

# Motive and Motivation in English Language Learning of Private University Undergraduate Students in Dhaka

Florence Teresa Penheiro<sup>1</sup>  
florence\_penheiro@yahoo.com

## Abstract

*This paper aims at exploring the motive and motivational level of private university students in English language learning in Dhaka. The poor performance of the students of our country in English is very often a matter of much debate in the academic sphere. Most of the learners of our country suffer from Anglophobia. The process of learning English in most of the cases is like a mammoth task to our students. However, majority of private universities of the country introduced English as one of the main disciplines. A country like ours where most of the apprentices suffer from Anglophobia, there are a few who are brave enough to consider English as their major is commendable. This study investigates the reason behind their interest in the subject and discovers that learners are well aware regarding the importance of English, which seize the key to success in the modern world. This paper throws light at the fact that English department students of our private universities are highly motivated in learning English. This study highlights the existing scenario of the motive and motivation behind learning English among our youngsters by investigating a questionnaire based on fourteen (14) questions. The analysis of the collective data presents that students are highly motivated towards the language though their motivation does not reflect on their performances, which is basically an exasperating truth indeed. The study ends with some suggestions stating how the situation can be trounced.*

Key terms: Anglophobia; motive; motivation

## Introduction

The teaching and learning English began in this region, when the first public university, The University of Dhaka was established in 1921. When the British rulers decolonized the Indian subcontinent in 1947, Pakistan was divided in two wings. Once upon a time, the present Bangladesh was known as East Pakistan and English was the official language of both the wings of Pakistan and India. When the government of then Pakistan declared that Urdu would be the official language of both the wings of Pakistan the historical incidence from 1948/1956 compelled the Pakistani government to consider both the languages Urdu and Bengali as the official language of East Pakistan and West Pakistan.

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<sup>1</sup> Lecturer, Department of English, The People's University of Bangladesh, Bangladesh

According to Al-Quaderi, Islam and Neazy (2010). English Literature continued to be studied at public universities and colleges as in the days of British colonial era. The English literature was not considered hegemonic like the African thinker Thiongo (Ashcroft et al, cited in Al-Quaderi, et.al. 2010). When Bangladesh emerged as an independent country, English was devalued owing to the nationalistic feeling of one language and one culture, English was treated as an optional subject in secondary and advanced level of education. In the 1990s, with the notion of free market economy, private universities emerged and most of the universities established English Department where students began to study English Language and Literature.

In Bangladesh, English is regarded as a foreign language, though learners in our country start learning the language from very early days of schooling. In Bangladesh, Rahman (2005) English is not used as an interpersonal and inter-institutional communication and there is no sign of English becoming lingua franca in Bangladesh. However, the language is gradually becoming a part of the socio-cultural system, due to technological advancement and exposure to Information Technology (IT) developments and internet in this country. The use of English has been increasing day by day especially among the young generation in various ways. There is significant use of English along with Bangla as code mixing and code switching (Banu and Sussex, cited in Rahman, 2005). The traditional grammar translation method has been followed in Bangladesh in all the levels of general education since it emerged as an independent country in 1971. The language classrooms focused on grammatical rules, memorization of vocabulary, translation of text and written exercise. In most of the cases, English classes were conducted in Bangla, with little communicative use of English. As a result, the English courses did not seem to improve the language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing as expected. Reform started to take place in education from early 1990s.

As English is considered the international language and as the demand for good English speaking skills is increasing day by day. There has been a significant emphasis in English language teaching and learning in Bangladesh. The Ministry of Education of the country has made several changes in its Educational Policy, to improve the situation in English among the learners. The government of the country has gone through different English language improvement projects like ELTIP- 1997-2001, funded by DFID, TQI: SEP2006-2016, funded by ADB and CIDA (Chowdhury and Kabir, 2014). These projects aimed at implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). This method promotes the idea of learning English through communication. The private universities emerged in the country's scenario in 1992 after the enactment of the Private University Act, which was a benchmark in the higher education system in Bangladesh.

