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Discursive Motivation Construction: A Case of Two Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract

Investigating the discursive construction of EFL learners' motivation is a relatively new area of inquiry. Hence, there is a dearth of research into how foreign language learners' discourse mediates their motivation construction. This study attempted to examine the discursive construction of two (one male and one female) Iranian EFL learners' motivation in Shiraz University, Iran. Employing Fairclough's (2003) critical discourse analysis framework, the study revealed that EFL learners' motivation is not single-dimensional and static; rather, it is complex, multi-dimensional and dynamic which is discursively constructed in the constant interaction between the individual and the social context. Findings also indicated that the discursive construction of EFL motivation involves the simultaneous interaction of multiple levels of learners' interpersonal relationships, their ideal selves, and factors in local and broader social, cultural and political milieus.

Keywords: motivation, critical discourse analysis, discursive construction, ideal selves, interaction

1. Introduction

One of the main concerns of those who are interested in L2 (foreign or second) language learning and teaching is to find out why some language learners are enthusiastically attempting to overcome all of the obstacles in

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their path towards mastering an L2 while some others seem to be reluctant to devote enough effort to learn a target language. The most popular concept used to answer such questions has long been “motivation”. Motivation has been considered responsible for investing effort and being a successful language learner while lack of motivation was regarded as the main influential factor leading to passivity and failure in language learning (e.g. Hirvonen, 2010). Although motivation has been introduced to the field of language learning long times ago (Gardner & Lambert, 1959), it has no unanimous definition yet. However, if we take a deeper look at the history of motivation studies, we can track an evolutionary trend in researching motivation. That is, along with developments in the field of psychology, there were parallel developments in the field of education and motivation studies (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Behaviorist theories of learning underscored the role played by external environmental influences. However, with the cognitive revolution through the 1970s, the inner processes of the human mind took center stage (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Both of these perspectives were problematic and incomplete. Regarding the former view, individuals’ role in initiating actions and behaviors was not taken into account while the latter neglected the fact that “humans are social beings and human action is always embedded in a number of physical, cultural and psychological contexts, which considerably affect a person’s cognition, behavior and achievement” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 15).

Recently, along with the introduction of social constructivism in psychology, once again the role of context was highlighted but rather than a retreat to behaviorism, there was a growing interest in the dynamic interaction between individuals and socio-contextual factors. In this new perspective, motivation is “viewed as dynamically constructed in discursive interactions between people situated in particular sociocultural contexts” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 15).

In line with these new perspectives, Dörnyei (2005), too, conceptualized the “L2 Motivational Self System” whose central concept is the *ideal self* which refers to the representation of the attributes that someone would ideally like to possess. A complementary self-guide is the *ought-to-self*, referring to the attributes one believes one ought to possess. 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”.

These new approaches to L2 motivation have led to new research methodologies in studying motivation. That is, the traditional quantitative

research methodologies have been complemented by qualitative approaches (Dörnyei, 2001). Instead of being considered an observable and measurable construct in the quantitative tradition, motivation, as a qualitative construct, is defined in terms of what “patterns of thinking and belief underlie such activity and shape students’ engagement in the learning process” (Ushioda, 2001, p. 96). Reconceptualizing the role of ‘context’ in recent research on language motivation, Ushioda (2009) focuses on a ‘person-in-context’ view; that is, on capturing the mutually constitutive relationship between persons and the contexts in which they act while emphasizing that this relationship is a dynamic, complex, and non-linear one.

In line with these new perspectives and to enrich our understanding of how motivation is constructed in the micro and macro social environments, we need to complement our knowledge by employing both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Most of the L2 learning motivation studies conducted in Iran employed quantitative research methods (e.g. Ghanea, Zeraat Pishah, & Ghanea, 2011; Gharghani Nezhad, 2011; Jokar, 2011; Kiany, Mahdavy & Ghafar Samar, 2013). To the best of the researchers’ knowledge, no study has attempted to examine motivation through qualitative research methods in the context of Iran. To fill this gap, the present study is an attempt to examine the motivation construction of two university students using qualitative methodology.

