

**ESL, LEARNING MOTIVATIONS AND SOCIOLOGICAL STRESSORS**

Dr. Motaleb Azari\*, Masoumeh Rezayi,

*\*(Associate Professor, Department of Studies in English, Payame Noor University, Iran.)**(Masoumeh Rezayi, M.A. Student, Azad University of Quchan, Iran.)***ABSTRACT**

The importance of learning English as an International communication device has created motivation among all people around the world, especially those engaged with pursuing higher education. Regarding occupational engagements, many social scientists consider learning a foreign language as one of the main motivational forces. Of course, there are many factors which are involved in preparing equal educational opportunities, and various socio-cultural environments may affect both, quality and perspective of public education. In this regard, the present study, begins with a brief investigation on various social models—mainly economic and environmental factors—of teaching English. As a case study, the main focus of the present paper is on teaching ESL among a group of office-men. Various educational methods and practices, as well as critical challenges in local educational systems which may lead many people to suffer a lack of discipline in this area are explored. Finally, based on a series of practical experiences, it is suggested that to reach better outcomes, developing countries need to provide all the subgroups—especially among those with higher educational levels—with equal opportunities for standard ESL teaching.

In a research on Motivation in ESL classrooms, Robert Lamitie (2013) represents a well-knitted review of literature on a vast amount of information regarding the role of motivation on learning ESL. Since the purpose of the present paper is on the role of socio-economical stressors on learning English as a second language, I briefly mention to these findings as an introduction to the present paper.

**Keywords:** *ESL learning process, Motivation, Social models, Iran*

© Copyright VEDA Publication

Lamitie begins with introducing a seminal model of motivation on the socio-educational level by Gardner and Lambert (1959). The model identifies two types of motivation (i.e. integrative motivation

and instrumental motivation), and attempts to examine their effects on ability to learn a second language. In their opinion, the integrative motivation refers to the desire on the learner's part to integrate



to some degree into the culture of the language being learned, so students who want to live in a foreign country or make friends from that country would be said to be driven by integrative motivation. Students driven by instrumental motivation, on the other hand, would be learning the language for utilitarian and practical reasons such as to advance their careers. Lamitie concludes that integratively motivated students in Japan would be better learners, but the present study intends to prove that in a country like Iran, the instrumental motivation works harder in creating a proper situation for learners to pursue ESL. Prior to examining the role of motivation in learning English as an international device for communication, let us begin with the rudimentary role of education in Iranian society and the connection between socio-cultural identities with the importance of public education in plural societies such as Iran.

In his description of "culture", Serenity (*Cultural Perception, 2010*) states; our perception of the world around us as well as personal relationships with objects, people, and nature, can be highly affected by culture. When it comes to familial levels, social cognitive models of parenting emphasize the importance of perceptions about parenting on the development of children's externalizing problems in socio-cultural landscapes (Tsethlikai, Peyton V & O'Brien M. 2011). The impact that culture has on this aspect of social cognition, is being increasingly recognized, especially regarding child education at home and in school. In other words, from a social cognitive perspective, the socio-cultural perceptions of concept of a "child" are closely related to certain "external" and "internal" factors (Tsethlikai et al. 2011). Examining a variety of environmental stressors such as poverty and isolation as external factors, along with parental and child behavior as internal factors seem unavoidable to clarify a unique local socio-cultural perception of education on the whole.

Many experts believe that even speech and cognition are mediated by social interaction and cultural practice (Rowell, Jennifer; Vannina Sztainbok and Judy Blaney. *Losing Strangeness*). In other words, the basis for any educational instruction lays in a well-defined socio-cultural understanding. For example, ESL teachers need to provide the

learners—especially in early stages—with certain social conducts based on the positive aspects of a foreign culture. This is, on the other hand, one of the main factors in reducing externalizing problems associated with local socio-cultural perceptions. Now the question is; how does culture influence the education and upbringing models of learners when it comes to ESL? There is no doubt that our choices and functions as teachers are affected by the culture in which we exist. Some of these areas that are affected include child-rearing goals such as: discipline technique, learning patterns, level of independence, family responsibility, and emotional development—in both, family and society level. Based on her personal experiences, Serenity (2010), believes that as a teacher it is important to consider learning about the different cultural blends in the classroom, yet at the same time it is important not to make assumptions based on this knowledge. This is mainly because, cultural discontinuity is known as one of the major obstacles in getting acquired with occupational opportunities in multicultural societies.