Universities play a very vital role all over the world in producing skilled and knowledgeable citizens to contribute in a country's well being in each sphere. In Bangladesh, both private and public universities play important role in manufacturing skilled citizens by providing degrees in various subjects. These graduates contribute to every sector of life from education to economy. The government of Bangladesh is giving approval to the establishments of private universities in our country from 1992. The University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC) is responsible for supervising and maintaining the quality of education in all the private and public universities of Bangladesh. The Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) project is a burning example of it.

### **The Teaching of English Language in Bangladesh**

As Farooqui (2007), said English is regarded as a foreign language in Bangladesh and the country depends on it for various international trades and commerce with the outside world. 95% of the total population of the country uses Bangla as the native language. However, English is in much demand in job market and education sector. Students undergo English language courses from year one to twelve in schools. These courses are mandatory for all students because of its growing demand in business, industry and government jobs and as well as for higher education in abroad. After the completion of the Higher Secondary Certificate examination, students move to tertiary education. There are two categories of education in Bangladesh - Public and Private.

Rahman (2012) cited in Kabir (2015) states that the primary curriculum "emphasizes learning English as an international language for communicating locally and globally. The 'English for Today' textbooks have been developed to help students attain competence in all four-language skills in English through meaningful and enjoyable activities. Emphasis has been given on listening and speaking skills as the foundation on which to develop reading and writing skills. Topics and themes have been selected in a way that would not only help students address the needs of real life situations, but would also inculcate humanistic values in them as well as broaden their mental horizon.

Though our government has implemented the CLT based curriculum in teaching and learning English, since the late 90's, it is a matter of great regret; our learners could not achieve the desired goal in mastering the language.

### **Objectives**

This study focuses how these private universities are helping students to develop the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The attempt of this paper is to gain students perspective on their motive and motivation towards learning

English. The purpose of this study is not to offer a generalization with all other private universities of Bangladesh but to achieve a deeper understanding of the situation of five English department students of C and D graded private universities of Dhaka.

### **Motive and Motivation**

"An important characteristic of motive is that we never observe them directly. We infer their existence from what people say about the way they feel and from observing that people and animals work toward certain goals. In other words, motives are inferences from behavior (the things that are said and done)". (Morgan et al., 1993)

On the other hand, the word motivation is defined as a force or influence that causes someone to do something. Therefore, in a way, "determination" is the word that differentiates between motive and motivation. "Behavior is 'pushed' toward goals by driving states within the person or animal. To reach an appropriate goal which can give human beings pleasure and satisfaction human beings have to go through four stages. The sequences of events are sometimes called the motivational cycle" (Clifford et al, 1993).

In Bangladesh, the role of English is purposeful. In most of the cases students are interested to learn the language in order to achieve certain goals only where the knowledge of the language is required. A large amount of research has been conducted in the study of motivation in second/foreign language learning. As stated in Rahman (2005) Gardner and Lambert (1959), Gardner, Smythe and Clement (1979) conducted extensive research on attitude and motivation and correlation with linguistic performance with learners. They proposed that successful learner of L2 must be psychologically prepared to acquire symbolic elements of a different ethno-linguistic community, and to impose elements of another culture into one's own life space (Agnihotri and Khanna, 1994). However, the findings of the research may be argumentative in a monolingual country like Bangladesh.

The most effective way to get insight into the learning process is to study the learner's attitude towards English language. With the present learner-centric teaching process where the teacher performs the role of a monitor, analyzing students' attitude towards learning is the key to study students' purpose and enthusiasm towards learning English language. Attitude is one of the major aspects, which have effect on behavior. One of the most successful language learning experiences in the world took place towards the end of the Second World War when the American soldiers were trained in different languages, of the countries they would have to administer. That was the time when Audio-lingual method was applied to those people, which was a huge success. Unfortunately, after that, the popularity of the method declined, and the reason behind

it was lack of motivation. The method was successful at that time because, students were highly motivated, they really wanted to learn and they had powerful reasons to do so, and obviously, the fear of failure was one of the variables behind the success of Audio-lingual method during that era.

