

Rural School Students' Motivational Orientations in Learning English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract. Many empirical studies have been conducted to examine students' motivation to learn English as a Foreign Language, given its growing power and the influence of globalization. However, school students' voices were almost missing in previous research in the Kazakhstani context, especially in rural areas. Hence, the purpose of this study was to explore motivational orientations in learning English as a foreign language in one rural school. To do so, the following research questions were formulated: 1) What are students' motivational orientations in learning English as a foreign language? 2) What strategies are viewed as helpful in increasing their motivation? The Language 2 Motivational System proposed by Dornyei's (2005) was applied in the research. It is built on three components: Ideal Language 2 Self; Ought 2 Self; Language 2 learning experience. The study was conducted through a qualitative approach. The data was collected via semi-structured one-on-one interviews with nine Grade 9 students. The six phases of thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2013) were used to analyze the data. The study revealed that students' Ideal 2 Self prevails over Ought 2 Self, where family and future endeavors were found to be the most influential factors. From this study, several implications were suggested, such as conducting only English lessons, organizing school competitions, adding extra classes, and reopening private tutoring centers in the village.



Key words: globalization, rural schools, English as a foreign Language, motivation, family influence



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Introduction

Globalization played a significant role creating the necessity of acquiring English worldwide, as well as enhanced its influence on educational policies and curriculum provision [1]. Its implementation as a curricular element in the educational system has become critical [2]. Moreover, Phillipson (2001) states that fully acquiring this language could lead to students' future success, therefore the substantial liability on teaching English as foreign language is of a great importance [3].

The education system in Kazakhstan, as many other spheres, was perilously influenced by the split-up of Soviet Union. It has undergone numerous changes, while initial steps according to Smirnova & Abdygapparova were taken to achieve two main goals: maintaining the Soviet system's achievements in education, as well as forming new opportunities for its future development [4]. In order to reach the goal of inclusion into international educational environment, the system in Kazakhstan had to adjust the "aims, content, methods of teaching at different levels and the amount of

hours allotted to different subjects.” (p. 310). Multilingual education, in this respect, specifically foreign language learning, turned into the topic of high valued considerations [5]. As this scholar stated, “laws about languages and their new state were discussed and laid down and status and context of learning foreign languages (mainly, English) were mentally, socially and legislatively changed”.

Gardner (1988) in their previous papers connected this term with such elements as integrative and instrumental motivation. Integrative motivation is defined by students’ aspiration to acquire the language to integrate into the community where the target tongue is used. In the contrary, instrumentally motivated students tend to be involved in a learning process to get better grades or to be enrolled to a college [6].

Materials and Methods

This study was conducted through a qualitative approach. Many previous studies examining motivation were conducted via questionnaires [7] and investigated students’ attitudes, as well as correlation between several variables. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998) “qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional methods” [8]. Comparing to quantitative methods “the focus of qualitative inquiries is on describing, understanding, and clarifying a human experience” [9].

Research site.

The research took place at the mainstream school named Ybiray Altynsarin in Shelek, Almaty region. My rigorous interest in conducting the research at this particular site lies in the fact that it is the place where I completed my school education and witnessed a low engagement of students when learning foreign languages. Therefore, the perceptions of students in acquiring English, specifically the phenomena of students’ motivation in learning English in rural areas, is a topic I was interested in investigating.

Moreover, this qualitative study focused on students’ experiences because school students’ voices were almost missing in previous research in the Kazakhstani context, especially in rural areas.

Population sample.

A group of people who possess the same characteristics is called population [10]. The population this research aims to study is the ninth-grade students at the mainstream school named after Ybiray Altynsarin.

According to Klassen et al., sample is a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study for generalizing about the target population. Ary, et.al. describes a sample as a small group that is observed. Creswell believes that investigating a subgroup with common features can lead to a thorough analysis of phenomena of a certain target population [11].

Simple random sampling technique was used to recruit the participants for taking interviews, as every member of the target population had the chance to participate in the study. The sampling includes nine students.

Specifically, the reason for selecting the ninth graders was that compulsory schooling in Kazakhstan ends up with the 9th grade after which students have to make a choice, whether to continue studying at the 10th -11th grades of secondary school, go to vocational colleges or start working. By the time they are in the ninth grade these students have already got at least 5 years of exposure to learning English as a foreign language and usually start thinking of their future career plans. Therefore, learners’ future aspirations may demonstrate whether there is an alignment with the motivation to pursue learning a foreign language or not. Piaget’s theory presumes that 12-15year teenagers are believed to be at the fourth stage of cognitive development, pertained to formal operational stage when young adolescents start envisioning their future life aspirations in prospective hypothetical situations [12]. Additionally, in studies conducted earlier, secondary school students were

mostly chosen as a sample to be investigated in terms of their Motivational Language 2 self-system [13, 14]. It is build based on three components: Ideal Language 2 Self that focalizes on students' future aspirations, hopes, and endeavors after attaining language 2 proficiency; Ought 2 Self - related to external factors such as getting good grades or meet parents' expectations; The third is Language 2 learning experience that refers to certain efforts made by students to fulfil the image created in their mind.

Data collection tool.

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were chosen as the primary tool for data collection. According to Dörnyei [15], it also gives an opportunity to obtain "data on the more intangible aspects of ... values, assumptions, beliefs, wishes, problems" [16]. The application of the qualitative approach, particularly conducting an interview can be considered as the way to obtain more extensive data about students' perceptions and motivation of learning English.

Duff believes that more qualitative interview-based studies would help to showcase the respondents' "experiences and desires with respect to language learning" (p.602), and this study attempts to uncover the voices and experiences of the participants through the means of the interviews [17].

Results

RQ1. What are students' motivational orientations in learning English as a foreign language?

Ideal L2 Self

The findings related to the first research question revealed several factors interrelated with the concept of Ideal L2 self, named by participants that are grouped into four categories: (a) Motivation to travel, (b) Motivation to study in English, (c) Motivation to get a job, (d) Motivation to become fluent in English. Each of the categories is presented below.

The data has shown that Ideal L2 Self prevails in students, because their incentives in learning English are mostly caused by their own dreams and ambitions where learning English plays a crucial role. Following responses clearly demonstrate students' beliefs and endeavors to be the main factor influencing their motivation to learn English, specifically negating the value of school assessment in it. As one of the students said:

Extract 8:

It's good to know [English language], it's good to learn. I don't think school grades are indicators of knowledge. (Student 5)

Another example also demonstrates that external factors, such as school grades do not impact on the motivation to learn English:

Extract 8:

Yes [refers to learning English], only for myself. I don't really care about grades. (Student 4)

The students' responses presented above illustrate that their motives are oriented towards self-actualization goals, which can also range according to their individual needs. Below each motivational factor is presented with the broader elaboration.

Motivation to Get a Job. One third of participants mentioned that acquiring English would help them to find a good job in future. The following response distinctly demonstrates this view:

Extract 9:

My dream is to become a flight attendant and master the most important foreign languages [including English] for working there. (Student 7)

Another respondent believes that knowing English can provide the possibility to work abroad as well:

Extract 10:

I think that knowledge of the language will help me to get a good job. Because if you can't work in Kazakhstan, you can go to another country and work there. (Student 2)

Similarly, the following respondent claims that for future work it is important to fully master the language and readiness to take actions towards this dream:

Extract 11:

I would like to take more English courses and fully master the English language. Because there [future workplace] you need to be fluent in English. (Student 8)

Today's competitive job market sets high requirements including the knowledge of several languages, along with the skills connected to the profession you obtain. Therefore, starting from the school years students are decidedly motivated to acquire English. The participants, in this sense seemed to be positively influenced by their family members, who also play as role models and inspire them by their own successful cases.

