Iranian EFL Learners' Motivation Construction: Integrative Motivation Revisited

Nasser Rashidi
Associate Professor of TEFL at Shiraz University, Iran

Mohammad Rahimi
Associate Professor of TEFL at Shiraz University, Iran

Zahra Alimorad
Assistant Professor of TEFL at Shiraz University, Iran

Abstract

Although Gardner and his associates' work was most influential in the field of L2 motivation, from the early 1990s onwards, their work has been criticized for several reasons. Some researchers claimed that integrative and instrumental orientations were no longer able to convey the complexity of the L2 motivation construct. To examine this complexity, the present study attempted to investigate the discursive construction of four (two males and two females) Iranian EFL learners' motivation at Shiraz University, Iran. Employing van Leeuwen's (2008) legitimation construction framework, the study revealed that depending on their future selves, each participant employed certain discursive strategies unique to him/her to (de)legitimize his/her future self. Therefore, what was observed was the use of strategies which were idiosyncratic to that particular person, in that particular context, for a specific purpose, and for that particular moment. Additionally, given the unique political conditions of Iran in the world, it was found that integrative and instrumental orientations can be best replaced by ideal and ought-to selves in this context. The study has some implications. Motivation researchers need to broaden the unit of analysis beyond the individual learner to the interaction between the individual and the multitude of factors in diverse social settings.

Keywords: discursive construction, ideal selves, integrative motivation and instrumental motivation, legitimation strategies, motivation, ought-to selves, self guides.

Authors' emails: nrashidi@rose.shirazu.ac.ir; mrahimy@gmail.com; s.zalimorad@rose.shirazu.ac.ir

INTRODUCTION

Gardner and Lambert (1959) started studying motivation in the bilingual context of Canada. Gardner (1985) defined L2 motivation as "the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" (p. 10). Two important concepts of Gardner's theory were integrative and instrumental orientations. While the former refers to a desire to learn a target language to identify and communicate with the members of the target language community or even enter it, the latter concept describes those factors responsible for motivation to learn a language because of a pragmatic assessment of the value of the language proficiency; for instance, better career opportunities or higher grades (Gu, 2009).

Later, however, Gardner's concept of integrative orientation has been criticized by several researchers (e.g., Au, 1988; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1990, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). The "predictive power" of each orientation for the learning outcomes was not consistent. Results of some studies indicated that instrumental orientation could lead to L2 outcomes well or even better than the integrative one (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Oxford (1996) also found that instrumental orientation was more influential among foreign language learners who were "separated in space and attitude from the target culture" (p. 5), while integrative orientation was more predictive of motivation among second language learners who had the opportunities to interact with the target language community and thus had better attitudes towards and perceptions of the community (Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Dörnyei, 1990; Oxford, 1996). Considering these drawbacks, some researchers attempted to postulate novel motivation theories which might be able to mitigate some of the above-mentioned problems. Dörnyei (2005), for instance, developed a new conceptualization of L2 motivation, the "L2 Motivational Self System".

Building on the theory of possible selves, Dörnyei (2005) developed this new conceptualization of L2 motivation. Possible selves represent individuals' ideas of 'what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming'; thus, this theory provides "a conceptual link between the self-concept and motivation" (Markus & Nurius, 1987, p. 157). The central concept of this theory is the *ideal self* which refers to the representation of the attributes that someone would ideally like to possess (i.e., a representation of

personal hopes, aspirations or wishes). A complementary self-guide is the *ought-to-self*, referring to the attributes one believes one ought to possess (i.e., a representation of someone else's sense of duty, obligations or responsibilities).

A basic hypothesis, according to Dörnyei (2009, p. 4), is that if L2 proficiency is part of one's ideal or ought-to-self, "this will serve as a powerful motivation to learn the language because of our psychological desire to reduce the discrepancy between our current and possible future selves". "Possible selves act as 'future self-guides', reflecting a dynamic, forward-pointing conception that can explain how someone is moved from the present toward the future" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 11). In order to examine the imagery component of future self-guides as a powerful motivational tool, Dörnyei (2009) refers to Higgins's (1987, 1996) *self-discrepancy theory* as the most coherent framework in this respect. Higgins postulates that people are motivated to reach a condition where their self-concept matches their personally relevant self-guides. Motivation, in this sense, involves the desire to reduce the discrepancy between one's actual self and the projected behavioral standards of the ideal/ought selves. That is, future self guides provide incentive, direction and impetus for action so that sufficient discrepancy between the ideal/ought selves and the actual ones can lead to distinctive self-regulatory strategies to reduce this discrepancy (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006).

