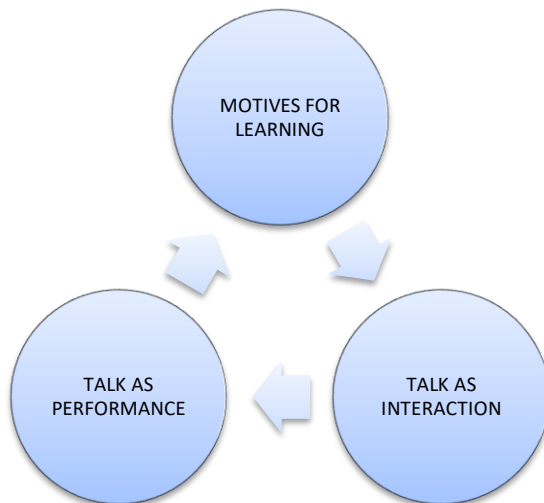


Figure 1- Conceptual Framework of the Study-Motives and Types of Talk

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative pilot study is done to explore motivation factors for learning among undergraduates. A purposive sample of random 30 participants responded to the survey. The instrument used is a 5 Likert-scale survey and is rooted from Richards (2008), Ork, et.al. (2024), and Elbashir (2022) to reveal the variables in table 1 below. The survey has 4 sections. Section A has items on demographic profile. Section B has 6 items on talk as performance. Section C has 6 items on talk as interaction and section D has 6 items on talk as transaction.

Table 1- Distribution of Items in the Survey

SECTION	STAGE	No of Items	Cronbach Alpha
B	MOTIVES	6	.983
C	TALK AS INTERACTION	6	.966
C	TALK AS PERFORMANCE	6	.884
	Total number of Items	18	.982

Table 1 also shows the reliability of the survey. The analysis shows a Cronbach alpha of .983 for section B, .884 for section C and .966 for section D. The overall external reliability for all 18 items is .982; thus, revealing a good reliability of the instrument chosen/used. Further analysis using SPSS is done to present findings to answer the research questions for this study.

FINDINGS

Findings for Demographic Profile

Table 2- Q1 Percentage for Gender

NO	ITEM/GENDER	PERCENTAGE
1	Male	50%
2	Female	50%

Table 2 reveals the percentage for gender of the participants. 50% are male and 50% are female participants.

Table 3- Percentage for Q2-Age Group

NO	ITEM/AGE GROUP	PERCENTAGE
1	18-30	40%
2	31-50	30%
3	51 and above	30%

Table 3 shows the percentage for age group. 40% of the respondents were 18-30 years old. Next, 30% of the respondents were 31-50 years old while 30% were from 51 and above.

Findings for Motives

This section presents data to answer research question 1 - How do learners perceive their motives for learning to speak a language?

Table 4- Mean for Motives

NO	ITEMS	MEAN
1	Do you feel it is challenging to manage time for working and learning English?	4.4
2	Do you feel it is challenging to manage family commitments while studying English?	4.5
3	Do you feel it is challenging to have self-discipline to learn English?	4.4
4	Do you feel it is challenging to reach your study goal?	4.4
5	Do you feel it is challenging to have self-motivation to learn English?	4.3
6	Do you feel it is challenging to have the right attitude to learn English?	4.4

Table 4 shows the mean for motives. The highest mean is 4.5 for the item 2- to manage family commitment while studying English. Next, four items share the same mean of 4 and they are item 1-to manage time for working and learning English, item3-to have self-discipline to learn English, item 4-to reach study goal and 6-to have the right attitude to learn English. The lowest mean of 4.3 is for item 5-to have self-motivation to learn English.

Findings for Talk as Interaction

This section data to answer research question 2- How do learners perceive talk as interaction?

