

تنمية الدافعية في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية في المرحلة الابتدائية هي الحل: (دراسة حالة لمدارس ولاية الجزيرة – السودان)

Fostering Motivation in the English as a Foreign Language Primary Level Is the Remedy: (A Case Study of the Gezira State Schools, Sudan)

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المستخلص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء دافعية تلاميذ المرحلة الابتدائية في فصول تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بولاية الجزيرة، السودان، مع التركيز على الممارسات الصفية التي تؤثر في مستوى تفاعل المتعلمين وانخراطهم في التعلم. اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج القائم على الصف الدراسي، وجمعت البيانات باستخدام أدوات متعددة شملت الملاحظة الصفية المباشرة، والاستبانة الموجهة للتلاميذ، ومذكرات التأمل والتقويم الذاتي للمعلمين. وسعت هذه الأدوات إلى قياس مستويات الدافعية لدى المتعلمين، والكشف عن العوامل الداخلية والخارجية المؤثرة فيها، وتحليل فاعلية الاستراتيجيات التدريسية المتبعة في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية بالمرحلة الابتدائية. وتشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن الدافعية لدى المتعلمين تتعزز بدرجة كبيرة من خلال الأنشطة الصفية التفاعلية، والتعاونية، وذات المعنى، التي تشجع المشاركة الإيجابية وتحد من القلق والخوف من استخدام اللغة. وتبرز الدراسة أهمية اعتماد أساليب التدريس المتمحورة حول المتعلم في تنمية الاتجاهات الإيجابية نحو تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في المرحلة الابتدائية. كما تقدم الدراسة دلالات تطبيقية مهمة لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية، ومصممي المناهج، وبرامج إعداد المعلمين، وتسهم في إثراء الدراسات المحدودة حول دافعية تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في السياق المدرسي الابتدائي بالسودان والبيئات التعليمية المشابهة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تعزيز الدافعية، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، المرحلة الابتدائية، الحل، المعالجة.

Abstract

This study explores motivation among primary school learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in Gezira State, Sudan, with particular attention to classroom practices that influence learners' engagement. Employing a classroom-based research design, the study draws on multiple data collection tools, including direct classroom observation, learner questionnaires, and teachers' reflective notes. These instruments were used to investigate learners' motivational levels, identify internal and external factors affecting motivation, and examine the effectiveness of various teaching strategies used in primary EFL classrooms. The findings reveal that learner motivation is significantly enhanced through interactive, collaborative, and meaningful classroom activities that encourage participation and reduce anxiety. The study highlights the importance of learner-centered teaching approaches in fostering positive attitudes toward English learning at the primary level. It provides practical implications for EFL teachers, curriculum designers, and teacher trainers, and contributes to the limited body of research on motivation in primary EFL contexts in Sudan and similar educational settings

Keywords: Fostering motivation, EFL, primary level, solution, remedy.

1. Introduction:

Motivation has long been recognized as a crucial factor in successful foreign language learning, particularly in contexts where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL). In primary school settings, motivation plays an even more decisive role, as young learners' attitudes toward language learning are formed at an early stage and tend to influence their long-term engagement and achievement. In many EFL classrooms, however, teachers continue to face persistent challenges related to learners' low interest, limited participation, and reluctance to use English communicatively.

In the Sudanese context, and more specifically in primary schools in Gezira State, these challenges are compounded by contextual factors such as large class sizes, limited instructional resources, exam-oriented teaching practices, and learners' minimal exposure to English outside the classroom. As a result, English is often perceived by young learners as a difficult and abstract subject rather than a meaningful tool for communication. This situation places a significant responsibility on teachers to adopt classroom practices that can foster motivation and create a supportive learning environment.

While a considerable body of literature has addressed motivation in EFL learning, much of it remains theoretical or focused on secondary and tertiary levels of education. Fewer studies have examined motivation from a classroom-based perspective at the primary level, particularly within under-researched contexts such as Sudan. Moreover, existing studies often emphasize general motivational theories without sufficiently linking them to teachers' daily classroom practices and learners' actual responses.

This study seeks to address this gap by investigating how motivation can be fostered in EFL classrooms through practical teaching strategies employed in primary schools in Gezira State. Drawing on a classroom-based experience and data collected through a questionnaire administered

to primary school learners, the study explores learners' motivational levels, the factors that influence their engagement, and the teaching practices that contribute to enhancing motivation in the EFL classroom.