One point which is worth mentioning is that although the ideal and ought-to selves are similar to each other in that both of them are related to the achievement of a desired end-state, Higgins (1998) emphasizes that the predilections associated with the two different types of future selves are motivationally distinct from each other: while ideal self-guides have a *promotion* focus, associated with hopes, aspirations, advancements, growth, and accomplishments, ought self-guides have a *prevention* focus, regulating the absence or presence of negative outcomes concerned with failing to live up to various responsibilities and obligations.

Arguing that for some language learners the initial motivation to learn a language does not come from internally or externally generated self images but from successful engagement with the actual learning process, Dörnyei (2005) proposed that the "L2 Motivational Self System" constitutes three components: ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience. He added in order for future self-guides to be able to exert their motivational power, a number of necessary conditions must be met. Hence, the ideal L2 self will be an effective motivator if (1)

the learner has a desired future self-image, (2) which is elaborate and vivid, (3) which is perceived as plausible and is in harmony – or at least does not clash – with the expectations of the learner's family, peers and other elements of the social environment, (4) which is regularly activated in the learner's working self-concept, (5) which is accompanied by relevant and effective procedural strategies that act as a roadmap towards the goal, and finally (6) which also contains elaborate information about the negative consequences of not achieving the desired end-state. (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 32).

Considering the fact that, nowadays, the ownership of global English does not belong to a particular geographically defined community of speakers, especially as English is widely used as a lingua franca between speakers of other languages and not simply in interactions between so-called 'native' and 'non-native' speakers, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) suggested that traditional concepts of L2 motivation such as integrativeness and attitudes to target language speakers and their culture begin to lose meaning since there is no clear target reference group and English is seen simply as a basic educational skill (much like literacy, numeracy, or computer skills) not tied to a specific culture or community. Given the above-mentioned views and motivation theories, the present paper is an attempt to examine Iranian EFL learners' motivation construction to find out which conceptualization of motivation best suits the EFL context of Iran.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Following Gardner's theory, many researchers all over the world tried to examine integrative and instrumental orientations and their effect on language learning success. Xu (2010), for instance, reported on changes in language learners' motivational profiles when they encountered a contextual shift from an EFL to an ESL setting. A pilot study explored the possible changes in learners' motivation orientations and their interrelation with learning effort and self-evaluated language skills. Learners in an ESL context were surveyed and asked to reflect on their previous experience in an EFL context. Findings suggested that integrative motivation accounted for their increased effort, investment and self-evaluated skills. However, Xu's study suffered from an important drawback. Xu defined context as an independent background

variable theorized to affect motivation, but over which learners had no control. Additionally, despite the focus on contextual variables, the researcher's aim was to uncover rule-governed psychological laws that explain how context influences motivation rather than to examine the dynamic complexity of personal meaning-making in social context.

In the context of Iran, Vaezi (2009) attempted to describe and examine Iranian undergraduate students' integrative and instrumental motivation toward learning English as a foreign language. Seventy nine non-English major students were selected to complete a questionnaire reflecting their motivation for learning English. In order to determine the students' tendency towards the two kinds of motivation, a 25-item survey was administered to undergraduate students in Birjand University of Iran. Results showed that Iranian students had very high motivation and positive attitudes towards learning English and they were more instrumentally motivated. It is worth mentioning that the major drawback associated with Vaezi's study is that although the cross-cultural perspective is a valuable line of inquiry, it has made researchers lose sight of variation at local and individual levels because of attempting to pursue generalizable patterns about one cultural group compared to another. In this study, learners were compared as groups as if all of the participants in each group have similar characteristics in all respects except the one under investigation. Holding such a view will surely lead to negligence of local and especially individual variations.

In another study in Iran, Ghanea, Zeraat Pisheh, and Ghanea (2011) aimed to investigate the relationship between learners' integrative and instrumental motivation and English proficiency among Iranian EFL learners. Their participants consisted of 128 undergraduate university students (males = 64, females = 64) majoring in English as a foreign language at Shiraz Azad University. Two research instruments were used to gather the needed data for the study: (1) Language Proficiency Test, and (2) A scale on motivation which determined the type of the EFL learners' motivation. Results of the correlation analysis showed a significant relationship between integrative and instrumental motivation and English proficiency among EFL learners of Shiraz Azad University. The *t* test results indicated no significant differences between males and females regarding their integrative and instrumental motivation.