2. Theoretical and Analytical Frameworks of the Study

Recently, the theoretical framework of L2 motivation has been broadened and expanded. Now conceived as a complex dynamic system, human behavior is considered to have a great number of interrelated components affecting the system’s behavior simultaneously (Howe & Lewis, 2005). Because of the multiple interactions of the system constituents, the system is in constant flux; however, the direction of the change cannot be ascribed to any single variable in isolation since it is the function of the overall state of the system. In such a system, context is considered as part of the system and neither the internal development of the organism nor the impact of the environment is given priority in explaining behavior and its change (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Fairclough’s (2003) critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework was utilized as the main analytical tool in the present study. His framework of CDA comprises three dimensions: text (spoken or written), discursive practice (text production and interpretation) and social practice. At the text level, the construction of motivation was examined through the participants’ use of modality. Modality choices are important in the process of motivation construction because “what you commit yourself to is a significant part of

what you are” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 166). Modality expresses the speaker’s/writer’s degree of affinity with or affiliation to a proposition or a text. That is, modality reflects the extent to which speakers/writers commit to representations in terms of truth or necessity (Fairclough, 2003).

At the discursive practice level, how, why, when, and where a text is produced were taken into consideration. At this level, the two strategies of legitimation and logics of equivalence and difference were focused upon (Fairclough, 2003, p. 87). Attempting to elucidate the semantic relations people use to claim the legitimacy of their actions, Fairclough (2003) refers to the issue of legitimation introduced by other scholars (e.g. van Leeuwen, undated, and van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999; both cited in Fairclough, 2003). Recently, however, van Leeuwen (2008) broadened and elaborated the concept of legitimation and this new conceptualization serves as the basis of data analysis in the present study. Legitimation is used by the speaker or the text producer to justify his/her own beliefs (van Leeuwen, 2008). The logic of difference is a tendency “towards creating and proliferating differences between objects, entities, groups of people, etc.” (Fairclough, 2003, p.88) while the logic of equivalence refers to “collapsing or subverting differences by representing objects, entities, groups of people, etc. as equivalent to each other” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 88). The latter logic can be achieved by placing words of similar ideological import throughout one’s text in order to strengthen a particular ideological effect (Laclau & Mauffe, 1985).

Legitimation strategies were mainly examined using van Leeuwen’s (2008) framework. According to him, language is the most important vehicle for legitimation. He introduces four major categories of legitimation, namely, authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, and mythopoesis. Because the only legitimation strategy utilized by the present participants was authorization, it is explained further.

Authorization refers to “legitimation by reference to the authority of tradition, custom, law and/or persons in whom institutional authority of some kind is vested” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 105). It consists of six sub-categories:

1. Personal authority: “legitimate authority is vested in people because of their status or role in a particular institution” (p. 106).
2. Expert authority: “legitimacy is provided by expertise rather than status” (p. 107).
3. Role model authority: “people follow the example of role models or opinion leaders. The role models may be members of a peer group” (p. 107).

4. Impersonal authority: “impersonal authority of laws, rules, and regulations” (p. 108).
5. The authority of tradition: “may be invoked through key words like ‘tradition’, ‘practice’, ‘custom’, ‘habit’” (p. 108).
6. The authority of conformity: “the implicit message is ‘everybody else is doing it, and so should you’ or ‘most people are doing it, and so should you’” (p.109).

At the level of social practice, the following questions were posed: To what kind of discourse network does the text belong? What are its ideological and hegemonic effects on “systems of knowledge and belief, social relations and social identities?” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 238). The analytical framework along with clarifying examples will be presented and exemplified in the results section.

3. Objectives of the Study and Research Questions

This study reports on a qualitative case study of two university English language learners’ motivation by examining their interpersonal relationships in the university where they attend, their future self-guides, and their personal struggles in, and alignment with social norms and requirements. 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, Fairclough’s framework (2003) of CDA was employed. The aim was to address the issue of motivation through the lens of a socio-dynamic perspective by posing the following research questions:

1. In what ways is Iranian EFL learners’ motivation constructed as they engage with the immediate learning community and broader national educational contexts?
2. How is their motivation constructed based on their future self-guides?

