

FROM EXTRINSIC TO INTRINSIC MOTIVATION: *What's wrong?*



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“Proposing a career oriented course on “English and my Future” would have the double benefit of motivating students to take their studies more seriously as well as weeding out those students who clearly see no benefit to it in their future.”

I think we all dream of having students with a high degree of intrinsic motivation to learn English. They would come to every class and have a great desire to learn English because it has been their life long dream. Unfortunately, as we all know, that really is nothing but a dream.

Let us consider the plight of our students. They have officially had some sort of English study for many years starting from middle school. Unfortunately, English is taught more akin to Ancient Greek or Latin, as some kind of “dead language” that might be somewhat useful later in life. So our students arrive at university with some vague notion of “English” but no strong background in it because they had about as much interest in English as they did in Physics or Turkish History.

So how do we convince our students that English will actually be useful to them? Enter the “extrinsic” factor. If our students see a future financial or professional benefit (something real and tangible) to learning English, they are going to display an immediate high motivation to learn. One would hope that starting with this extrinsic motivation through good teaching we might actually convince them that English is interesting and move their motivation to an intrinsic one. The fact remains, however, that our students simply do NOT see any use in learning English.

One possible solution? To have a required one hour course focusing on professions where English is required. This course could be taught by inviting a series of

guest speakers who are currently employed in jobs where English is essential. This course would have to be a Level One course so our students would learn from the outset that English is useful and will have some tangible benefit for their lives after graduation. One thing sorely lacking in tertiary education in Saudi Arabia is any kind of career development. Students graduate and basically have no clue what they should do and end up “falling into” some career path rather than choosing it.

If not this, then we are left with convincing students that English is useful because they might improve their video gaming scores or perhaps understand foreign films with a bit more depth. Although on the surface we might think this would entice students, in reality it would do little to motivate them any more than currently. Repeating the mantra that “English is the international language” does nothing for our students.

We often discuss curriculum revision. If and when we get around to it, I think proposing a career oriented course on “English and my Future” would have the double benefit of motivating students to take their studies more seriously as well as weeding out those students who clearly see no benefit to it in their future.