Ghanea et al.'s (2011) study was, in fact, based on the linear approach to the study of motivation. The problem with studies based on such linear models is that they hypothesize relations between variables in

positive or negative terms, conventionally represented as positive or negative correlation. As Ushioda (2009) rightly puts it, "we cannot and should not simplify events in terms of cause-effect relations like this" (p. 219). She emphasizes that "linear models of motivation which reduce learning behavior to general commonalities cannot do justice to the idiosyncrasies of personal meaning-making in social context" (Ushioda, 2009, p. 219). Recently, researchers have come to the understanding that complex phenomena such as human behavior cannot be explained on the basis of such simple linear relationships. As a result, they are searching for more sophisticated techniques to capture the complexity of these phenomena.

Considering the above-mentioned drawbacks in motivation research, some scholars have suggested reconceptualizing the construct of motivation. For example, Turner (2001, cited in Ushioda, 2009) argues for a multi-method analysis of motivation in context from multiple angles and multiple participant perspectives. Therefore, we need to enrich and diversify our understanding of how motivation shapes and is shaped through learners' involvement in the micro and macro contexts in which they live and act and this points to the need for more qualitative approaches to the study of motivation which is the aim of the present study.

Nowadays, English constitutes an undeniable aspect of at least educated people's lives in Iran because of its widespread use in international conferences, scholarly periodicals, foreign trade and business, the internet, and many other domains. As stated by Riazi (2005), "despite the ideological stance of the state's policy towards English culture and language, which intends to keep it at a minimum level, there is nevertheless a strong need for the use of English language" (p. 113). In such a context, English is treated as an obligatory subject to be studied at schools. Additionally, having a moderate command of English is a necessary prerequisite for entering graduate and postgraduate university courses. That is, all educated individuals are required to be proficient enough in English in order to be able to use the Internet, read and write scholarly articles, participate and make speeches in international conferences, and, in sum, be a member of their discourse communities.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To examine EFL motivation in the context of Iran, the present study is an attempt to uncover the construction of Iranian EFL learners' motivation qualitatively to find out which concept best explains their motivational orientations.

Motivation has always been considered one of the determining factors in L2 acquisition process. In fact, motivation is an unchallengeable phenomenon; yet, its complex and multidimensional nature has not been thoroughly understood. Despite its importance, the majority of language learning motivation studies conducted so far have employed quantitative research methods to find the correlation between motivation and language learning success or its effect on different aspects of language learning experience (e.g., Birjandi & Hadidi Tamjid, 2010; Kiany, Mahdavy, & Ghafar Samar, 2013; Papi, 2010; Roshan, 2010; Soodbakhsh, 2009; Vaezi, 2009; Xu, 2010; Zarei, 2009; to name some). To the best of the researchers' knowledge, few studies have attempted to examine motivation through qualitative research methodologies (e.g., Gu, 2009; Heitzmann, 2009; Kim, 2009; Kissau, 2006; Mezei, 2008; Phan, 2010; Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2005). Among these studies, only Gu (2009) attempted to examine the mediating role of discourse in constructing L2 learners' motivation. In the present study, the qualitative research approach was chosen since it emphasizes the participants' perspectives. In qualitative research, the main focus is on understanding the phenomenon of interest from the perspectives of the participants, often referred to as the 'emic', or insider's perspective (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). Hence, to achieve this goal, the present study will attempt to give the voice to the language learners. The aim is to capture the process of motivation construction from their perspectives.

This study is a qualitative case study of four university English language learners' motivation construction examining their motivational dispositions in their accounts about their future goals and aspirations. With an interest in investigating the mediating role of learners' language in motivation construction and in establishing the link between motivation and language in use, van Leeuwen's legitimation construction framework (2008) was employed. Instead of providing a description of the different components that contribute to the participants' motivation and identifying the correlation between motivation and learning

outcomes, this study attempts to address the issue of motivation through the following research questions:

1. How do Iranian EFL learners try to discursively construct and legitimize their motivation?
2. Which expression, integrative motivation or future self-guides, best explains English learners' motivational dispositions in the EFL context of Iran?