4. Literature Review

Motivation has long been the subject of inquiry in many parts of the world including Iran. Because of the huge number of studies conducted on the subject, only some of the most recent ones will be reported and critically examined here. Phan (2010), for example, investigated the motivation of Vietnamese technical English majors in their English studies and the factors which influenced their motivation over the course of ten months. Using grounded theory, his results revealed: (a) Vietnamese technical English students were intrinsically motivated to learn English; (b) Most of the time, other types of motivation overrode the students’ intrinsic motivation; (c)

Students' motivation was influenced by inter-cultural contact with the target language and its communities, and specific Vietnamese cultural practices.

In Iran, Ghanea et al. (2011) examined the relationship between the learners' integrative and instrumental motivation and English proficiency among Iranian EFL learners. Their participants consisted of 128 undergraduate university students at Shiraz Azad University. Results showed a significant relationship between integrative and instrumental motivation and English proficiency among these EFL learners.

The theoretical framework adopted in Phan (2010) and Ghanea et al. (2011) has been based on the conceptualization of motivation as either integrative or instrumental. However, the current global spread of English as a lingua franca and the fact that nowadays the ownership of English does not belong to any particular community cast doubts on the meaningfulness of the concept of integrative motivation and the conceptual distinctiveness of integrative and instrumental motivation.

In another study in the context of Iran, Gharghani Nezhad (2011) attempted to investigate self-regulated learning and its relationship with EFL learners' writing performance and motivation. Seventy nine participants studying EFL at the advanced level in a language institute took part in the study. Results indicated that there was no relationship between self-regulation and writing and between motivation and writing. However, a positive relationship was found between self-regulation and motivation.

Yet, in another study, Jokar (2011) endeavored to examine the relationship among learners' autonomy, motivation, and GPA. A convenient sample of sixty university students at Shiraz Payame Noor University participated in her study. Her findings revealed that there were significant positive relationships between motivation and GPA as well as between autonomy and GPA. However, it was found that learners' autonomy did not correlate with motivation significantly. Using regression analysis, she came to the conclusion that autonomy scores were better predictors of GPA than motivation.

Gharghani Nezhad's (2011) and Jokar's (2011) studies are based on the assumption of linear relationships existing among motivation and other constructs of interest to these researchers, namely, self-regulated learning, autonomy, and GPA. They hypothesized relationships between these variables in positive or negative terms, conventionally represented as positive or negative correlation. As Ushioda (2009, p. 219) rightly puts it, "linear models of motivation which reduce learning behavior to general commonalities cannot do justice to the idiosyncrasies of personal meaning-making in social context". That is, complex phenomena such as human behavior cannot be explained on the basis of such simple linear

relationships. Therefore, more sophisticated techniques are needed to capture the complexity of these phenomena including motivation.

Recently, Kiany et al. (2013) examined the combined effects of contextual characteristics on the motivational changes of students after four years of learning English at high schools. 401 Iranian high school students participated in their study. Results indicated that all the motivational variables decline during the last years of high school and only 'L2 anxiety' increases. Findings also showed declines in 'interest', 'ideal L2 self' and 'instrumental-promotion' to be statistically significant. They concluded that the traditional teaching and learning environment and conservative policies of foreign language teaching were the main causes of these changes in students' motivation.

The problem with Kiany et al.'s study is that they 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, their aim was to uncover rule-governed psychological laws that explain how context influences motivation rather than to examine the dynamic complexity of meaning-making in social contexts.

In addition to the problems mentioned above, all of the above-reported studies conceptualized motivation as a stable and constant construct which could objectively be observed, measured and evaluated. In addition, all of them except Phan (2010) utilized quantitative methodologies rooted in positivist psychometric approaches to the measurement of individual traits. Therefore, they are reductionist in their approach; that is, they "reduce the multitude of potential determinants of human behavior by identifying a relatively small number of key variables to explain a significant proportion of the variance in people's action" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 16). Of course, utilizing quantitative research in its own cannot be considered a problem; the problem, however, is to limit the investigation of a phenomenon to quantitative research alone.

One of the researchers who attempted to capture the complexity of motivation by employing qualitative research is Gu (2009). She investigated two Chinese university students' discursive motivation construction. Employing a critical discourse analysis framework, she illustrated how learner motivation was discursively constructed in the dynamic interaction between the individual and the social environment, and through a complex process which involved their interpersonal relationships, their imaginative projections about the future, and their alignment with social discourses.