By grounding the discussion in real classroom contexts, this research aims to move beyond descriptive accounts of motivation and offer insights that are pedagogically relevant to EFL teachers working in similar settings. The findings of the study are expected to contribute to a clearer understanding of motivation at the primary level and to provide practical implications for improving English language teaching in Sudanese primary schools.

2. Problem of the Research.

Despite the recognized importance of motivation in language learning, primary EFL learners in Gezira State often exhibit low engagement and limited interest in English, influenced by classroom size, limited resources, and exam-oriented practices. This situation raises the question of how motivation can be effectively enhanced in Sudanese primary classrooms.

3. Questions of the Research

- What are the levels of motivation among primary EFL learners in Gezira State?
- What factors influence learners' motivation in these classrooms?
- Which teaching strategies effectively enhance motivation and engagement?

4. Objectives of the Research.

The research is intended to achieve the following:

- To assess the motivational levels of primary EFL learners in Gezira State.
- To identify factors that affect learners' motivation.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of classroom-based strategies in enhancing motivation.

5. Hypotheses of the Research.

- Learners' motivation is significantly influenced by classroom practices and teaching strategies.
- Interactive and meaningful classroom activities increase learners' engagement and positive attitudes toward English.

6. Significance of the Study.

The study provides insights into practical ways to enhance motivation in primary EFL classrooms in Sudan. It benefits teachers, curriculum developers, and educational policymakers by offering evidence-based strategies for improving learners' engagement, confidence, and language learning outcomes.

7. Limitations of the Study.

- The study is limited to three primary schools in Gezira State and may not fully represent all Sudanese primary schools.
- Data collection relied on classroom observations and self-reported questionnaires, which may include subjective biases.
- The short-term intervention may not capture long-term effects on motivation.

8. Theoretical Background:

Motivation is widely regarded as a central element in the process of second and foreign language learning, as it influences learners' willingness to engage, persist, and succeed in classroom tasks. In EFL contexts, where learners have limited exposure to the target language outside the classroom, motivation becomes a determining factor in sustaining learning efforts, particularly among young learners at the primary level.

From a pedagogical perspective, motivation can be understood as a dynamic construct rather than a fixed personal trait. Young learners'

motivation is shaped by multiple interacting factors, including classroom atmosphere, teacher behavior, learning activities, and learners' perceptions of success. In primary EFL classrooms, learners tend to respond more positively to learning experiences that are enjoyable, interactive, and meaningful, while repetitive or teacher-centered practices often result in disengagement and low participation.

One influential distinction in motivational theory is between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to learners' internal interest and enjoyment in learning English, such as curiosity or pleasure derived from using the language. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is associated with external rewards or pressures, including grades, examinations, or teacher approval. Although both types play a role in primary education, research suggests that intrinsic motivation is more sustainable and effective in fostering long-term engagement among young learners. Therefore, EFL teachers are encouraged to design activities that promote interest, autonomy, and a sense of achievement rather than relying solely on external rewards.

Another relevant theoretical perspective emphasizes the role of the teacher as a key motivational agent in the classroom. Teachers' attitudes, instructional strategies, and interactional styles significantly influence learners' motivation. Supportive teacher behavior, clear instructions, encouragement, and constructive feedback contribute to a positive learning environment where learners feel confident to participate and take risks in using English. In contrast, overly rigid classroom control and excessive focus on error correction may hinder motivation, especially at early stages of language learning.

Classroom activities also play a crucial role in shaping motivation. Communicative activities, games, songs, group work, and task-based learning have been shown to enhance learners' engagement by making

language use purposeful and enjoyable. For primary learners, such activities help bridge the gap between abstract language forms and meaningful communication. In contexts like Gezira State, where resources may be limited, teachers' creativity in adapting simple materials and interactive techniques becomes particularly important in sustaining learners' motivation.

In addition to instructional practices, learners' social and cultural environment influences their motivation to learn English. Parental support, societal attitudes toward English, and opportunities to use the language outside school all contribute to learners' motivational orientation. However, in many Sudanese primary school contexts, exposure to English is largely confined to the classroom, placing greater responsibility on teachers to create motivating learning experiences within school settings.

In summary, motivation in primary EFL classrooms emerges from the interaction between learners, teachers, activities, and contextual factors. Understanding motivation as a classroom-based and context-sensitive phenomenon provides a theoretical foundation for examining how practical teaching strategies can foster motivation among primary school learners. This theoretical framework informs the present study and guides the analysis of learners' responses and classroom practices in Gezira State.

9. previous Studies.