METHOD

Participants

One month before the study's inception, the researchers informed students of all instructional levels of their research project. Then, they went to each class and spoke to the students about the objectives of their research. They asked them to give them their email addresses and cell phone numbers in case they showed interest in the study. Additionally, the participants were told that they would be paid for their invaluable help and cooperation in the project. Four students (males = 2, females = 2) showed interest and gave them their contact information voluntarily. They phoned them to organize initial meetings in which they assured them of the confidentiality of their information and talked about the commitment to answering their emails, participating in the interviews, and keeping a weekly diary on their English studies. To protect their anonymity, pseudonyms were used throughout the study.

These four students attended Shiraz University and studied English Language and Literature. Among these four participants, David and Yasaman were intermediate-level students while George and Mary were upper-intermediate ones as perceived by them and their teachers. Table 1 shows each of these participants' profile in detail.

Table 1: Each participant's profile

	Name	Profiles
1	*David*	David comes from a family of five. He was 21 years old at the beginning of this study. His mother had got divorced 10 years before the study because of his father's additction. She is a housewife and all of the children are living with her. David had not attended any private language institutes before entering

		university. He had studied the humanities at high school.
2	*George*	George comes from a family of six. He was 25 years old at the start of this research. He started studying English when he was in the third grade of guidance school. He had not been able to finish his English studies because he had to do his military service; so, there was a two-year gap in his studies. But, after finishing military service, he started studying English once more at the same institute and he was still a student of that institute at the time of this study.
3	*Mary*	Mary has a five-member family. She was 21 years old at the beginning of this research. She studied mathematics at high school. She attended a language institute when she was 12 years old and continued studying English until she was 17 years old. She, however, left the institute to study for university entrance examination; therefore, she could not receive her degree from that institute.
4	*Yasaman*	Yasaman comes from a family of five. She was 22 years old at the outset of this research. She studied mathematics at high school. Before entering university, she attended a small private institute but she could not graduate from it because of her being injured in a car accident.

Instrumentation

Interviews, emails, and diaries were the instruments employed in the data collection. Altogether, six individual interviews, each about thirty-minutes, were conducted. Additionally, the participants completed diary entries on a weekly basis: seventy two diary entries with an average length of 300 words per entry. The researchers also sent a total of 48 emails, 12 emails to each of them.

The interviews, conducted every two months, were semi-structured with open questions. All of the interviews were conducted in Persian and their main focus was on the participants' motivation (or lack thereof), the factors that influenced their motivation, and their future plans and goals. Regarding diaries, they were encouraged to note any critical incidents they faced in their daily lives not only those incidents related to English learning but also those related to other aspects of their lives. In order to establish rapport between the researchers and the participants, the email exchanges were not limited to English learning but included other topics such as interpersonal relationships, friendly messages, congratulation

messages for specific days of the year and so on. In this way, the researchers tried to create a trusting atmosphere while maintaining a balance. Different tools were used for data collection to increase the validity of the study.

Data Collection Procedure

This study was a one-year longitudinal case study which started in January, 2012 and continued up to January, 2013. The process of data collection and analysis was gradual, recursive and ongoing; that is, data collection and analysis were performed synchronically which allowed the researchers to constantly evaluate, reevaluate and reformulate the theoretical framework of the study, its coded categories, and its research questions. As soon as an interview was conducted or an email received, a preliminary analysis was performed leading to new questions which were then posed in subsequent email exchanges or interview sessions. Diary entries, interviews, and email exchanges were examined together in order to cross-refer the various available data sources. That is referred to as triangulation of tools of research. The English writings of the participants were left intact.

Data Analysis

As part of data analysis, the transcription of the interviews was a significant and complicated aspect of the study. In order to transcribe interviews, the researchers first listened carefully to one part of each interview and then transcribed and translated it into English. Attempts were made to reproduce the utterances as accurately as possible and in order to maintain the original flavor, translation was done verbatim. However, pauses, fillers, and vocatives were not represented exactly because the focus of this study was on the texts themselves.

At the outset, the researchers asked the participants to answer all of the emails in English but regarding diaries, they were free to choose whichever language (English or Persian) they felt comfortable with. The researchers translated diary entries which were originally written in Persian using a similar translation procedure to that of the interviews. Some of the translations were checked by the participants to ensure their accuracy and conciseness. After transcribing and translating, all of the

data gathered were coded thematically. A range of key themes which contributed to learners' motivation construction emerged.