As said by Harmer (1998), famous researchers like Gardner and Lambert, suggested that motivation are of two types- Integrative and Instrumental. According to them students who feel an intimate affinity with the culture of the target language were more highly motivated than those who were only learning language as a means to an end or to obtain certain goals (e.g. getting a better job). In other words, Instrumental motivation was less powerful than Integrative motivation. But whatever kind of motivation students have it is certain that highly motivated learners do better than the ones without any motivation at all. For an obvious reason adult university level students have been selected for this study. Young children, specially, in schools are not concerned of job objective. It is more appropriate to investigate the attitudinal and motivational level of graduate students as the learners because psychological maturity comes at the front. Students of this age and stage have a better understanding of their future careers, so their attitude would unquestionably be different and that would influence their learning process.

### **Methodology**

In this part, we are going to discuss the research methodology including research location, method, data collection process, instrument, data analysis methodology. The paper begins with a brief history about how and when English emerged as a major subject at all level of education in our country. Then it reports on a study conducted in five different English department students in five different universities of Dhaka where a series of interviews were taken on the issues of students' motive and motivation of studying English. It ends with some recommendations for changes in the education policy of Bangladesh.

A quantitative method has been followed in this study, which included fourteen (14) questions based on Motive and Motivation of the students of English departments from different private universities in Dhaka. A survey using a questionnaire is a versatile technique that enables us to collect a large amount of data in a relatively short time. The questionnaire that has been used for this survey comprised very easy questions keeping the students competence level in mind. The result of questionnaire survey is typically quantitative which contained close-ended questions that required qualitative analysis. This study included 50 informants (25 male and 25 female), from B.A. (Hons.) in English from 1st to 4th year.

### **Literature Review**

The formal and effective education can only be ensured if there is a balanced and well-planned curriculum. The literature on motive and motivation of adult learners in Bangladesh, especially in the private university sector is scarce. Many studies highlighted the problems of teaching English to the students of all level of the country. In our country, stated by Farooqui (2007) learning English language means learning grammar, reading and translation is a very rare case these days. Students do not like to become engaged in conversation or play communication games. They expect teachers to be authority figures and prefer the traditional teacher-centered approach. In Bangladesh as (Chowdhury: 2001, cited in Farooqui, 2007) mentions, students are not exposed to skill development process in pre-university years. So, if they are faced with communicative approaches to language teaching in the university, they find themselves in a new world. As a result, it is very difficult for teachers to get the students to participate in class activities. Rahman (2005) states that Bangladeshi learners learn English for "instrumental" reasons .To achieve a certain goal, for example, just to pass an examination, they do not learn for the sake of learning or love for learning.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

A questionnaire survey was conducted for this study and the following part of the discussion is based on questionnaire analysis:

The questionnaire was designed on 14 questions. The first eight (8) questions were on motive and the remaining six (6) questions were based on motivation. The result of this data analysis has been presented in three different column charts. They are Figure: 1, 2 and 3. The horizontal lines of the charts represent fourteen (14) questions of the questionnaire. The vertical lines symbolize the responses of the informants in percentage (%). Figure: 1 shows the combined (male and female) response of the students in percentage (%). Figure: 2 represent the response of the female informants, whereas Figure: 3 represent the answers of the male participants. The result between both the respondents (male and female) varied remarkably.