Gu's study was conducted in China where English learners had access to native English speakers. Additionally, China is a country which has extensive political and economic relationships with all the other

countries of the world. Therefore, the context of her study is completely different from that of the present research. Considering the current economic, social and political isolation of Iran in the whole world, the present researchers attempted to investigate the discursive construction of two Iranian EFL learners' motivation to find out how their motivation is constructed under the influence of such unique environment.

5. Method

5.1 The setting of the study and the participants

This study is part of a larger project constituting one of the researchers' Ph.D. dissertations. One month before the study's inception, that researcher asked Shiraz University professors to inform students of all instructional levels of her research project. Then, she went to each class and spoke to the students about the objectives of her research. She asked them to give her their email addresses and cell phone numbers in case they showed interest in the study. Additionally, she told them that they will be paid for their invaluable help and cooperation in her project. Among those students who showed interest and gave her their contact information, two of them were chosen for this study. She phoned them to organize initial meetings in which she assured them of the confidentiality of their information and talked about the commitment to answering her emails, participating in the interviews, and keeping a weekly diary on their English studies. To protect their anonymity, pseudonyms are used throughout the study.

These two students attended Shiraz University and studied English Literature in the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics in the college of Humanities, one of the fifteen colleges of the university. As stated above, in order to guarantee the accuracy of the participants' responses, they were paid for their participation in the study and for their cooperation during this longitudinal project. Because of their different background life experiences, the process of their motivation construction was envisaged to be different from each other. In this section, each of the participants' profile will be described in detail.

Martin

Martin comes from a family of six, with his father and his mother and his three older brothers. He was born in Shiraz and he was 23 years old at the start of this research. His father is a retired colonel and his mother had been a teacher who had to leave her job because of the conditions of her husband's career which necessitated lots of travels to different cities all the time. Martin attended a well-known institute in Shiraz (I1 hereafter) since he was 14 years old and he received his senior degree from that institute. He

had studied mathematics at high school and had taken English-only entrance examination for entering university. In this specific type of exam, students are required to take only general high school courses exams such as English, Persian Literature, Arabic Language and theology. Additionally, they are tested on a 100-item English test which is called “specialized English test”. Such students are only allowed to choose majors which are related to English language such as English Literature, English Translation, Linguistics and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

Rose

Rose comes from a family of five, consisting of her father, her mother and her two older brothers. She was born in a small city of Fars province and she was 18 years old at the outset of this study. Her father is a retired employee and her mother is a retired high school teacher. She attended a small institute in her hometown and she received her senior degree when she was in pre-university grade of the high school. She studied mathematics while she was a high school student and she took both mathematics and English-only entrance examinations for entering university.

5.2 Data collection and analysis procedures

This study was a one-academic-year longitudinal case study which started from January, 2012 and continued up to January, 2013. Interviews, emails, and diaries were the main instruments employed in the data collection. Altogether, six individual interviews, each about thirty-minute duration, were conducted. Additionally, the two participants completed diary entries on a weekly basis: thirty six diary entries with an average length of 300 words per entry. The researcher also sent a total of 24 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’ English language learning experience, their future plans, their motivation (or lack thereof) at different stages of their life from their childhood to the present time, and the factors that influenced their motivation. 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 other ones related to other aspects of their lives. They were asked to complete diary entries every week and to note all of the incidents happened to them. In order to establish rapport between the researcher 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 researcher tried to create a trusting atmosphere while maintaining a balance.

The process of data analysis was gradual, recursive and ongoing; that is, data collection and analysis were performed synchronically. This 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.

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 translated and transcribed it in English. Attempt was made to reproduce the utterances as exactly 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. To this aim, strict attention was paid to preserving and recording grammatical and linguistic features since these features were vital in this study.

