Investigating the Students' Attitude towards Using Extracurricular Activities to Enhance their Motivation at the English Department at An-Najah University

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ABSTRACT

In the quest for feasible solutions for the falling standard of the English majors at An-Najah National University, insufficient attention has been given to improving student motivation. Some measures have been taken to curb and reverse the tendency, such as introducing more courses and more exams. Such measures and assumptions ignore the basic psychological principles that assert that increasing the level of difficulty for students produces a corresponding degree of anxiety and despondency to the detriment of the learning process. Based on relevant studies and the responses to a learner-oriented questionnaire, this paper will explore strategies by which we can motivate students and instill in them a greater sense of autonomy and control over their own language learning abilities. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher, approved by three experts in the faculty of education at An-Najah University and administered among the third and fourth year English major students at the English department at An-Najah University. Data was collected and analyzed. The results revealed that the English Department at An-Najah University didn't take into consideration the basic principle of motivation. As a solution to this problem the researcher suggests a number of things among which introducing variety of extracurricular activities which according to the students will help enhance their motivation and thus upgrade their standard in English.

Keywords: Extracurricular, Enhancing, Motivation, Activities.

1. INTRODUCTION

The teachers' concern with the prevailing teaching methods, with the curriculum and the administrative and educational settings implies their willingness to share some of the blame for the falling standards in English among the students of the English Department, and that is commendable. Nevertheless, as Fattash (2001) concludes that despite the fact that traditional, unimaginative and sometimes poor teaching methods have contributed a good deal to An-Najah University students' general lack of proficiency in English, the Department's present concern should be focused at the root of the problem. The question then is why is it that the enormous effort put into the teaching of English at An-Najah University has produced only incompetent students without any appreciable degree of fluency in English? This has driven the instructors at the English Department at An-Najah University to greater effort to try and remedy the situation.

When educators expend a lot of effort and fail to produce competent English language users, their tendency is to blame the students as being lazy, irresponsible, stupid or unmotivated. Fattash (2001) concludes that the students at the English Department are dissatisfied with their general performance in English and the teachers too expressed their dissatisfaction with the students' standard and achievement. But the problem may not really be with the students here. It could be fundamentally due to the instructors' failure to recognize the critical role motivation plays in language learning. It is the teachers' responsibility to create that driving force to encourage the students to make use of every activity and the teacher's enthusiasm to generate the necessary desire for learning. Dornyei (2001, 116) aptly notes that teacher skills in motivating learners should be seen as central to teaching effectiveness. Thanasoulas (2002) states that many teachers believe that by sticking to the materials and trying to discipline the refractory students, they will manage to create a classroom environment that will be conducive to learning.

Problem and Purpose of the Study

There is a general feeling among administrators and educators at An-Najah University that the students' performance and their level of competence in English are falling to an unprecedented rate. Fattash (2001) revealed that 72% of the teachers at the English Department-An-Najah University expressed dissatisfaction with the standard of the department's graduates and their level of motivation for learning. In response to these challenges, many curricular changes have been introduced in the new syllabi. At the English Department, these have taken the form of more courses and more exams added to the curriculum. None of the changes, however, has been made with the crucial psychological factor of motivation in mind.

This study investigates one of the reasons for this deterioration in the standard which the researcher believes is due to lack of motivation among the students at the English Department. This is confirmed through the students' responses in the questionnaire that enhancing their motivation in learning can be achieved through introducing a variety of extracurricular activities in the Department and promoting their involvement in these activities.

Research questions

This research attempted to answer the following questions:

1- What is the English major students' main aim behind majoring in English?

2- Does the English Department at An-najah National University offer the students enough opportunities such as extracurricular activities, as a significant factor in motivation, to improve their proficiency in English?

3- What would be the effect of such measures from the students' point of view?

4- Are the students satisfied with the number of extracurricular activities offered by the English Department?

5- What are the students' attitudes toward the proposed extracurricular activities?

Definition of terms

1- Motivation: is the driving force or stimulus or influence that causes a person to act in a way to achieve some goal.