To analyze the data, van Leeuwen's (2008) legitimation construction framework was utilized as the analytical tool. According to van Leeuwen speakers or text producers use different legitimation strategies to justify their own beliefs. Believing that language is the most important vehicle for legitimation, he introduced four major categories of legitimation, namely, authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, and mythopoesis. "These forms of legitimation can occur separately or in combination. They can be used to legitimize, but also to delegitimize, to critique" (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 106).

Furthermore, to give rigor to the study, different strategies for data collection were used. Data triangulation, member checks, low-inference descriptors, extended fieldwork, and descriptive adequacy were the main strategies employed to enhance the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the present study which correspond to internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity in quantitative studies, respectively.

RESULTS

As revealed by the textual analysis of the data, participants' future images of themselves had a strong influence on their motivation construction. Their future selves, however, were also flexible and changing in accordance with the changing situations. In this section, the factors influencing the participants' future selves leading to the fluidity of their self guides and motivation are reported.

The Context

Asked about their purposes for learning English and their future plans and desires, each participant answered differently. However, none of them pointed to a desire or willingness to identify and integrate with the members of the target language community as their future goals and plans. For instance, Yasaman talked about her future decisions in this way:

> tour guiding has always attracted my attention but I always liked teaching. When I entered university, I found out that teaching is very

boring. It is boring to teach a book for several terms. Only, students will change. Of course, I like relationships with other people but it is boring to teach the same subject using the same method. (Originally in English)

Yasaman is using 'evaluation' strategy to legitimize her future choice; that is, by describing 'teaching' as a 'boring' job, she is attempting to legitimize her own decision of not being a teacher in the future. It is boring because a teacher has to teach the same subject using the same method. Therefore, she decided to become a tour guide. However, later on, she said,

I myself liked to become a tour guide very much. I liked it very much. I investigated it a bit. Many people said where a tour was that I wanted to guide it [It is highly unlikely for you to have the opportunity to guide a tour]. For this reason, I got a bit disappointed. I thought floods of tourists were supposed to come every month and we would go, talk to them, and guide them. But, according to statistics, unfortunately, this has not been the case. (Translated version)

In the above extract, Yasaman makes use of two speaking/ legitimation strategies in order to delegitimize her future self. First, she uses 'personal authority' strategy by saying 'many people said where a tour was that I wanted to guide it'. People's words influenced her so much that she 'got a bit disappointed'. Second, she employs 'scientific rationalization' strategy to strongly confirm the 'delegitimacy' of her future self when she says 'according to statistics, this has not been the case'. Scientific rationalization "not only includes modern science but also other systematic bodies of knowledge that are used to legitimize institutional practices" (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 116). In this case, Yasaman refers to statistics which is a form of modern science to delegitimize her future self as a tour guide.

Asked if she thought about travelling to English speaking countries or living there as her goal while deciding to study English Language and Literature at the university, she answered,

The most important goal I had in my mind was just to follow my interest and continue my studies till getting my Ph.D. I was very much determined to become a university professor in my field of interest. I didn't think about going abroad because I was sure I didn't want to leave

my family and my country. I think I can reach my goals in my own country and a lot of people have done this before. (Originally in English)

In this extract, Yasaman employs the strategy of 'The authority of conformity' which is one of the categories of 'Authorization' by admitting that 'a lot of people have done this before'; that is, she believes that she can achieve what she wants in her own country because many people have done so before. This belief justifies her attempts at doing her best to attain her goals. In this way, she tries to legitimize her decision about staying in her own country and not leaving it.

Future Obligations and Responsibilities

The informants' potential future obligations and responsibilities were also influential in their future selves construction. In fact, future obligations and responsibilities constituted their future ought-to selves that were influential in their motivation construction. That is, their future selves were constructed considering the attributes they believed they ought to possess (Dörnyei, 2005). As an example, Mary does not like to be a university teacher. As she explains:

> I like to do literary translation very much. I like to translate recent books written in other countries. I think this is my goal because I do not like to become a university professor. A professor should walk in these corridors and these classes for years. I feel as if he is in prison in this department. (Translated version)

Mary desires to become a literary translator. She, however, does not like to become a university professor. Hence, she employs the strategy of 'analogy' or 'comparison' which is one of the categories of 'Moral Evaluation' legitimation (van Leeuwen, 2008) to legitimize the former and delegitimize the latter. In this extract, the comparison is implicit; that is, an activity that belongs to teaching (i.e., walking in these corridors and these classes for years) is described by a term which, literally, refers to an activity belonging to prisons, and the negative values which, in the sociocultural context of a prison, are attached to being a prisoner are then transferred to the original activity of being a teacher (van Leeuwen, 2008). She, in fact, draws an analogy between 'the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics of Shiraz University' and a 'prison'.