Research on motivation in EFL learning has received considerable attention over the past decades, reflecting its recognized importance in shaping learners' engagement and achievement. However, a close examination of the existing literature reveals noticeable differences in focus, methodology, and educational level, as well as a persistent gap between theory and classroom practice, particularly in primary school contexts.

A substantial number of studies have explored motivation from a theoretical or psychological perspective, emphasizing general models of

intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and their role in language learning. These studies have contributed valuable insights into how learners' attitudes, goals, and self-perceptions influence their willingness to learn English. Nevertheless, many of them remain abstract in nature and offer limited guidance on how motivational principles can be translated into practical classroom strategies, especially for young learners.

Empirical studies conducted in secondary schools and universities have frequently reported a positive relationship between motivation and language achievement. Such studies often rely on questionnaires and statistical analysis to measure learners' motivational orientations and levels of engagement. While their findings are informative, their relevance to primary education is limited, as younger learners differ significantly from older students in cognitive development, learning styles, and emotional needs. Consequently, motivational strategies effective at higher levels may not be directly applicable to primary EFL classrooms.

Studies focusing specifically on primary school learners highlight the importance of interactive and learner-centered teaching practices. Research has shown that activities such as games, songs, group work, and task-based learning can enhance learners' interest and participation by making language learning enjoyable and meaningful. These studies also emphasize the role of a supportive classroom environment in reducing anxiety and encouraging young learners to use English confidently. However, many of these investigations are conducted in well-resourced educational contexts, which differ markedly from the realities of classrooms in developing countries.

Within the Sudanese and similar EFL contexts, a limited number of studies have addressed motivation in relation to classroom practices. Existing research has often concentrated on identifying motivational problems rather than examining practical solutions grounded in teachers'

daily experiences. Moreover, several studies tend to focus on secondary education, leaving primary schools underrepresented in the literature. As a result, there is insufficient empirical evidence on how motivation can be effectively fostered among primary school learners in Sudanese classrooms.

Another limitation observed in previous studies is the reliance on single data collection instruments, such as questionnaires, without sufficient triangulation or classroom-based observation. While questionnaires provide useful insights into learners' perceptions, they may not fully capture the complexity of classroom dynamics and teaching practices. Classroom-based studies that combine learners' responses with teachers' reflections and contextual analysis remain relatively scarce.

In light of these limitations, there is a clear need for research that examines motivation as a classroom-based phenomenon situated within specific educational and cultural contexts. The present study responds to this need by focusing on primary EFL classrooms in Gezira State and by exploring motivation through learners' responses to a questionnaire informed by actual classroom practices. By situating motivation within real teaching and learning environments, the study seeks to bridge the gap between motivational theory and pedagogical practice and to contribute contextually relevant insights to the field of EFL teaching.

10. Methodology:

This study adopts a classroom-based research approach to investigate how motivation can be enhanced among primary school learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings in Gezira State, Sudan. The study was designed to combine practical classroom experience with empirical data collection to provide insights that are both pedagogically relevant and contextually grounded.

10.1. Research Design.

A mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating both quantitative and qualitative elements. This design allowed for a comprehensive examination of learners' motivational levels, the classroom practices that influence engagement, and the perceptions of young learners regarding English language learning. The classroom-based component involved the researcher's direct observation and implementation of motivation-enhancing strategies, while the empirical component relied on structured questionnaires administered to the learners.

10.2. Participants

The participants included primary school students aged 9–12 years from three schools in Gezira State. A total of 120 learners were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring representation from different classes, gender groups, and language proficiency levels. This selection aimed to capture a diverse perspective on motivational factors within the local educational context.

10.3. Classroom Observation

The researcher observed teaching sessions over six weeks, documenting learners' engagement, participation, and responses to different motivational strategies.

10.4. Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was developed specifically for primary learners, incorporating simple, age-appropriate items to measure intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, interest in English, and perceptions of classroom practices.

Teacher Reflection Notes: Teachers were invited to provide brief reflective notes on the implementation of motivational strategies and learners' responsiveness, supplementing the primary data sources.

10.5. Procedures

The research was conducted in three stages:

- Pre-intervention Phase: Baseline data on learners' motivation and classroom participation were collected through observation and the questionnaire.
- Intervention Phase: The researcher introduced motivation-enhancing strategies, such as interactive activities, collaborative tasks, and meaningful communicative exercises, while maintaining regular teaching practices.
- Post-intervention Phase: Learners' responses were reassessed using the same questionnaire, and classroom observations were repeated to identify changes in engagement and motivation.