2- Extracurricular activities: Activities performed by students that fall outside the realm of the normal curriculum of school or university. They are voluntary as opposed to mandatory, Robin and Baldwin (2002).

3- English as a second language/ ESL: The reference is to the use of English in countries where it is considered an official language even if it is not spoken as a mother tongue by the majority of the population.

4- English as a foreign language/ EFL: The reference is to language learned as a foreign language and for convenience.

5- Curriculum: It is all the material that is envisioned to be taught and learned within an educational program.

Significance of the Study

This study may prove significant in the sense that it focuses on one of the most crucial aspects in education i.e. motivation, without which the process of learning will be monotonous, thwarting may create a sense of apathy that consequently may hinder the teaching and learning process. Taken into consideration, the factor of motivation through introducing a variety of extracurricular activities at the English Department An-Najah University may play a significant role in upgrading the students' level of proficiency and enhancing their general performance.

Research Instrument and Methodology

For the purpose of investigating the students' attitude towards the use of extracurricular activities as a major factor in enhancing their motivation to learn English and improve their overall level of performance, a questionnaire was developed, distributed and administered to the third and fourth year English majors at the Department of English, An-Najah University. The questionnaire was evaluated and approved by three juries from the faculty of education at An-Najah National University. The students of the third and fourth years who are specialized in English were chosen as a sample for this study. They are sixty four students. They were chosen because at this stage they are supposed to have qualified for the specialization and have had enough experience and finished enough courses in English at the English Department.

This study employs the descriptive analytical method to investigate the effect and the students' need for extracurricular activities to enhance their motivation to learn the language.

At the first stage, to determine validity, the questionnaire was judged by three juries and approved.

To confirm the validity of the questionnaire, the researcher conducted person correlation coefficient between each item and total score to determine internal consistency where the ranges of correlation measured between 0.50 and 0.76 and all of these values are significant at alpha 0.05

To establish reliability the researcher conducted Cronbach alpha formula where the reliability was 0.85. Such value is educationally acceptable.

Definition and Types of Motivation:

Crookes and Schmidt (1991) defined motivation as the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language. The incentives for learning are as varied as the individuals themselves. Bligh (1971) and Sass (1989) listed some of them: interest in the subject matter, perception of its usefulness and general desire to achieve self-confidence and self-esteem. But perhaps the most definitive description still remains that of (Gardner and Lambert, 1972) who identified two types of motivation: instrumental and integrative. Instrumental motivation is the desire to learn a second or foreign language for practical reasons, such as success in exams, enhancement of job prospects or social status, etc. It is generally characterized by the desire to obtain something practical or concrete from the study of a second language (Hudson, 2000). Norris-Holt (2001) stated that with instrumental motivation the purpose of language acquisition is more utilitarian, such as meeting the requirements for school or university graduation, applying for a job, requesting higher pay, reading technical material, translating work or achieving higher social status.

Integrative motivation, on the other hand, occurs when learners like the speakers of the target language and their culture and desire a closer integration with them. One crucial reason why, despite the ambitious English curricula, many children in Palestinian schools fail to acquire even a primary level of competence in the English language. Hassan (2001) states that the majority of students at several governmental schools, where she conducted her study to measure the students' attitude to English, can't produce coherent meaningful sentences due to various reasons, such as fear, tension, anxiety, lack of motivation and lack of opportunities to practice their English. This may be because they are impelled by neither instrumental nor integrative motivation. After all, there is little need as yet for them to be thinking of either working at a job, where knowledge of English is required,

or traveling to an English-speaking country. Because the reality of jobs is as distant in their future as the native speakers of English are to them in terms of geography, learning the English language has little relevance for them. Consequently, they view it as a subject arbitrarily thrust upon them in which they have to succeed somehow by hook or by crook. There is a striking similarity between Japanese students, as described by Morrow (1987) and their Palestinian counterparts in the way they approach the learning of English. They are both impelled by instrumental motivation. Because passing exams is their main objective, their focus and that of their teachers' is geared towards those items that will be examined, namely, vocabulary and grammar, to the detriment of the speaking and listening skills. The Japanese students, like their Palestinian counterparts, are mainly impelled by instrumental motivation and (Benson's, 1991) observation of the Japanese students' inability to use English meaningfully despite their knowledge of its structure in the abstract is familiar to all of us here in Palestine. It is the problem we encounter all too frequently in the university and college required English courses.