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 who were proficient enough in both English and Persian 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. That is, the themes, which the participants referred to in the majority of cases while talking about their language learning moments, emerged as contributing to their motivation construction. In order to check the inter-rater agreement, one of the researchers analyzed all of the texts available based on Fairclough's framework of CDA. Then, another one of them independently analyzed the texts based on the same framework. Intra-rater agreement was also checked. That same first researcher herself analyzed all of the texts once and then after a few days, she coded some of them for the second time. The index of the former was 78.3% while that of the latter was 81.2%. Results of these analyses are reported in the next section.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 The role of interpersonal relationships in EFL motivation construction

Martin and Rose's interpersonal relationships constituted one of the important factors contributing to their motivation construction. For instance, their relationships with their parents, peers, teachers, relatives, and even university staff played an influential role in the process of the construction of their motivation. Rose, for example, was greatly influenced by one of her teachers at the institute she attended:

In the institute, we had a teacher who could not walk without canes. He had problems in his hands and his legs. He was a former M.A. student of Shiraz University. In comparison to other teachers, he was *very knowledgeable*. Seeing him was *very encouraging* to me because despite his problems, he was *very strong* in comparison to others. Most of the teachers who had studied in Tehran or Shiraz could not even be compared to him. He had a *very intimate relationship* with *us* so that *we* called him '*uncle*'.

In this extract, Rose is trying to legitimize this situation by employing "role model authority" (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 107). She remembers one of her teachers who was physically disabled but more knowledgeable than his colleagues. As she states, this situation was "very encouraging" to her contributing to her motivation construction. In order to describe his knowledge, Rose makes use of adjectives such as "knowledgeable" and "strong" which are intensified using the adverb "very". To show the intensity of the intimate relationship between this teacher and herself, she calls him "uncle". The word "uncle" points to a relationship beyond that of a teacher and his students. This teacher, according to Rose, serves as a role model encouraging her to do her best in learning English. Additionally, instead of using first person pronouns "me" and "I", she uses "us" and "we" to locate herself in the mainstream discourse community of her classmates who share beliefs and ideas. That is, by saying "he had a very intimate relationship with us so that we called him uncle", she is trying to tell us that she as well as her classmates shares this belief that he is an "uncle" rather than a "teacher".

In addition to "role model authority", Rose employs "expert authority", too (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 107). Considering the fact that Rose's ultimate desire is to be a university professor and her brother is currently a university instructor, she is trying to provide legitimacy for her actions by utilizing this strategy:

My brother has *always* been a model for *all* I have done. Since my mother was not a housewife and went out to work, my brother took care of me. Because of this, I learned *everything* from him. I still think that he has played the role of parents for me.

Rose's brother serves as a model for her because he is a university professor, the same career she loves to become. The use of words such as "always", "all", and "everything" points to the intensity of the trust and reliance she has on her brother to position him as a legitimized person to be followed. Therefore, her brother's expertise is used as a justification for her motivation construction in this extract.

Martin also has a similar experience to that of Rose. Remembering one of his teachers at I1, he remarks:

He *was really great*. He *was the most informative* one. *I do not know someone else who has such amount of information even Shiraz University professors*. He *was full of English* as if he has been studying English since his childhood.

Employing "expert authority", Martin is attempting to legitimize his interest in English. The use of positive adjectives and expressions such as "really great", "the most informative", and "full of English" positions his teacher as an expert in the field and provides legitimacy for Martin's positive attitude towards English learning. The use of modal verbs as part of modality choices is also very illuminating in this context. Martin's non-modalized declarative statements point to the strong commitment he has to the truth of what he is claiming. In fact, he is texturing his own identity as a person legitimized to make such strong claims. He is signaling his high degree of certainty by using non-modalized "was". By claiming that "I do not know someone else who has such amount of information even Shiraz University professors", Martin is putting that teacher and Shiraz University professors in a contrastive relation of difference in order to highlight his knowledge. In one of his interviews, he mentions:

Last semester, some students gossiped about one of our professors. He got sad and then *he started misbehaving us*. *Last term, I liked to communicate, to ask questions and to do assignments on time*. But, *this semester*, I am *discouraged*. He did not say anything but his behavior has changed. *This behavior is not suitable for a Ph.D. He is not right to behave like this. It is somehow beneath his dignity*.