10.6. Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores, to provide a clear overview of learners' motivational levels. Qualitative data from classroom observations and teacher reflections were examined using thematic analysis, identifying recurring patterns, behaviors, and factors that contributed to learners' motivation. This combination of analytical methods ensured a holistic understanding of motivation in the primary EFL classroom.

10.7. Ethical Considerations.

Participation was voluntary, and both parents and school authorities provided informed consent. Learners' anonymity was maintained, and

observations were conducted in a non-intrusive manner to minimize disruption to regular teaching.

11. Results and Analysis:

This section presents the findings of the study on motivation among primary school learners in Gezira State, Sudan. Data were obtained from classroom observations, learner questionnaires, and teacher reflection notes. The analysis integrates quantitative and qualitative insights, providing a comprehensive understanding of motivational patterns in the EFL classroom.

11.1. Learners' Motivational Levels

The questionnaire results revealed varying levels of motivation among students. Analysis of responses showed that:

- High motivation was reported by 38% of learners, who actively participated in classroom activities, volunteered for reading tasks, and demonstrated curiosity about new English vocabulary.
- Moderate motivation was noted in 44% of learners, showing occasional engagement but requiring encouragement to participate in communicative activities.
- Low motivation was observed in 18% of learners, characterized by minimal participation, reluctance to speak in English, and negative attitudes toward language learning.
- These findings indicate that while a significant portion of learners shows interest in learning English, a considerable number still face motivational challenges, which may limit their overall achievement.

11.2. Factors Influencing Motivation

Analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data identified several key factors affecting learners' motivation:

- **Classroom Practices:** Interactive activities, such as group work, games, and storytelling, positively influenced learners' engagement. Teachers' use of praise and encouragement was also noted as a strong motivator.
- **Exposure to English:** Limited exposure to English outside the classroom reduced learners' intrinsic motivation. Learners reported difficulty in using English in daily life, which affected their perception of its relevance.
- **Learning Environment:** Large class sizes and insufficient teaching resources were cited as barriers to motivation. Observations indicated that overcrowded classrooms limited opportunities for individual participation.
- **Assessment Practices:** Exam-oriented teaching focused on rote memorization appeared to diminish intrinsic motivation, as learners associated English learning primarily with grades rather than meaningful communication.

11.3. Effects of Motivation–Enhancing Strategies

During the intervention phase, several strategies were implemented, including interactive tasks, collaborative exercises, and real-life communicative activities. Post-intervention data indicated:

- An increase in active participation among learners, particularly in reading aloud and group discussions.
- Enhanced learner confidence, with more students willing to answer questions and engage in dialogue in English.
- Improved interest in English, as observed in classroom behavior and supported by questionnaire responses showing higher scores for enjoyment and engagement.
- **Thematic Analysis of Classroom Observations**

- Thematic analysis highlighted recurring patterns that contributed to motivation:
- Positive reinforcement: Frequent praise and acknowledgment of effort encouraged continued engagement.
- Collaborative learning: Group work facilitated peer support and reduced fear of making mistakes.
- Meaningful tasks: Activities linked to learners' daily experiences (e.g., describing objects, storytelling) increased perceived relevance of English.
- Teacher enthusiasm: Observations revealed that teachers' energy and enthusiasm had a direct impact on learners' willingness to participate.

11.4. Summary of Key Findings.

Overall, the study indicates that motivation in primary EFL classrooms is influenced by a combination of teacher practices, classroom environment, exposure to English, and assessment methods. Motivation-enhancing strategies that are interactive, collaborative, and meaningful proved effective in increasing learner engagement and fostering positive attitudes toward English.

12. Discussion:

The findings of the present study clearly demonstrate that motivation plays a decisive role in shaping primary school learners' engagement and success in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in Gezira State. The results confirm that motivation among young learners is not a fixed personal trait but a dynamic classroom-based phenomenon that is strongly influenced by teaching practices, teacher behavior, and the learning environment. Learners who were exposed to interactive, supportive, and meaningful classroom activities consistently displayed higher levels of participation, confidence, and willingness to use English.

One of the most significant findings of this study is the strong relationship between classroom practices and learners' intrinsic motivation. Activities such as group work, storytelling, games, and real-life tasks transformed English from an abstract academic subject into a meaningful tool for communication. This finding supports motivational theories which argue that intrinsic motivation increases when learners perceive learning activities as enjoyable, relevant, and purposeful. In the context of Gezira State, where learners have minimal exposure to English outside the classroom, such practices are particularly important, as the classroom often represents the only meaningful environment for English language use.