Sustaining the Motivation of the English Majors

Ellis (2004) states that motivation is one of the key factors that determine the rate and success of second and foreign language attainment. It provides the key incentives to initiate learning a foreign language and later the determination to persevere and sustain the long and often difficult learning process.

Thanasaulas (2002) points out that unless motivation is sustained when action has commenced, the natural tendency to get tired or bored of the task and succumb to any attractive distractions will result in demotivation. He suggests that there should be motivation maintenance strategies among which increasing the learner's self-confidence, creating learner autonomy and encouraging positive self evaluation.

Suslu (2006) says that unlike unmotivated people who have lost impetus and inspiration to act, motivated people are energized and activated to the end of the task.

When it comes to the specialization courses we are on less shaky grounds since those who opt for English as their specialization do so because of either instrumental or integrative motivation or a mixture of both. Out of the 64 English majors who responded to a questionnaire prepared specially to investigate data for this paper, 70% cited integrative motivation as the reason for their choice

of specialization while 87.5% felt that specializing in English would improve their chances for a good job in the future. Out of these, 56% listed both instrumental and integrative motivation. Only 18% responded that family pressures had dictated their choice.

This gives us an initial advantage but the question that should be asked is what are we doing as teachers to sustain that motivation and to keep it at the levels required for successful language acquisition? Motivation is linked to achievement. At the English department, however, the emphasis being largely upon courses and exams, success is measured in terms of grades. When the focus is on reading and writing, memorization on the part of the students gives them a semblance of proficiency, concealing their level of proficiency at which most of them cannot function linguistically in situations involving genuine communication. When they become teachers of English, they rely so heavily on Arabic, their first language, in the classroom.

That the students themselves are aware of their lack of real proficiency is evident in the point they have raised several times in the past, namely, that they would like more courses in conversation. Fattash (2001) showed that there are courses in the Department's plan that do not contribute to the development of the students' ability and competence in English and that there is lack of language courses that enhance the students' oral skills. Their demand reflects their priority, which is to learn to become competent users of the English language. It is an expectation that is not fulfilled by the two courses on oral communication in the English Department curriculum. In the oral communication courses included in the English Department curriculum each section has nearly forty students registered. There is not enough time in the class to encourage all of them to participate in the discussions and at the same time to cover enough units in the prescribed textbook. Moreover, a lot of activities in the book have to be sacrificed in order to meet the exam requirements. The situation is worse in the other specialization courses, namely literature in which, the sheer magnitude of the material to be covered necessitates a teacher-oriented approach. This is why 65.6% of the respondents replied in the negative to item no. 6 of the questionnaire on whether the Department offered many opportunities to students to practice English. This yields negative results because without activities to encourage their participation, there is little to sustain their initial interest in learning English. As Davis

(1993) pointed out, passivity dampens students' motivation and curiosity. On the other hand, highly motivated students are those who actively participate in the process of learning and do not remain passive inside and outside the classroom.

In the field of research into motivation and second language learning, suggestions are not lacking for the way in which the situation in the classroom can be improved. Lowman (1984), Lucas (1990), Weinert and Kluwe (1987) and (Bligh, 1971) recommended instructors to encourage students to become self-motivated, independent learners:

a- by giving them frequent, early positive feedback to enhance their sense of personal achievement;

b- by ensuring opportunities for their success by assigning tasks that are neither too easy nor too difficult;

c- by helping students find personal meaning and relevance in the material; and

d- by creating an open and positive atmosphere in the classroom and boosting their self-worth as valued members of a learning community.

In his book, *Discipline* without *Stress, Punishments or Rewards*, Marvin Marshall (2001) adds that teachers can also promote the desire to learn by stimulating curiosity and teaching students to ask themselves questions and assume responsibility for what they learn. They can encourage learners by recognizing and acknowledging their efforts, and when necessary, collaborating with them. They can use variety in their material in order to offer learners choices, and they can structure experiences to apply to life outside of the classroom. On the personal level the teachers can stimulate motivation by being interested in their students as well as the subjects they teach.