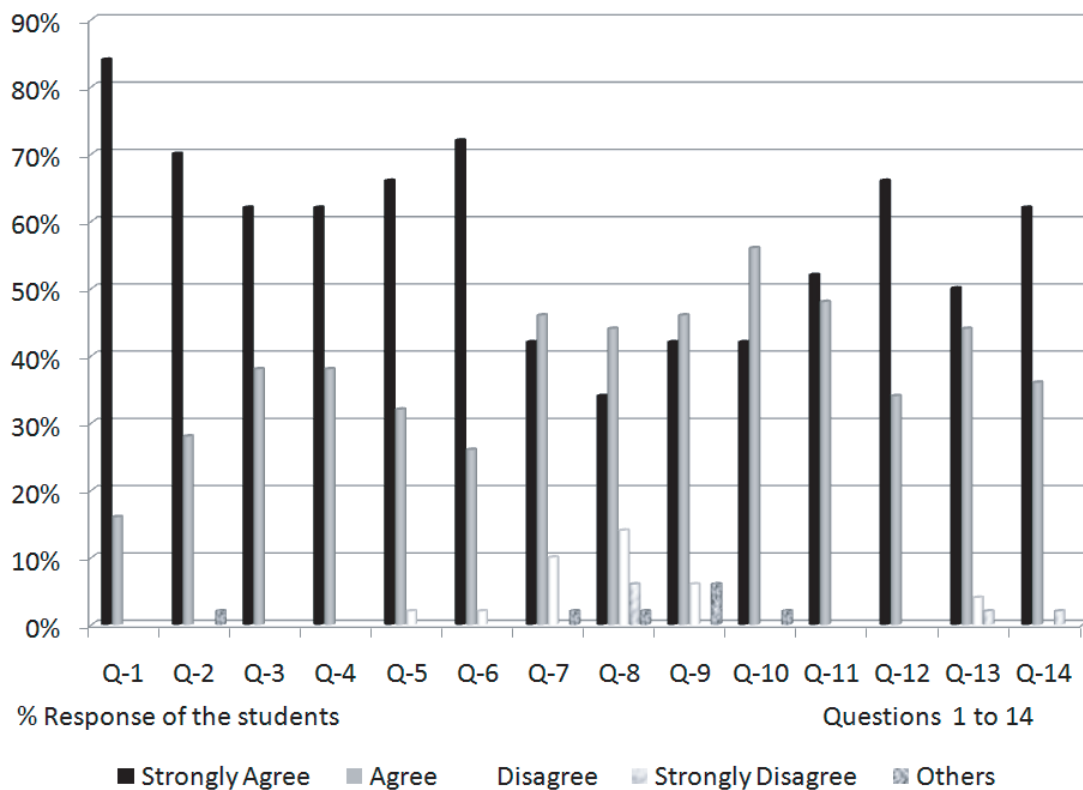


Figure-1: Combined Response of the Informants

### Questionnaire for Informants

According to (Figure: 1), the data reveals that 84% student participants 'strongly agreed' to the fact that they enjoy English Language. The data also shows 16% students 'agreed' to the same question.

70% of students replied that they enjoy attending the English classes; on the contrary, 28% student 'agreed' to the same fact, 2% of the students had other opinions. The study presents that 62% students 'strongly agreed' to the fact that their parents consider English as a very important language and 38% student 'agreed' to the same statement. Parents these days are keener to teach their children English as the language could manage to gain the status of widely used international language. 76% and 24% female students 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' (Fig: 2) that their parents put much emphasis on learning English; on the contrary 48% and 52% of male students 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' (Fig: 3) on the same statement.