In the above extract, Martin makes use of the two logics of equivalence and difference simultaneously by putting last and this semester in a contrastive relation of difference. Here, the “relations of meaning inclusion” or what is called “hyponymy” in semantics (Fairclough, 2003, p. 101) are being set up by elaborating the meaning of “this semester” in terms of “being discouraged”. “Last term”, on the other hand, is textured as co-hyponym of liking to “to communicate”, “to ask questions”, and “to do assignments on time”. On the other hand, these co-hyponyms are set in a contrastive relation of difference. This logic of difference is built up through the range of contrastive relational structures and expressions mentioned.

The words and expressions Martin uses to describe his teacher’s behavior are also elucidating in this extract. Sentences such as “he started misbehaving us”, “this behavior is not suitable for a Ph.D.”, “he is not right to behave like this”, and “it is somehow beneath his dignity” reveal his negative attitude towards his teacher’s behavior. His use of non-modalized “is” and “is not” positioned him as a legitimized person to make such strong claims. Hence, his discourse contributed to his reduction of motivation during a specific period of time so that later on he argues that “personally, this professor gets on my nerves and I cannot understand the lessons”.

6.2 The role of ideal self in EFL motivation construction

Fairclough (2003) believes that speakers’ self-identification is, to a large extent, reflected in what they are committed to in text. To analyze the participants’ accounts, the present researchers made use of this assumption. As revealed by the textual analysis of the data, participants’ ideal selves have a strong influence on their motivation construction. Rose repeatedly states:

I like to be a university professor. *So*, I like to continue my studies up to Ph.D. level. I *am very interested in English*. I *do not get tired of English because* I *am* interested in it. In high school, if I had *Differential* exam, I did not like to be awake studying it at night even if the entire world was given to me. I liked to finish it until 12 p.m. *and* go to sleep. *But*, now, if I *remain* awake studying *English* all night, I won’t be tired next day. I *have a special interest in English*.

Rose uses conjunctions such as “so”, “because”, “and”, and “but” to establish the link between her imagination, ideal self, and social discourses. To characterize her ideal self and to legitimate her choice, she uses positive terms such as “being interested in it”, “not getting tired of English”, and

“having a special interest in English”. Her ideal self, which is an “English university professor”, strongly influences her attempts at mastering English and her interest to do her best in learning it. Additionally, to provide legitimacy for her choice, she not only makes a strong commitment to the truth of her propositions but also utilizes the two logics of equivalence and difference simultaneously. Regarding the former strategy, the use of non-modalized verbs such as “am”, “do not get tired”, “remain”, and “have” points to the degree of commitment and certainty she has with respect to her interest in English. The latter strategy is utilized by putting “Differential” and “English” learning in a contrastive relation of difference. On the one hand, studying “Differential” is textured as co-hyponym of “not liking to be awake studying it at night”, “liking to finish it until 12 p.m.”, and “going to sleep”. Studying “English”, on the other hand, is textured as co-hyponym of “remaining awake studying English all night”, “not being tired”, and “having a special interest in English”. These two lists of co-hyponyms of studying “Differential” versus studying “English” are also simultaneously set in a contrastive relation of difference. This logic of difference is built up through the range of contrastive relational structures and expressions mentioned above.

Martin’s ideal self is also similar to that of Rose. He also aspires to be an English university professor. As he mentioned:

I am going to study English Literature up to Ph.D. level.
For M.A., either in Shiraz or in Tehran but for Ph.D.
level, I will *certainly* travel to a country that has a say in
English Literature or at least in European Literature.

As revealed in his statements, Martin’s ideal self is more influenced by macro-factors in the whole world; that is, he is decided to move to another country which, he thinks, is rich in English Literature. By using the adverb “certainly”, he commits himself strongly to the truth of his decision to study English Literature at Ph.D. level in another country.

However, regarding the financial status of a university professor, they have different ideas. While Rose believes that the financial aspect is not satisfying, Martin asserts that it is acceptable. As mentioned by Rose in one of her interviews:

University professors *always* say that the financial aspect is *not good especially* those who become faculty members. After they get married, they come to the conclusion that it is *not that interesting* since they say that they are *not able to* manage their lives by being *just* a

university professor. *But*, I came to the conclusion that if one lowers his expectations, it is possible. Why not?