Unfortunately, time constraints, the number of students in classrooms and the size of the material to be covered militate against our using the interactive, learner-oriented approach without which the successful implementation of many of the above recommendations is not possible. Another major problem which has never been addressed is that the English Department curriculum is modeled on the curricula of British and American universities, which are designed for native speakers of English. It is not really suitable for our students for whom English is fundamentally a foreign language. Had it been modeled on ESL or EFL programs, it would have not only made it more relevant for them, but it would have also made possible the practical application of the

guidelines given to us by ESL and EFL specialists.

Literature Review

Sass (1989) carried out a research to measure major contributors to student motivation. He asked his classes to recall two recent class periods, one in which they were highly motivated and one in which their motivation was low. Each student makes a list of specific aspects of the two classes that influenced his or her level of motivation and then meet in small groups to reach consensus on characteristics that contribute to high and low motivation. In over twenty courses, Sass reports, the same eight characteristics emerge as major contributors to student motivation. Instructors' enthusiasm, relevance of the material, organization of the course, appropriate level of difficulty of the material, active involvement of the students, variety, rapport between teacher and students, use of appropriate concrete and understandable examples.

In a study conducted by Berwick and Ross (1989), a group of Japanese university students enrolled into compulsory English course were examined to determine their degree and form of motivation. The students were found to possess instrumental motivation, with the underlying reason for studying English being the entrance exam requirements for university. Typically, upon entrance to the desired establishment, the student's interest to continue study declined. Prior to beginning the English class, the students were tested for motivation, which was found to be low. However, on completion of 150 hours of class time the motivation level of students had improved. Some suggestions for this alteration in motivation included the use of a variety of instructional techniques and the recent adoption of an exchange program with an American sister university. This may have affected student perceptions and thus, their motivation to study the language.

Hollrah (1999) carried out a research on the claim of facts that students involved in extracurricular activities receive higher grades than those not involved in activities. She examined the correlation between extracurricular activities and academic performance. Three experts in this field were interviewed and asked similar questions. The study was conducted on college aged students. After questioning two hundred ninety-two college students, he found that participation in extracurricular activities enhances both the intellectual and social development of students. She also discovered that a number of reasons contributed to the reasons why extracurricular activities benefit students academically. One of those reasons is that students learn character building lessons that they can apply in their study habits and to their lives. Second, students learn life skills that benefit their studies and teaches students organization and the time management skills. Third, extracurricular activities teach students analytical skills and creative problem solving skills since they have to think creatively to perform their tasks. There is close uniformity between the results revealed in this study and those of the researcher regarding the impact of extracurricular activities on students motivation and performance.

In a study conducted by Fattash (2001) he employed two questionnaires one for the students and one for the teachers at the English Department at An-Najah University. He measured the students' and the teachers' satisfaction with the English curriculum and the students standard in English. The students as well as the teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the overall level of performance, the methods of teaching and the level of motivation. These results very closely match the results revealed in this study.

Macleod (2002) carried out a study using quantitative methods and statistical analyses. This study has put forward generalizations about the learning process and compiled list of strategies considered important for good language learning. He analyzed student self-report and observation data on two successful language learners studying English as a second language on a pre-sessional intensive English language course. The study revealed that they were aware of the learning strategies they used and why they employed them. One of the questions the study addressed is what are the learning strategies that two successful ESL learners with instrumental motivation employ both inside and outside the classroom? It was also found that the learners' strategy used was affected by motivational level, attitudes towards language learning, personal learning style, teaching method and certain personality characteristics.

Shia (2005) conducted a study to extend prior research by developing an inventory to measure four established motivation factors and to introduce two new extrinsic motivation factors. The Academic Intrinsic Motivation (AIM) Inventory was developed by synthesizing past research on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to create six subscales related to academic motivation. As hypothesized the inventory demonstrated both reliability and construct validity. When compared to

the motivated strategies for learning questionnaire, the total academic intrinsic motivation inventory score was found to be positively correlated to the total motivated strategies for learning. Intrinsic motivation score, negatively correlated to extrinsic motivation score and not significantly correlated to the motivated strategies learning questionnaire score.