Table 5- Mean for Talk as Interaction

NO	ITEMS (FROM DETAILS)	MEAN
1	Do you feel it is challenging to be proficient in pronunciation?	4.4
2	Do you feel it is challenging to be proficient in speaking English?	4.5
3	Do you feel it is challenging to be proficient in writing in English?	4.5
4	Do you feel it is challenging to start and end a conversation in English?	4.3
5	Do you feel it is challenging to learn the rules and patterns of writing a sentence in English?	4.4
6	Do you feel it is challenging to express views and ideas in English?	4.4

Table 5 shows the mean for talk for interaction. Two items share the highest mean of 4.5 and they are 2-to be proficient in speaking English and 3-to be proficient in writing in English. Next, three items have the same mean of 4.4 and they are 1-to be proficient in pronunciation, 5-to learn the rules and patterns of writing a sentence in English, and 6-to express views and ideas in English. The lowest mean is 4.3 for the item 4-to start and end a conversation in English.

Findings for Talk as Performance

This section data to answer research question 3- How do learners perceive talk as performance?

Table 6- Mean for Talk as Performance

NO	ITEMS	MEAN
1	Do you feel it is challenging to learn English because you lack speaking skills?	4.5
2	Do you feel it is challenging to learn English because you lack grammar skills?	4.5
3	Do you feel it is challenging to learn English because you lack vocabulary?	4.4
4	Do you feel it is challenging to learn English because your first language gets in the way?	4.4
5	Do you feel it is challenging to learn English because of restrictive teaching methods for language use?	4.2
6	Do you feel it is challenging to learn English because of your fear of making mistakes?	4.5

Table 6 shows the mean for talk as performance. Three items share the highest mean of 4.5 and they are 1-lack speaking skills, 2-lack grammar skills and 5-fear of making mistakes. Next, two items share the same mean of 4.4 and they are 3-lack vocabulary skills and 4-language gets in the way. The lowest mean is 4.2 for the item 5-restrictive of teaching methods.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings and Discussions

The findings reveal that there are several driving factors that motivate and demotivate learners to learn a language. On one continuum, learners are motivated by their internal drive to use the language and on the other end of the continuum, learners can be demotivated by the challenges they face as they strive to be better at communication in the target language. Their self-discipline is also their motivation to pursue success in the learning. However, learners can be demotivated by their family commitments and their work-life balance. The study by Ork, et.al. (2024) show that learners are pushed to learn a language by their motives. The motives determine the effort that the learners take to use their talk as interaction and performance. In addition. To that, the study by Elbashir (2022) portrayed the need for speakers to use different variety of talks to convey different information at specific times. Learners are pushed to learn due to some motivational elements. Nevertheless, they may face challenges in the learning process. These challenges can become the demotivating factors for successful learning. When learners can successfully face the challenges and reduce the demotivating factors, they can then proceed to increase the learning success.

Next, for effective interaction, speakers need to pronounce words properly. They also need to use proper rules and patterns of the language. These skills allow them to express their views and ideas well. Findings reveal that learners perceive that they need to be proficient in both speaking and writing the language to interact successfully. They also reported that pronunciation is also an important factor for interaction. Responders felt that they needed to learn the rules and patterns of the language in order to express their views and ideas. In addition to that, in order to perform, speaker needs to have good language skills. This involves grammar skills, vocabulary and language use. Findings reveal that learners perceive speaking and grammar skills as crucial in order to use the language for performance. Similarly, the study by Chand (2021) emphasized the need for language proficiency to be able to use different types of talk for communication.

Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Language learners differ not only by their age group but also by their motives. Adult learners may face different challenges compared to younger learners. Nevertheless, the needs of language learners may not differ much in terms of their need to be able to communicate effectively using the learned language. Language instructors need to be more flexible when it comes to evaluating learners' communication outcome. They need to have a variety of language tasks so learners are able to communicate efficiently for different purposes. Future researchers could look deeper into why language learners face the challenges. The challenges can easily become the demotivating factors that impedes learning success. The researchers could also explore is there are and relationship between motives for learning and communication success.

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