At first, she tries to legitimize the disappointing financial future of her major by employing the strategy of “expert authority”. Shiraz University professors, as experts in this field, are referred to as dissatisfied with their financial support. To provide legitimacy for her claims, she uses adverbs such as “always”, “especially”, and “just” as well as negative adjectives like “not good”, “not interesting”, and “not able”. However, at the end of her accounts, she expresses her own disagreement with her professors’ claims by stating “But, I came to the conclusion that if one lowers his expectations, it is possible. Why not?”. The use of “but” in the present context shows a contrastive relation between her ideas and her professors’ claims. That is, by revealing her own disagreement, she attempts to legitimize her own ideal self.

Martin, on the other hand, is more optimistic with regard to his future financial support. As he mentioned in one of his interviews:

Verily, I *have not seen* a university professor without welfare. He *is* anyway *able* to manage his life. Nowadays, in all of the countries, the situation *is* the same: one who *is* a university professor in an OK university, in Iran, *mostly* in state universities, the professors *are highly* financially *secured*.

Once more, Martin’s ideal self is more influenced by the macro-factors in the whole world as revealed in his propositions. He always tries to provide legitimacy for his claims by giving general examples of the situation in other countries of the world. Using adverbs such as “verily”, “mostly”, and “highly” as well as positive adjectives like “able” and “secured”, he is attempting to legitimize his motivation for continuing his studies up to becoming a university professor and for justifying his current endeavors. Additionally, his use of non-modalized verbs, “is” and “are”, is indicative of his high degree of certainty of what he claims.

6.3 Alignment with social discourses and EFL motivation construction

The influence of the social context of Iran as well as that of the world on these two participants’ motivation gradually became salient when they started to talk about the social factors existing in their country and the whole world. As mentioned by Rose:

The situation of the whole world is worrying. That is, it is possible to predict the future of all fields, either

engineering or medicine, you continue and there is something. Certainly, I sought advice from some people and they told me to choose TEFL. For example, *my brother, my uncles, those whom I thought what they say is reliable*. They believed that because of the sanctions, there *might* be problems.

Rose's worry about the future of English Literature indicates that social conditions have a great influence on her motivation to continue studying this field. To justify this worry, she refers to the political problems existing among Iran and other countries of the world which might bring about problems for the future of her major, English Literature. Although she uses modal verb "might" in her statement "there might be problems" to indicate her uncertain and doubting thought regarding the future, she tries to legitimate her claims by utilizing "role model authority" referring to her "brother", "uncles", and in general "those whom I thought what they say is reliable". These two strategies, in fact, contribute to lowering of her commitment regarding the truth value of her proposition. That is, she uses these strategies to lower her responsibility for the truth of what she is claiming. All in all, social factors of the whole world are influential in Rose's motivation construction and in choosing the major to study.

Marin, however, talks about another social factor influential in his motivation construction. As he says:

Now, someone who has been accepted as a university professor is safe. He *has job security*. This *does not lead to development*. There is *no challenge*. There is *no competition*. If there is, he will search for new methods; the students will be important for him. *Neither are the students important for him nor the teaching method and what is taught*. The influence this has on students is that university is the same as high school. It is not serious. This is exactly similar to an upside down funnel.

Comparing this situation with that of I1 institute where he studied English formerly and he teaches English currently, he admits:

In I1, *surely*, if someone is *able to employ a new teaching method, he will remain. If he is not able to employ it, he will be fired*.

Martin is, in fact, attempting to clarify the influence of the macro context on students' motivation. He is referring to those decision-makers who are

responsible to decide which teacher should remain and which one should be fired. To do this, he makes simultaneous use of the two logics of equivalence and difference by putting I1 institute and Shiraz University in a contrastive relation of difference. In this context, the relations of hyponymy are being set up by elaborating the meaning of “I1 institute” in terms of “being able to employ a new teaching method leads to job security” and “not being able to do so leads to being fired”. The adverb “surely” is also indicative of his high degree of commitment to the truth of what he is claiming regarding the situation in I1 institute. “Shiraz University”, however, is textured as co-hyponym of a place characterized by “job security”, leading to lack of “development”, “challenge”, and “competition”; a place where “neither are the students important for university professors nor the teaching methods and what is taught”. On the other hand, the two lists of co-hyponyms of “I1 institute” and “Shiraz University” are set in a contrastive relation of difference. He is trying to legitimate his own reduced motivation by resorting to the strategy of employing these two logics simultaneously. He attributes his own negative attitudes towards outdated teaching methods at university to lack of severe regulations against those professors who remain fossilized in their teaching methods. In fact, he is viewing responsible authorities as the cause of this terrible condition at Shiraz University.