Asked about her initial desires and goals for studying English at the university, she answered,

> Well, I love my major so it wasn't all about going abroad or immigration. So choosing it was mostly because of my interest. I do love to continue my lessons in English-speaking countries and I'm trying for this but I only want to finish my studies in high levels and come back to my country. I love being here. (Originally in English)

In the above extract, Mary is attempting to employ 'goal orientation' strategy as a category of 'instrumental rationalization' to legitimize her interest in her own country. The use of 'to finish my studies in high levels and come back to my country' shows her great love for her country leading to her decision on staying there and not travelling to western countries. Although she likes to continue her studies in an English-speaking country, she does not decide to immigrate to those countries for a long period.

David's future self is not related to English studies. His main purpose is designing sites as he reiterated several times,

> I do not want to study English language in the future. I am a site designer and I am designing a site which is an online game. I want to devote my life to that and to earn money from it. I do not think that I will continue studying English. I do not like teaching. I do not like the way a professor lives. You should be too polite, too personable; walk properly; be tidy that I am not. I am very active. I do not behave badly. I am playful. I like playfulness more. (Translated version)

The strategy David utilizes to legitimize his future self is 'explanation', a category of 'theoretical rationalization'. He is attempting to explain professors' appropriate behavior in terms of 'being too polite', 'being too personable', 'walking properly', and 'being tidy'; that is, doing things in these ways is appropriate to the university professors (van Leeuwen, 2008). He does not view himself a legitimized person able to achieve these characteristics because he believes his personality is completely different. Additionally, he employs 'goal orientation' strategy by maintaining 'to devote my life to that and to earn money from it' to legitimize his future self as a site designer.

Financial Issues

Financial issues were also influential in the participants' motivation construction. These issues seemed to be the most worrying ones, especially for the male informants. For instance, because of being older than his classmates, George was always more worried than them regarding his future life. As he said:

> I decide to continue studying in the future but I am too worried. I am worried about our job opportunities: 1000 Tomans or 1200 Tomans per each hour; this is really worrying. If I am paid 1500 Tomans per hour, I should work five hours to be able to buy a kilo of rice. This is very worrying. (Originally in English)

In the above extract, George is attempting to employ 'goal orientation' strategy as a category of 'instrumental rationalization' to legitimize his worry about his future job opportunities. The use of 'to be able to buy a kilo of rice' shows that he is using this strategy to legitimize his extreme worry about the status of his future self in the future. By maintaining 'I should work five hours to be able to buy a kilo of rice', he is emphasizing how worrying his situation is. It seems that, in addition to the impacts of social discourses, the construction of George's future self has its origins also in material bases.

In one of his emails, George wrote:

> I myself think that Iran is the best place for living if you can earn lots of money for a living, but these days with our disastrous economy it is better to leave here, but when I've started to learn English I did not think of learning it as a bridge to go overseas, my goal was to be a professor in English, and I hope so! (Originally in English)

In the above extract, George employs 'evaluation' strategy which is a category of 'moral evaluation legitimation' to legitimize leaving his own country and travelling to other countries. To justify his claim, he makes use of different adjectives such as 'the best', 'disastrous', and 'better'. Considering 'our disastrous economy', he is, in fact, referring to higher order economical problems which prevailed over his country. This points to the importance of higher level issues in constructing university students' motivation. However, as in the case of Mary, George, too, does not think about travelling to and living in western countries as a lifelong

goal. He intends to be an English university professor in his own country, as he said.

Based on the above-mentioned results of data analysis, the two research questions of the study can be answered. In response to the first research question, it is worth mentioning that depending on their future selves, each participant employed certain strategies unique to him/her to (de)legitimize his/her future self. As an example, Yasaman utilized 'evaluation' strategy to delegitimize her future self as a teacher. She, however, used 'personal authority' to delegitimize being a tour guide. The important point is that there is no method of predicting each individual's use of different kinds of strategies because of the complexity of the construct of motivation and the existence of lots of factors contributing to its construction. Therefore, what was observed was the use of strategies which were idiosyncratic to that particular person, in that particular context, for a specific purpose, and for that particular moment. Although each participant's discursive strategy was uniquely determined, it seems justified to give a general idea of the strategies they employed. Among the strategies introduced at the outset, the present participants employed different categories of "authorization", "moralization", and "rationalization" strategies. Mythopoesis, however, was the only strategy which was never used by this specific sample of students.