Discussion of Findings

Below is the questionnaire which was used as an instrument for this study. It contains 27 questions which focus on aspects of motivation that the researcher suggests and the students, in their responses to the questions, found relevant and crucial to the improvement of their motivation to learn English.

No	Item	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	Percentage			
					agree	disagree	Und.	Degree
1	I chose to specialize in English because I like the language, the people who speak it and their culture.	45	12	7	70.3%	18.7%	10.9 %	High
2	I chose to specialize in English because I feel it will improve my chances for a good job in the future.	56	6	2	87.5%	9.3%	3.0%	High
3	I chose to specialize in English because my family forced me to.	12	51	1	18.7%	%79.6	1.5%	Low
4	Since I joined the English Department, my proficiency in English has improved.	41	13	10	64.0%	20.3%	15.6%	moderate
5	The Department offers many opportunities for the students to practice English.	12	42	10	18.7%	65.6%	15.6%	Low
6	I use every opportunity to practice English.	36	22	6	56.2%	34.3%	9.3%	moderate
7	I need only courses in my specialization to improve my English.	25	32	7	39.0%	50%	10.9%	Low
8	I need more than merely courses and exams to improve my English.	55	4	5	85.9%	6.2%	7.8%	High
9	I believe I can improve my English better with opportunities for practice outside the classroom.	57	3	4	89.0%	4.6%	6.2%	high
10	The Department should have extra-curricular activities like short plays, poetry recitals, debates, social hours, student conferences, meetings with foreign nationals, video shows, department journals, in which the students can take part.	56	3	5	87.5%	4.6%	7.8%	High
11	If the Department had such activities, I would find learning English more interesting.	62	2	0	96.8%	3.12%	0.0%	High
12	Such activities would be interesting because I would not have to worry about exams and grades.	43	17	4	67.1%	26.5%	6.2%	moderate
13	Such activities would be productive because I will have a chance to do something on my own without depending on the teacher.	53	3	8	82.8%	4.6%	12.5%	High
14	Such activities would be fun because they will take place in a friendly, non-threatening environment away from the classroom.	54	7	3	84.3%	10.9%	4.6%	High
15	If such activities were held, I would participate.	57	4	3	89.0%	6.2%	4.6%	High
16	Such varied activities would help me improve the various language skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing.	62	1	1	96.8%	1.5%	1.5%	high
17	I would improve my vocabulary and grammar through extracurricular activities.	63	-	1	98.4%	0.0%	1.5%	High
18	I would gain more confidence and develop a stronger personality.	59	3	2	90.2%	4.6%	3.1%	High

No	Item	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	Percentage			
					agree	disagree	Und.	Degree
19	I would increase my sense of independence and self-esteem through extracurricular activities.	60	2	2	93.7%	3.1%	3.1%	High
20	These activities will create an atmosphere of friendliness and co-operation in the Department.	58	2	4	90.6%	3.1%	6.2%	High
21	These activities should be initiated and supervised by the students themselves.	23	35	6	35.9%	54.6%	9.3%	Low
22	These activities should be initiated and supervised by the students in co-operation with the teachers.	52	8	4	81.2%	12.5%	6.2%	High
23	Students should choose an activity and nominate participants.	47	11	6	73.4%	17.1%	9.3%	High
24	The Department should choose an activity and interested students should nominate themselves as participants.	47	8	7	73.4%	12.5%	10.9%	high
25	There should be several different extracurricular activities each semester.	61	2	1	95.3%	3.1%	1.5%	High
26	We should have extracurricular activities at least twice a month.	54	3	7	84.3%	4.6%	10.9%	High
27	The Department should award certificates to those who take part in extra-curricular activities.	49	7	8	76.5%	10.9%	12.5%	High

For analyzing the results, the researcher used the following criteria according to the agreement responses. 70% and above is considered high. 40%-69% is considered moderate. Less than 40% is considered low.