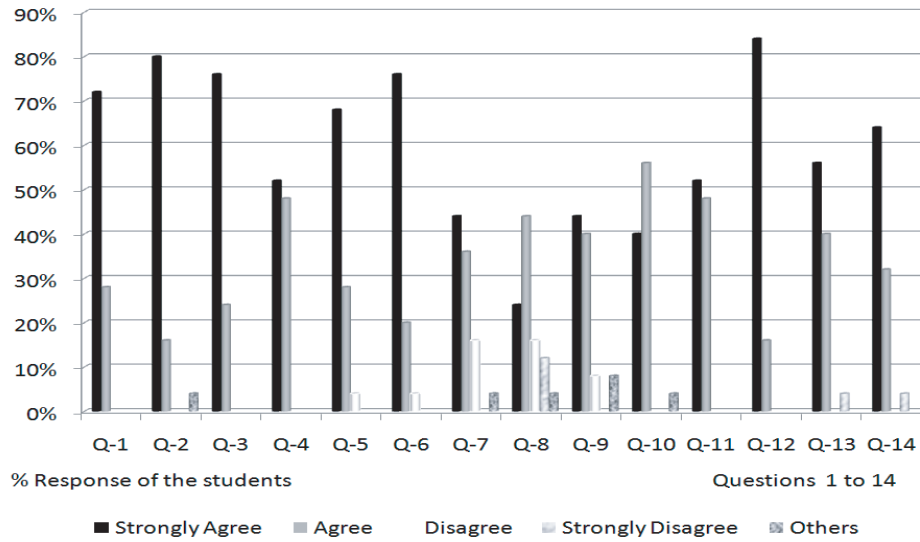


Figure-2: Response of the Female Informants

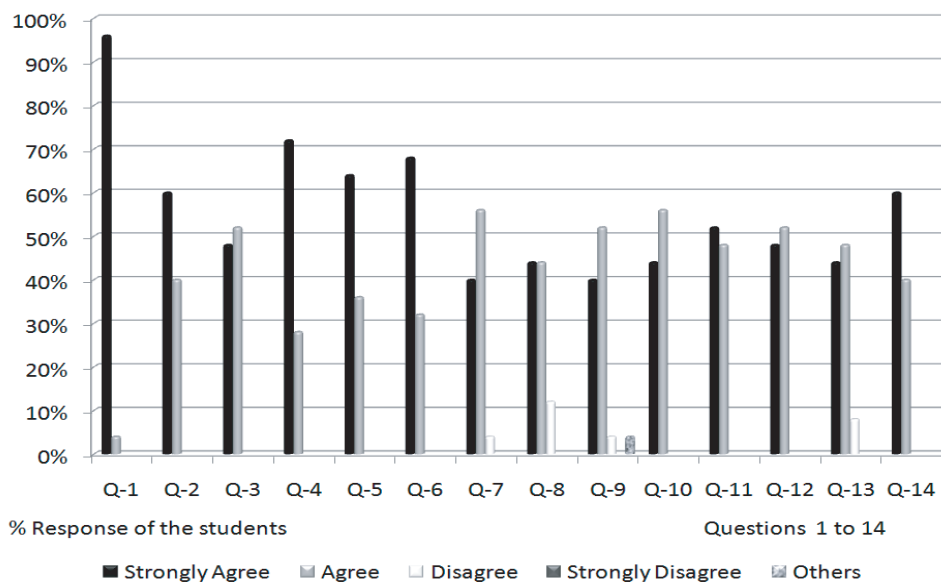


Figure-3: Response of the Male Informants



The data reveals that collectively 62% student and 38% students 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' to the fact that they find an English speaker as highly accepted respected by others in the society. Children these days are very fond of people who are able to speak good English and admire such people who are competent in that language, as knowing good English is a symbol of well-rounded education now a days. Due to the rapid and vast technological advancement, young people at present have more exposure to computers, mobile phones, internet etc. They are fond of different social networking sites where they consider knowing good English is a part of fashion or style. They believe it is a good tool to create a good impression on others, especially, among the opposite sex. That is another strong reason when they hear someone speaking good English, they wish if they could do the same. 66% of students 'strongly agreed' and 32% 'agreed' that they fancy speaking fluent English, 2% of the students 'disagreed' to the fact. Competency in English is necessary today and jointly 72% students 'strongly agreed' to the point whereas 26% students 'agreed' (Fig: 1) to the point that they think speaking English is necessary. Only 2% of the students 'disagreed' to this statement.

The data illustrates (Fig: 1) English films are not that popular in our country; as 34% young people 'strongly agreed' to the question, on the contrary 44% students simply 'agreed' to the point, whereas, 14% of students 'disagreed' and 6% students strongly 'disagreed' to the fact that English films are more enjoyable than Hindi or Bangla movies, only 2% students had different opinion.

42% of the students (Fig: 1) 'strongly agreed' that they are keen to read English novels, however, 46% of the students simply 'agreed' to the point while, 6% of the students 'disagreed' and 6% of the students had other reasons of not liking to read English novels. The study presents that students are aware of their deficiency in writing and are enthusiastic to improve their writing skills. 42% of the students 'strongly agreed' to the fact and the other 56% of the students simply 'agreed' to the point that it is necessary to improve their writing skills by undergoing more courses based on free writing. 52% of students 'strongly agreed' to the point that learning English is more important because it is considered as a great tool to pursue further studies at home and abroad.