Teacher-related factors also emerged as a crucial element in sustaining learners' motivation. Classroom observations and reflection notes revealed that teacher enthusiasm, encouragement, and positive feedback significantly influenced learners' attitudes toward English. Young learners responded positively when their efforts were acknowledged, even when their language production was limited or inaccurate. This confirms that emotional support and reassurance are essential components of motivation at the primary level. In large classrooms, which are common in Sudanese schools, these practices helped reduce learners' anxiety and fear of making mistakes, thereby promoting active participation.

At the same time, the study identified several contextual challenges that negatively affect learners' motivation. Large class sizes, limited instructional resources, and exam-oriented teaching practices were found to restrict learner interaction and creativity. The strong focus on examinations often shifted learners' attention from meaningful language use to memorization and mechanical practice, which weakened intrinsic motivation. This finding highlights a mismatch between communicative teaching principles and assessment practices at the primary level. When assessment prioritizes correct answers over communicative ability, learners may lose interest and confidence in using English.

Another important aspect revealed by the study is the role of relevance and contextualization in motivating young learners. Lessons that were connected to learners' daily lives, local environment, and familiar experiences generated higher levels of interest and engagement. This suggests that motivation in primary EFL classrooms is closely linked to cultural and contextual relevance. For Sudanese learners, motivation increases when English is presented as a language that can be used to express familiar ideas rather than as a distant foreign system detached from their reality.

Overall, the discussion highlights that motivation in primary EFL classrooms is multifaceted and context-dependent. While motivational theories provide useful explanatory frameworks, this study demonstrates that motivation is best understood and enhanced through classroom-based practices grounded in learners' social and educational realities. Interactive activities, supportive teacher behavior, meaningful content, and a positive classroom atmosphere collectively contribute to higher motivation and more effective language learning. These findings underscore the importance of empowering teachers with practical strategies that address both the psychological and contextual needs of primary EFL learners in Sudan.

13. Conclusion:

This study investigated motivation in primary EFL classrooms in Gezira State, Sudan, with a particular focus on classroom practices and learners' responses. The findings confirm that motivation is a central factor influencing learners' engagement, confidence, and participation in English language learning at the primary level. Motivation was found to be strongly shaped by interactive teaching strategies, positive teacher behavior, and meaningful classroom activities that connect learning to learners' real lives.

The study also demonstrates that, although contextual challenges such as large class sizes and limited resources persist, they do not completely prevent the development of motivating learning environments. Teacher-led

strategies, including encouragement, collaborative activities, and contextualized tasks, can effectively mitigate these challenges and foster positive attitudes toward English. The findings further suggest that reducing excessive reliance on exam-oriented practices may help strengthen learners' intrinsic motivation and promote communicative language use.

By grounding the analysis in real classroom experience, this research provides practical insights for EFL teachers, curriculum developers, and educational policymakers in Sudan. It concludes that sustained attention to motivation at the primary stage is essential for improving long-term English language learning outcomes and for establishing a strong foundation for learners' future academic success.

14. Recommendations for Further Studies:

The findings of the present study open several avenues for further research into motivation in primary EFL contexts, particularly within Sudan and similar under-researched educational settings. First, future studies could adopt a longitudinal design to examine how learners' motivation develops over an extended period of time. Tracking motivational changes across several academic years would provide deeper insights into the long-term impact of motivational strategies introduced at the primary level and their influence on learners' later language achievement.

Second, further research could expand the scope of investigation to include a larger and more diverse sample of schools across different regions of Sudan. Comparative studies between urban and rural schools, or between public and private institutions, may reveal how contextual factors such as resources, teacher training, and school environment influence learners' motivation differently. Such studies would enhance the generalizability of findings and support evidence-based educational planning at the national level.

Third, future studies may focus more closely on the role of teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and professional training in shaping motivational practices

in the classroom. Investigating how teachers understand motivation and how this understanding is reflected in their instructional decisions could provide valuable insights for teacher education programs. In addition, research involving classroom observation combined with in-depth teacher interviews would enrich the qualitative dimension of motivation research.

Another promising direction for further research is the exploration of parental and community involvement in motivating primary EFL learners. Since young learners' attitudes toward language learning are influenced by their social environment, examining the role of parents' attitudes, home support, and exposure to English outside school could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of motivation.

Finally, future studies could investigate the use of educational technology and digital resources as motivational tools in primary EFL classrooms. Even in resource-limited contexts, simple technological interventions may enhance engagement and exposure to English. Research in this area would be particularly relevant in light of global trends toward blended and technology-supported learning.

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