The first three items address the reasons why the students at the English Department-An-Najah University specialize in English. In response to the first item the majority of the students expressed a positive attitude towards the English language and the culture it represents. More than 70% chose to specialize in English because they like English and the English culture. This result can be built upon to promote the students appreciation of the language they chose to specialize in. This is a positive sign which should be enhanced by developing the students' motivation to learn the language.

The response to item no. 2 shows that 87% of the students chose to specialize in English because it will improve their chances of getting better jobs. This shows that the instrumental motivation for learning English is quite high. It also reveals the growing interest in learning English for purposes such as the one mentioned above.

Unlike the previous two items the response to item no. 3 shows that very few students chose English because of family pressure which means that it was mainly the students' own independent choice to specialize in English.

The results revealed in item no. 4 show that only 64% felt that their proficiency in English has improved since they joined the English Department. Considering that the students have already spent four years studying intensive English, this result should be taken seriously. From the results in the following item this shows that this feeling is due to lack of motivation and lack of opportunities provided by the English Department.

In response to item number 5, 65.6% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that the English Department offers many opportunities for the students to practice their English. This makes the Department responsible for this kind of indifference to one of the most important factors which contribute to the students' motivation to learn the language.

In response to item no. 6, only 56.2% use every opportunity to learn English. This is also the Department's responsibility to urge the students to utilize every possible opportunity that may contribute to the enhancement of their performance.

Maehr and Migley (1991) state that 'the classroom is not an island.' Gardner (1982 pp. 132-147) identified two contexts or settings in which learning takes place. One is the classroom where the instruction is formal and success is largely a matter of passing exams and getting good grades. The other is a natural setting in which language is acquired by meaningful interaction through interpersonal relationships. In other words, outside the classroom is where the most effective language learning actually takes

place. This very clear from their response to item no. 10 below where the majority of students express their desire to participate in activities that enhance integrative motivation.

With this in mind, the respondents were asked in item no. 9 whether they felt they needed more than merely courses and exams to improve their English, nearly 86% replied affirmatively. In response to item no. 10, 89% agreed that they believed they could improve their English better with opportunities for practice outside the classroom. 87.5% affirmed in item no. 11 that the Department should have extra-curricular activities like short plays, poetry recitals, debates, social hours, student conferences, meetings with foreign nationals, video shows, department journals, etc., in which students can take part. An overwhelming 97% responded positively to item no. 12 that if the Department had such activities, they would find learning the English language more interesting. This should be one of the major objectives of the Department.

In response to item no. 13, 67% of the students thought such activities would be interesting because they would not have to worry about exams and grades. Here it should be mentioned that learners' autonomy should be encouraged and teacher centered approach should be deemphasized, a step in the right direction to focus on the students motivation and desire for self control. 83% of the students felt such activities would be productive because they would have a chance to do something on their own without depending on the teacher (item no. 14). 84% agreed that such activities would be fun because they would take place in a friendly, non-threatening environment away from the classroom (item no. 15). This is where the actual and authentic learning process takes place, and this could make up for the lack of opportunities which are available for those who study the language as a second language and not as a foreign language like the Palestinian students.

When asked in item no. 16 whether they would participate in such activities if they were held, 89% replied in the affirmative. Here it should be emphasized that the students' willingness and enthusiasm to take part in learning activities should be utilized for their benefit. Nearly 97% thought such varied activities would help them improve the various language skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing (item no. 17), while 98.4% felt they would improve their grammar and vocabulary (item no. 18). 92% agreed they would gain more

confidence and develop a stronger personality (item no. 19), and nearly 94% responded positively to item no. 20 that such extracurricular activities would increase their sense of independence and self-esteem. Approximately 91% affirmed that such activities would create an atmosphere of friendliness and co-operation in the Department (item no. 21).

The overwhelmingly positive response to items 9 through 21 on the questionnaire confirms the expectancy-value theory upon which the well-known and widely applied model of instructional design, the ARCS Model of Motivational Design, is based and which stands for *A*ttention, *R*elevance, *C*onfidence and *S*atisfaction. In the expectancy-value theory, according to Vroom (1964), and Porter and Lawler (1968), 'effort' is identified as the principal measurable outcome of motivation. For 'effort' to occur, the learner must, firstly, value the task and secondly, believe s/he can succeed in it.