Motivation to Study Abroad. Students' desire to learn English for their future plans to enter university or study abroad was one of the common factors mentioned by the majority of participants. Hence, this sub – category aims at presenting findings about how students view themselves in future in relation of English language to their further education. For instance, to the question about what motivates them to learn English one of the students' responds was "To study in another country and speak fluently without any difficulties" (Student 8).

Another way one of the respondents envision English in the future is indicating Ideal Self-motivation by saying:

Extract 14:

Yes, If I will study at the University in Almaty, and can study at the master's program in another country [in English language]. (Student 4)

Currently, there are many possibilities available for students who are eager to study abroad. Students' desire to experience another culture, obtain quality education and broaden their outlook are the strongest motivators, since many of those programs are offered in English.

Ought 2 Self

The qualitative data widens this category further with discussion of 'must' feelings expressed by the participants towards learning English language. The Ought 2 Self sub-category in qualitative data exhibits factors that put pressure on participants to learn English because of sentiments of demand and obligation to get good grades or please their parents. The revealed factors can be grouped into (a) Family's influence, (b) Examination UNT.

Family's Influence

In this sub-section of the findings the influence of family members will be presented as one of the major factors contributing to students' desire to learn English as a FL. Mostly, their relatives whose job is somehow connected to English language had an impact on students by showing its importance through their own experience. One of those examples is demonstrated in the following response:

Extract 15:

I have a sister who is currently studying at the University. And once, when I saw her studying online, so I look there, everything is in English, then I realised that if go to higher educational institution, I will need English. (Student 7)

More than that, findings revealed that parents oftentimes tend to talk and explain to their children about the crucial role of English in future life, specifically career opportunities. According to one of the participants, she often hears from her parents "Learn English, and it will only benefit you. Education is not superfluous, learn English" and in turn it increases their desire to continue

learning the language further. As the student mentioned:

Extract 16:

They told me that it is broadly used language, and if I am going to a different country, or if I am going to a different job, I could use that English. Since then, I have also developed an interest in English myself. (Student 2)

One more student referred to parents' words: "The language of the future is English" and continued by expressing her own view about motivation to learn this language:

Extract 17:

Therefore, it is very important to know it, to apply it in modern times. There is a shortage of specialists in the English language, and I have noticed it. That is why I chose English. (Student 4)

Interestingly, some students' motivation changed from the time their parents started telling them how English would benefit them in future with one putting it this way:

At first, I participated because of my parents, then after a little improvement, I started learning and motivating myself, my mother is also learning English now. (Student 8)

One more participant when asked if parents expect him/her to succeed in learning English, gave the following response:

Extract 18:

They expect a lot from me. Supporting me, taking me to teachers, additional classes. (Student 5)

One of the important aspects to emphasize from this extract is that most of the time parents' involvement in their child's learning process can have a positive impact as well, if students feel encouragement and support.

Moreover, one student said that along with the influence and support they receive from their family, they want to meet their expectations:

Examination UNT

This section of the findings aims to show students' motivation to learn English in relation to academic reasons, particularly to pass UNT which plays an important role in applying to university. To the question if students are going to continue learning English in future one of the students responded:

Extract 19:

Yes, I plan to [to continue learning English]. Because I am going to choose English at UNT.

A few students have already chosen their profession and considering what subjects should they choose while taking UNT. As one of the respondents mentioned:

Extract 20:

I saw that I had to pass English at UNT to be able to choose the profession in marketing.

To sum up, students' future images of themselves seem to enhance their incentives and foster their actions towards achieving their imagined selves. Hence, despite the fact learning a language is a tiresome journey where they face numerous obstacles, holding onto this superordinate vision arouses inner interest to acquire this tongue.

RQ 2. What strategies are viewed by students as useful for increasing their motivation?