Students are highly motivated to learn English because they have the realization that within the rapid growth of globalization it is very difficult to compete in the national and international job market with inadequate knowledge and skills of English. 66% of students 'strongly agreed', on the contrary, 34% of the students 'agreed' to the view. 50% students 'strongly agreed' to the question and 42% of the students simply 'agreed' to the fact that knowing good English will enable them to have a good salaried job. On the contrary, 4% students have 'disagreed' and the other 2% students 'strongly disagreed' to the fact.

The data used in conducting this study reveals that students of private universities are highly motivated towards learning English. Students are well aware of the fact that English is the international link language and to compete with the global world, the necessity of learning English cannot be denied at present. Though the result of data analysis support this study that students of English departments of private universities are motivated enough in studying English, However, it is a matter of great regret that the situation of English teaching and learning in Bangladesh seem to be sadly lacking. Regardless of being highly motivated (as per the result of this survey presents) the sad reality is that, the students motivation is not reflected in their performances. The performances of the students are not satisfactory at any level, specially, in writing and speaking. There can be many reasons behind it, for example: faulty education system, faulty teaching techniques, lack of interest of knowledge of books, which may not have practical applications, stereotype kind of syllabi, which may not carter to the needs of the students (Mishra, 2014).

### **Limitations**

The data sample for this study was diminutive in comparison with the real scenario of our private universities, as we know there are numbers of private universities in Dhaka. However, informants from minimum 4/5 universities contributed to this study. If a wider sample could have been included, then a generalized finding of the research could have been possible.

### **Conclusion**

Since English is regarded as a foreign language in Bangladesh, students of our country find learning the language to be a mammoth task. Without proper aims and objectives, all our efforts might seem futile in teaching and learning English. It is a matter of great concern that effective implementation of English is far behind the desired goal. There should be a proper aim and objective to help evaluate students and teachers performance. The study reveals students are highly motivated and interested in learning English but the harsh reality is; the outcome of this study does not reflect on their performances. To overcome such problem the following suggestions can be followed for the betterment of the learners:

The teachers should be efficient enough in the target language and must be cordial towards the students by creating a cozy atmosphere in the class so that students feel the urge to attend classes. As far as possible, their lectures should contain vocabularies, which are easy to understand, according to the competence level of the learners. To make the class more enjoyable teachers can warm up the class by sharing poems or funny anecdotes, which are relevant to their lesson or age and so on.

The academics should try their best to plan easy, reachable words suitable to the age and acquisition level of the students. He/she must not use vocabulary that are beyond the perception level of the students. Even if, he/she uses an unknown word, the teacher must write it on the board with its pronunciations. This will enable the learners to enrich their vocabulary.

The most important of all, the teacher selection process in both private and public universities. The private universities should be transparent in their selection process so the most qualified and skilled academic can contribute in for the betterment of the students. On the other hand, the public universities should be away of any sort of political influence in order to select the most efficient candidate who can contribute in producing skilled citizens for the development of the country.

If such measures could be taken the unfortunate reality, which is very daunting could be improved. The findings of this study show that learners are highly motivated towards learning English language and literature. Surprisingly, their performance and overall attitude towards studies does not reflect the fact that they are motivated, rather it looks like children these days are less interested to read and learn. To overcome this obstacle, the syllabus and material should be designed in such a way that appeals the students of modern days.

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### APPENDIX

#### Motive and Motivation in English Language Learning of Private University Undergraduate Students in Dhaka

Thank you for taking the time to consider the questionnaire. Your opinion is very important.

**Name (optional):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Institution:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Year:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Trimester:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Gender: Male/Female** \_\_\_\_\_

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Others
1.	I like to learn English Language					
2.	I enjoy English class(s).					
3.	My parents consider English a very important language to learn.					
4.	I think an English speaker is socially more respected (bilingual person).					
5.	When I hear someone speaking English well, I wish I could speak like him.					
6.	I think speaking in English is necessary nowadays.					
7.	I want to create a good impression among my friends.					
8.	English films are more enjoyable than films in any other language.					
9.	I like to read the English novels.					
10.	I prefer more courses based on writing.					
11.	I hope to continue further education.					
12.	I think proficiency in English will help me to find a good job.					
13.	Learning English can enable me to get a job with a good salary.					
14.	For personal development.					