In contrast to Phan (2010) and Ghanea et al. (2011), these findings revealed that the concept of “integrative motivation” is no longer sufficient to explain English learners’ desires and goals. Nowadays, English is not considered the property of any single community; rather, it is a global language. Therefore, learners’ motivation is more influenced by their future images of themselves or their ideal selves rather than by their desire to integrate to the target language community. Hence, our results support and provide validity for Dörnyei’s (2005) concept of self guides. Also, contrary to the results of Gharghani Nezhad (2011) and Jokar (2011), our results indicated that the relationship among motivation and other constructs is not linear; rather, it is non-linear, complex, and dynamic. Additionally, by isolating a few variables of interest and examining their relationship with motivation, they did not do motivation research justice. To capture the complexity of motivation, all of the diverse factors in the micro and macro contexts should be examined simultaneously. Our results are also in contrast to those of Kiany et al. (2013). While they considered context as an independent background variable affecting motivation, we found that context itself is not static and fixed; rather, it is dynamic and changing. Motivation was found to be gradually constructed by various ongoing factors in the local and broader social, political, cultural, and historical

milieus. In addition, it was found that learners are constantly engaged in meaning-making in the personal and social contexts where they live and act.

Findings of the present study, however, are in line with those of Gu (2009). Gu, too, examined motivation holistically and found that not only is motivation complex and multidimensional but also it is dynamic and changing in accordance with the changing world and it is individually, historically, and socially constructed. In contrast to Ghanea et al. (2011), Gharghani Nezhad (2011), Jokar (2011), Kiany et al. (2013), and Phan (2010), the findings of Gu's and our study revealed that utilizing quantitative research alone provides us with an incomplete and simplified picture of motivation while the employment of qualitative approach gave us a more complete and holistic view of motivation construction at different levels of its relationship. Additionally, our research results revealed that the unique political situation of our country exert a huge influence on Iranian EFL learners' motivation construction.

7. Conclusion and Implications

Although many motivation studies have been conducted in Iran, no study has 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 has tried to pave the way for more studies in this domain. Taking a critical and discursive approach, it has 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, we found that these participants made use of different discursive strategies to legitimize their own motivation. The two logics of equivalence and difference were set up simultaneously by these informants through relational structures and expressions of meaning inclusion and contrast. Additionally, authorization was another major strategy utilized by them to legitimize their beliefs and behaviors. Their use of non-modalized verbs was also indicative of the fact that they viewed themselves as legitimized to make strong claims regarding their own motivation construction.

By taking individual learners' past and present English learning experiences into account, the environment where they are located, and the broad social and cultural context, motivation has been examined in an integrative and multidimensional manner. EFL learners' past and present experiences of learning constitute one of the dimensions affecting their motivational behavior. Their past memories in addition to their ideal selves point to the historical nature of EFL motivation. Their ideal selves

themselves are influenced by the current social, cultural, and political conditions of their country. Additionally, their relationships with members of their families and other people in the society cannot be considered external influences devoid of negative or positive effects on learners' motivation.

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 the cultural conditions. It is, also, worth mentioning that all of the diverse factors identified influence motivation simultaneously. That is, the broad social, cultural, and political conditions influence EFL learners' English learning at different levels of their relationships with their peers, teachers, and university staff in addition to their ideal selves and all of these factors play a vital role in their motivation construction. 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.

Results of this study have both theoretical and practical implications. Regarding the former, it was found that motivation is a more complex construct than has previously been conceptualized. Therefore, to examine motivation, one should consider all of the factors in the micro and macro contexts simultaneously. With respect to the latter, the present findings help teachers understand why some students are willing to do their best to learn English while some others are reluctant to do so. As teachers get a more complete and holistic understanding of students' motivation, they will be more able to deal with the ups and downs of their motivation during the sustained activity of learning a foreign language.

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