Extra classes

Some students showed their interest in learning English and therefore expressed their desire to be given more lessons in English, as the knowledge they get from ordinary lessons "is not sufficient" (Student 3). As the participant said:

Extract 21:

Now there is no extra classes. For example, two hours in the morning. After all, there are many people who do not understand English in the ninth grade. Only if they focused more on English, just like in Math and etc. (Student 3)

In addition to that, according to some students they do not understand fully some topics due to the lack of time and would want to see English as an elective class as well. This can be seen from the following response:

Extract 22:

I can say that there is no extra English classes at all, if there are electives, we would ask for additional explanation of the topics (Student 5)

Students' classroom experience of learning English do not seem to fulfil their needs in terms their desired level of proficiency in their imagined selves. Therefore, they shared their concerns regarding the obstacles they face, and their incentives to have more opportunities to be exposed more to learning this language.

Private tutoring centers

Those students who have experienced private tutoring in educational centers wished for them to reopen in the village, as they were highly motivated while learning English there:

Extract 23:

I think... It seems to me that in Shelek there is a need to open a lot of courses in this English language. I think that many people will be able to learn English perfectly if they open these English courses for a longer period. (Student 2)

Students' positive responses about their experience while attending private tutoring organizations, where they improved their various skills, were able to practice speaking and teachers' genuine willingness to help

students through interactive tasks seem to be one of the strategies determining further motivation of students in learning English.

Competitions

One student mentioned the importance of participating in various competitions to keep them motivated and engaged in learning English in school. One of the students shared insights regarding this strategy:

Extract 24:

I think there should be competitions at school. Because I know that only one lesson is given, which I think is not enough. And if you participate in different competitions, other such activities... you can get a lot of experience. You can compete with other people, test your knowledge, that is, you can set yourself a goal, prepare for it, and thus develop yourself. (Student 2)

Students' responses showcased the lack of activities run by school and that the teachers strictly rely on the curriculum stated by the government.

Only English Lessons

One more finding is that students want the lessons to be conducted in English mostly, in other words to be immersed to the language:

Extract 25:

In the English language lesson, we have a mixed Kazakh language. I wish the lessons were conducted only in English (Student 3)

As students mostly learn English at school, the way their lessons conducted, and what approaches are used by their educators are among the most important concerns of students. They realize that those methods they are exposed to in classroom do not help them improve their knowledge thus rely on private tutors or self-learning.

To sum up, from the findings mentioned above it can be noted that students in rural areas possess a quite high level of motivation

in learning English and genuinely shared their suggestions regarding the strategies they would want to be implemented in their schools. Interestingly, those strategies are mostly basic things that are provided in many cities, which creates huge discrepancy between urban and rural schools. Despite that, students eagerly use all of the sources and teaching strategies provided by schools to improve their knowledge.

Discussion

RQ1: What are students' motivational orientations in learning English as a Foreign Language?

Finding 1

Majority of the students reported an increased level of willingness to learn English because of their internal desire to studying abroad, travelling, and have better employment opportunities found to be among influential factors fostering their motivation. Specifically, they are related to the concept of the Ideal 2 Self, which refers to students' "desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves" [13]. This finding is found to be in a compliance with numerous studies conducted earlier [18, 19, 20].

For instance, Taguchi et al., investigated the motivation to learn English among over 5000 students in three countries, Japan, China, and Iran. The study revealed the Ideal L2 Self prevailed in students' intended learning endeavors [20]. Following Dornyie's [13] theory, explaining students' efforts towards reaching their idealized imagined selves, it can be justified through the study conducted by Ghapanchi et al. [21], where strong positive correlation between Ideal L2 self and conscientiousness and openness was found out. Along with that, opportunity to travel abroad seemed to prevail in students' answers and strongly corresponds with the findings of Alkaff's [22] study where 97.88% of the participants perceived English in a similar way. Speaking about the geographical factor, Lamb [23], when exploring students' motivation discovered that Ideal L2 self in rural areas in Indonesia had comparatively less substantial power in terms of students'

motivational demeanor in learning English. Oyserman and Fryberg [24] believe that underlying reason must be, from one side, the absence of role models and because future selves are in continuing controversy with students' social identity. Similarly, Kormos & Kiddle [25] found out that in the context of Chile there is an immense inequality between higher and social classes, that leads to differences in motivational behavior of students who belong to those societies. Even though, some studies in other countries demonstrate the opposite, findings of the current study show that rural school students' motives for acquiring English mostly derived from their own dreams and plans.