However, unless the task is both meaningful and relevant, it will not encourage 'effort'. The ARCS principles represent the four stages of the process of achievement. Extracurricular activities can accomplish the components and the sub-components of the ARCS model, identified by (Keller, 1987). (a) They can supply novelty and stimulate curiosity by posing problems to solve, and by their variety, provide the required range to incorporate the students' linguistic and psychological needs. (b) They present objectives that can be successfully achieved and which are related to the learners' experience and values. (c) They build confidence by providing challenging and meaningful opportunities for successful learning. (d) In addition, they allow students greater autonomy by linking learning success to their personal effort and ability. (e) Finally, by encouraging and consolidating effort, they provide intrinsic enjoyment of the learning experience. Extra-curricular activities provide what Lepper (1988) refers to as 'contextualizing' learning because they help students see how linguistic skills can be applied in the real world.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After this thorough discussion of the results and their implications, it is revealed that the English major students at the English Department-An-Najah University can be highly motivated to enhance their performance and improve their standard. It also shows the students' willingness to take part in the proposed extracurricular

activities if they are introduced in the Department. Moreover, the students show interest and enthusiasm to take charge of their activities and seek extra autonomy in learning. Based on all this, the following recommendations can be presented hoping that they will be taken into consideration by the teachers of the English Department at An-Najah National University and the university administration as well:

1- Teachers can encourage and support extracurricular activities by initiating and supervising them and collaborating with the students to set them up.

2- While it is true the Department does have some extra-curricular activities, these are too few and far between to have much positive effect in boosting motivation and general proficiency among students. A list of extracurricular activities can be added such as discussions, seminars, conferences, cultural exchange program in collaboration with the foreign agencies.

3- Proper planning, organization and co-ordination of the activities with the administration and the organizers should precede these activities to ensures their success.

4- The instructors enthusiasm is a crucial factor in student motivation and if the instructors become bored or apathetic, students will too (Davis, 1993). The events and any extracurricular activities initiated by the Department or the university administration should receive sufficient advance publicity to ensure a better attendance.

5- Extracurricular activities shouldn't be arbitrarily chosen but they should be well coordinated and relevant the students' needs and interest.

6- These activities should be conducted in a proper tension-free atmosphere to ensure the maximum benefit.

7- The students' self motivation should be strengthened to produce highly motivated learners. The teachers' involvement must not stop short of the classroom but must be extended beyond since that is where real communicative interaction takes place.

8- There is no limit to the kind of activities the Department can offer. It can encourage students to enact short plays and hold poetry recitals, for such public performances build their confidence and work wonders with their pronunciation and intonation. It can hold a symposium at least once every semester, but one in which the participants are the students themselves. The subject of the conference can be geared to their needs so that in presenting their papers, the participants can have the much-needed practice in writing and research and crystallizing their ideas coherently and lucidly. Debates on subjects of controversy among students can also provide them with a forum for communicating their opinions trenchantly. Norris-Holt (2001) said that in order to make the language learning process a more motivating experience, instructors need to put a great deal of thought into developing programs which maintain students' interest and have obtainable short term goals.

9- The English Department can also co-ordinate with the Public Relations Department to invite young foreign peace activists and volunteers to enjoy social hours with the students and to exchange views with them. This enhances intrinsic motivation and facilitates what Finegan (1999) saw as successful acquisition of a wide range of registers and a native-like pronunciation.

Based on the sample tested in the questionnaire, the interest in such activities, were they to be held, is great. 95.3% of the participants affirmed in response to item no. 26 that there should be several different activities each semester, and 84.3% agreed that they should be held at least twice a month. In my opinion, they should be held at least once a week because extra-curricular activities hold a tremendous potential for sustaining motivation and promoting genuine language acquisition. They can help us realize our goal as educators, which Small (1997) defined as 'developing long-term learners who are intrinsically motivated, display intellectual curiosity, find learning enjoyable, and continue to seek knowledge after their formal instruction has ended.'

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