With respect to the second research question, based on what the participants' expressed, it was found that integrative motivation can no longer account for Iranian EFL learners' motivation because of the unique political conditions of Iran. As stated at the outset, because of being accused of undeclared nuclear activities, Iran has very few relationships with western countries especially English speaking ones. Considering the current political situation of Iran, none of the participants desired to integrate with the culture of English speaking countries as their future goal and aspiration. Their main intention was to construct future ideal and ought-to selves capable of providing them with the financial support and future well-being while they would keep living in their own country. Hence, it seems justified to contend that ideal and ought-to selves are more suitable concepts in comparison to integrative and instrumental orientations and they best explain Iranian EFL learners' motivational dispositions. It was also found that their future selves are not fixed and static; rather, they are always changing in accordance with the changing situations. For instance, Yasaman used to like teaching;

however, later on, she found out that teaching is a boring job and decided to become a tour guide. But, she got disappointed of becoming a tour guide because of a decrease in the number of tourists which was itself the result of higher-level political issues. Their future selves were also affected by the economic conditions of the society which brought about economic concerns for all of the participants, especially the male ones.

DISCUSSION

One of the important findings of the present study was the uniqueness of the process of motivation construction in every individual. That is, individual variation prevailed in the case of these participants. This finding is fully consistent with that of Tanaka (2011) which demonstrated learners' uniqueness as intentional agents. In line with the present findings, that study, too, illustrated learner variability and the dynamic nature of L2 motivation. Additionally, the same finding of the present study fully agrees with that of Shoaib and Dörnyei (2005). Consistent with their findings, the present study indicated that motivation is not a stable state but a dynamic process that fluctuates over time.

Results of this study revealed that given the unique political conditions of Iran, the construct of integrative motivation cannot suitably account for Iranian EFL learners' motivational dispositions. Hence, the participants of this study strived to learn English because of assessing the practical values of having an excellent or even a moderate command of English proficiency which might provide them with better career opportunities in the future. Mary, for instance, wished to become a literary translator in the future. She, however, did not think of going abroad or immigration. Similarly, pointing to the disastrous economy in the context of Iran, George, also, dreamed of being a university professor in the future. As he said, he had never thought of learning English as a bridge to going overseas. One possible justification for this finding can be these participants' family conditions. Coming from large families with limited financial opportunities, they seem justified to think of seeking some kind of financial support for their future. For Yasaman, however, having strong family relationships is the main determining factor which impedes her integration into the target culture.

This finding is partly consistent with the findings of some previous research such as those of Clément et al. (1994), Dörnyei (1990), and

Oxford (1996) which indicated that instrumental orientation was more influential among foreign language learners who were separated in space and attitude from the target culture. Findings also agree with what Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) suggested. Consistent with what they said, it was found that traditional concepts of L2 motivation such as integrativeness and attitudes to target language speakers and their culture begin to lose meaning since there is no clear target reference group and English is seen simply as a basic educational skill not tied to a specific culture or community.

On the other hand, findings of the present study disagree with those of Ghanea et al. (2011). Contrary to what these researchers found, results of the present study revealed that it is not always the case that integratively oriented English learners achieve better results than instrumentally oriented ones. Hence, the present participants were of differing levels of proficiency, as perceived by them and their teachers, although none of them was integratively oriented.

It is worth mentioning at the end that since this study is a qualitative one, it did not intend to seek the generalizability of its findings. Additionally, it would have been more desirable if the time span for investigation of changes in motivation had extended beyond a single academic year in order to present a more reliable picture of change over time.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Although many motivation studies have been conducted all over the world, few studies have attempted to investigate EFL students' motivation from a qualitative point of view. To fill this gap, the present study, intending to provide a holistic view of both individual and social practice in examining motivation construction, tried to pave the way for more studies in qualitative study of motivation. Taking a critical and discursive approach, it investigated motivation construction through the interaction between the individual and the social context by employing the notion of discourse. Attempting to answer the two research questions of this study, the researchers found that these participants made use of different discursive strategies to legitimize their own motivation. Authorization, moralization, and rationalization were the major strategies utilized by them to legitimize their beliefs and behaviors.