Finding 2

Family members' influence was the main finding while exploring students' motivation in relation their Ought 2 Self. Many previous studies disregard this component, such as by Islam et al. and Papi who marked Ought to Self to have the least effect on intended efforts. Nevertheless, in this study it was found out that parents have the valuable role in their kids' motivation and further efforts in learning English as a foreign language [18, 19]. As the students attend high school, therefore realize the importance of English themselves and are currently in the process of choosing their future career path. Similarly, according to Taguchi et al., (2009) among Asian students, Ought to Self is shown to be more significant due to family and school influence [20]. In a similar vein, the respondents from this study were inspired by their siblings, whose experience of learning, using English made them carry on with this tongue. More than that, parents' encouragement and support were among the greatest factors motivating students.

Finding 3

Students' experience of learning English have demonstrated their efforts towards achieving their desired goals, such as attending private tutors, using various applications, and watching videos on the internet. This finding can be found from several other studies. Ryan et al. [26] investigation of Japanese learners of English is one of

a small number of studies to have used a mixed quantitative–qualitative method to test the Language 2 Motivational theory. The results revealed a strong correlation between the main motivational variables and participants' intended learning efforts. However, some students lacked any conscious effort towards fulfilling their dream. This can be seen from Lamb's study among Indonesian high school learners of English and stated that this could be because Ideal Selves sometimes tend to be vague and too idealistic, and hence less likely to promote effortful behavior [23].

RQ2: What strategies are viewed by students as useful for increasing their motivation?

Finding 4

The overwhelming majority of students view “extra classes”, “private tutoring centers”, “competitions”, “only English lessons” to be the strategies that could foster their motivation to study English.

Some students struggled with the comprehension of the material delivered by their teacher, in terms of grammar rules, thus reported the need to have additional classes to have more time to ask their questions. Moreover, participating in competitions was found as the factor in fostering students' willingness to learn English. This finding fully correlates with the study conducted by Kubilius, et al., (2004) who explored middle and high school students' engagement in extracurricular activities, including competitions, and discovered its high influence on students' motivation [27].

Private tutoring centers are still not well developed in rural areas of Kazakhstan. Therefore, the participants of the current study had little experience of attending such centers. Nevertheless, the findings revealed that their positive experience, such as playing games, individual approach to each student, engaging activities, effectiveness, a small number of students creates the need of reopening more such places in the village where the study was conducted. Students were highly motivated to attend private tu-

toring centers, as they believed it would help in their future career plans.

Thus, it can be concluded that most of the findings are in some degree correlate with the previous research, however, many factors such as the context, age of students, etc determine the results of the study, As such, it can be said that many research on the topic of motivation conducted in urban areas, and there is a lack of empirical research in rural schools.

Conclusion

The study revealed rural school students' motivational orientations as seen through the prism of the L2 Motivational Self System Theory [13]. Moreover, it identified the strategies that were viewed by students as useful for fostering their motivation in learning English. The students' motivation to learn English as a Foreign Language was influenced mostly by their own desire to acquire it and consequently to use it in pursuing their dreams, such as successful career, travelling or going abroad to obtain higher education. In this sense, Ideal 2 Self was found in students rather than Ought 2 Self.

Lastly, the strategies viewed by students as useful for increasing their motivation to study English as a Foreign Language in school were identified. Students expressed the need to have extra classes, as the number of hours allocated to study English within curriculum were not sufficient, and they faced difficulties with the comprehension of the topics due to the lack of time. Moreover, having only English lessons, organizing competitions and reopening private tutoring centers were outlined in the findings.

