

Motivational Factors of Learning English in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Ruhuna

S.G.S.Samaraweera
University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka sanjaya@eltu.ruh.ac.lk

Lack of understanding of the motivational factors of the 1st year students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) at the University of Ruhuna in learning English has impacted negatively on the General English Programme conducted as a foundation course. Therefore it is crucial to identify the factors that motivate the learners to learn the target language in order to assist them to master the language up to the desired standard. Richards & Schmidt (2002:343) state that motivation “energizes” human behavior and “gives it direction”, while (Dornyei, 1998, p: 117) defines motivation as “the driving force in any situation that leads to action”. Further, (Gardner, 1989) states, “Motivation is a significant dimension in language learning”. Gardner (1990) states, “Motivation in second or foreign language learning as comprising three main elements, i.e. first, a desire to learn the language, second, effort expended towards learning the language and third, favourable attitudes towards learning the language”. Here it is clear that motivation plays a significant role in the process of language learning and the learner, the teacher and the administration should be aware of the factors of motivation that would stimulate learning. Hence, this study investigated the factors that motivate students to learn English in the Faculty of Humanities & Social sciences (HSS). The sample comprised 60 students of different socio-educational backgrounds and questionnaire surveys and interviews were conducted with the students to gain in-depth insights into the motivational factors. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data. The findings of the study depicted different integrative and instrumental motivational factors such as to find a job, to get promotion, to develop personality, to do higher studies, to upgrade their social status and to achieve prestige, etc. Thus the findings are considered significant in preparing curricula to teach the English language effectively with a focus on the educational, professional and socio-economic benefits to the students.

Key Words: Motivational Factors, English, Learning, Language