By taking into account individual learners' past and present English learning experiences, the environment where they were located, and the broad social and cultural context, motivation was examined in an integrative and multidimensional manner. EFL learners' present experiences of learning constitute one of the dimensions affecting their motivational behavior. Their future self guides point to the historical nature of EFL motivation. Their future selves themselves are influenced by the current social, cultural, and political conditions of their country.

Besides, employing a discursive approach to the study of motivation, this study explored the individual dimension of EFL motivation and its interaction with the social and cultural conditions. Although they were English learners from the same department, their processes of motivation construction seemed to be distinct from each other because of the complexity of the factors contributing to their motivation and the diverse degrees of their influence.

The motivational theory proposed in this study is intended to provide an integrated view of both individual and societal practice in examining and understanding motivation construction. Through understanding individual learners' formative experiences, exploring their situated surroundings, tracing their various learning experiences during the university period, and taking into account the broad social milieu, motivation has been presented in an integrated model, which views them as individually, historically, and socially constructed. Additionally, the interaction between the individual and the social context has been better understood by employing the notion of discourse and by focusing on its constitutive effects on social reality: "It is through discourse that the individual engages with the social and it is also through discourse that the social is expressed by the individual" (Gu, 2009, p. 271).

This study has several implications for further research. First, motivation researchers need to broaden the unit of analysis beyond the individual learner to the interaction between the individual and the multitude of factors in diverse social settings. To this end, they need to employ a research approach different from traditional positivist approaches which investigated the correlation between motivation and learning behaviors and outcomes. That is, they need to avoid simply finding out which variables make a difference and generalizing a motivation theory for learners with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and goals. Additionally, they need to view learners as active agents capable of making changes to the world. In addition to the need for

broadening their perspective, researchers need to take learners' future selves into consideration. That is, the historical construction of learners' motivation merits further attention and investigation because it is very influential in the process of motivation construction.

This study can have diverse implications. First, from a theoretical point of view, although previous studies have endeavored to investigate motivation from various perspectives, no systematic comprehensive models have so far been developed that illustrate the evolution of EFL motivation in multiple social dimensions. In the present study, however, the interaction between the individual and the social context has been better understood by employing the notion of discourse and by focusing on its constitutive effects on the participants' interpersonal relationships, their intrapersonal identity, and their system of knowledge and beliefs.

Second, from a practical viewpoint, the results of this study indicated that individuals' family background and their previous life experiences are important factors influencing motivation. Therefore, it seems to be a good idea for teachers and practitioners to envisage ways to enhance their knowledge of the students' backgrounds in order to provide them with the necessary help and support.

This study has also several implications for further research. First, motivation researchers need to broaden the unit of analysis beyond the individual learner to the interaction between the individual and the multitude of factors in diverse social settings. To this end, they need to employ a research approach different from traditional positivist approaches which investigated the correlation between motivation and learning behaviors and outcomes. That is, they need to avoid simply finding out which variables make a difference and generalizing a motivation theory for learners with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and goals. Additionally, they need to view learners as active agents capable of making changes to the world.

In addition to the need for broadening their perspective, researchers need to take learners' future selves into consideration. That is, the historical construction of learners' motivation merits further attention and investigation because it is very influential in the process of motivation construction. This study can also be a starting point to pave the way for more studies having such a discursive viewpoint to investigate the discursive construction of other characteristics which were previously defined as ID characteristics (e.g., anxiety, self-efficacy, inhibition, extroversion, etc.). Finally, since this study has been an exploratory piece

of research, more studies in this area are needed to confirm the obtained results.

Bio-data

Nasser Rashidi is Associate Professor of TEFL at Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran. He has had some publications and presentations both nationally and internationally. His areas of interest include, inter alia, socio-cultural theory of learning and teaching, critical pedagogy, and discourse analysis.

Mohammad Rahimi is Associate Professor of TEFL at Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran. He has had some publications and presentations both nationally and internationally. His areas of interest include English language teaching and testing.

Zahra Alimorad is Assistant Professor of TEFL at Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran. She has had some publications and presentations both nationally and internationally. Her areas of interest include, English language teaching and discourse analysis.

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