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Ағылшын тілін шет тілі ретінде үйрену процесінде ауыл мектептері білім алушыларының мотивациясы

Ж. Т. Саламатова

Ustaz Pro Кәсіби біліктілікті арттыру орталығы

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Аңдатпа. Білім алушылардың ағылшын тілін шет тілі ретінде меңгеру мотивациясы жайлы оның әлемдегі маңыздылығының күшеюі мен жаһандану ықпалын ескере отырып көптеген эмпирикалық зерттеулер жүргізілді. Бірақ Қазақстанда өткен зерттеулерде мектеп білім алушыларының ойы, әсіресе, ауылдық жерлерде мүлдем ескерілмеген. Сондықтан бұл зерттеудің мақсаты – ауыл мектептерінің бірінде ағылшын тілін шет тілі ретінде оқытудағы мотивациялық бағдарларды зерттеу болды. Ол үшін келесі зерттеу сұрақтары құрастырылды: 1) Ағылшын тілін шет тілі ретінде үйренуде студенттердің мотивациясы қандай? 2) Мотивациясын арттыру үшін қандай стратегиялар пайдалы деп саналады? Зерттеуде Дорни (2005) ұсынған Motivational Language 2 System теориясы қолданылды. Ол үш құрамдас бөліктен құрылған: Ideal 2 Self; Ought 2 Self; Language 2 learning experience. Зерттеу сапалы әдіс арқылы жүргізілді. Деректер 9-сыныптың тоғыз оқушысымен жартылай құрылымдық жеке сұхбат арқылы жиналды. Деректерді талдау үшін Браун және Кларк (2013) әзірлеген тақырыптық талдаудың алты кезеңі пайдаланылды. Зерттеу оқушыларда Ideal 2 Self Ought 2 Self -тен басым болатынын анықтады, мұнда отбасы мен болашақ жоспарлары ықпал ететін факторлар болып табылды. Осы зерттеуден ағылшын тілінде сабақ өткізу, мектепшілік жарыстар ұйымдастыру, қосымша сыныптар қосу, ауылда жеке репетиторлық орталықтарды ашу сияқты бірнеше ұсыныстар айтылды.



Түйінді сөздер: жаһандану, ауыл мектептері, Ағылшын шет тілі ретінде, мотивация, отбасы ықпалы

Мотивация обучающихся сельских школ в процессе изучения английского как иностранного языка

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Абстракт. Было проведено множество эмпирических исследований для изучения мотивации обучающихся в изучении английского языка как иностранного, учитывая его растущую силу и влияние глобализации. Однако в предыдущих исследованиях в Казахском контексте голоса школьников почти отсутствовали, особенно в сельской местности. Следовательно, целью данного исследования было изучение мотивационных ориентаций при изучении английского языка как иностранного в одной из сельских школ. Для этого были сформулированы следующие исследовательские вопросы: 1) Каковы мотивационные ориентиры обучающихся в изучении английского языка как иностранного? 2) Какие стратегии считаются полезными для повышения их мотивации? В исследовании применялась система Motivational Language 2 System предложенная Дорнеем (2005). Он построен на трех компонентах: Ideal 2 Self; Ought 2 Self; Language 2 learning experience. Исследование проводилось с помощью качественного метода. Данные были собраны с помощью полу-структурированных индивидуальных интервью с девятью учениками 9-х классов. Для анализа данных использовались шесть этапов тематического анализа, разработанного Брауном и Кларком (2013). Исследование показало, что Ideal 2 Self учащихся преобладает над Ought 2 Self, где семья и будущие планы оказались наиболее влиятельными факторами. Из этого исследования было предложено несколько рекомендаций, таких как проведение уроков на английском языке, организация школьных соревнований, добавление дополнительных классов и открытие частных репетиторских центров в селе.



Ключевые слова: глобализация, сельские школы, английский как иностранный, мотивация, влияние семьи

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