Recent studies consistently show that environmental factors which lead to academic success and productive later lives are formed most effectively and economically in the earliest years of a child. Quality early childhood education lays the foundation not only for literacy, but also socialization skills that become reliably evident and increasingly testable in the early elementary stages. Language fluency for elementary students, for example, is highly correlated with a student's likelihood of successfully completing high school, in turn making the student far more likely to enter college, and postgraduate studies or immediate employment (Hernandez, *Poverty and Early Child Education 1*). Failure to lay the proper educational opportunities in early stages, poses enormous costs for children, schools and communities. In other words, the society loses the student's potential as a fully productive adult, often paying again through social programs. In fact, economically disadvantaged children are at greatest risk of receiving an inadequate foundation in early childhood, which leads to improper socio-cultural identity and unstable economic situations in future (2).



To have a better understanding of some various social models of education and many other internal and external factors affecting education, let us now examine ESL educational opportunities and practices in Iran.

When it comes to ESL learning process, there are 3 categories of learners; the first group is those who do not want to learn. The second group is those who do not want anyone else to learn so they are disruptive. And the third group is those who want to learn but have a hard time understanding because of certain stressors.

Since, the main focus of this paper is on externalizing factors affecting ESL learning, let us focus on the third category and examine some of the other external stressors preventing ESL learners from proper educational opportunities.

Of course, there are many factors affecting learning processes in various environmental settings, such as different disciplines and methods of education. But the most important factor is the kind of motivation behind any educational activity. For example, many business people who are engaged with local businesses and do not find any connection with learning a foreign language, are less interested to pursue ESL. To this group of people the whole learning process is considered as a "time consuming process" interrupting their daily activities. On the other hand, those staff people who find their progress in personal occupations closely connected with learning English are more enthusiastic to acquire ESL.

On the whole, the massive unequal influences in the environments, doubles with personal motivations, as the main factors restricting the popularity of ESL in developing countries such as Iran. Hence, in the present global village, where learning an international communication device seems unavoidable to remain in socio-cultural and economical courses, governments need to pay much more attention to the public education of ESL. In this regard, people are kept up-to-date with the new inventions and findings regarding their local businesses and this, in turn, create a proper situation for developing countries to achieve drastic progresses regarding socio-cultural, economic and political landscapes in international levels.

## WORKS CITED

- [1] *Denial of Equal Educational Opportunity Prohibited.* (n.d.). 20 USC § 1703 . Retrieved February 2013 from [www.law.cornell.edu](http://www.law.cornell.edu) › ... › Title 20 › Chapter 39 › Subchapter I › Part 2.
- [2] Gardner, R.C. & Lambert, W.E., 1959. *Motivational variables in second language acquisition*, Canadian Journal of Psychology, 13, 266 - 272. In; Lamitie, Robert (2013). *Motivation in the ESL Classroom: Results of a Questionnaire Given to Toyo University International Regional Development Majors.* Toyo University Repository for Academic Resources. Available in; <https://toyo.repo.nii.ac.jp/index.php>.
- [3] Hernandez, Donald, J. *Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation.* In; Poverty & Early Childhood Education, available at; [www.educationalfirststeps.org/poverty](http://www.educationalfirststeps.org/poverty).
- [4] Lamitie, Robert (2013). *Motivation in the ESL Classroom: Results of a Questionnaire Given to Toyo University International Regional Development Majors.* Toyo University Repository for Academic Resources. Available in; <https://toyo.repo.nii.ac.jp/index.php>.
- [5] Nkoyiai, Anastasja. Amanuel A & Teklemariam.(2011). *Socio-Cultural and Economic Factors Affecting Primary Education of Maasai Girls in Laitokitok District, Kenya* . Academic journal article from The Western Journal of Black Studies. 35 (4).
- [6] Rowsell, Jennifer; Vannina Sztainbok and Judy Blaney. *Losing Strangeness: Using Culture to Mediate ESL Teaching.* Language, Cultura and Curriculum. [www.uncw.edu/ed/pdfs/news/cultureandesl](http://www.uncw.edu/ed/pdfs/news/cultureandesl).
- [7] Serenity, Rae. (2010). *Cultural Perception - Influence In Future Generations.* Retrieved December 2012 from [ezinearticles.com](http://ezinearticles.com) › Reference and Education.
- [8] Tsethlikai, Monica. Peyton V & O'Brien M. (2011). *Exploring Maternal Social Perceptions and Child Aggression among Urban American Indians.* Retrieved February 2013 from [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed).