

# **Motivational Factors Influencing the Students of Barishal University in Learning English: An Empirical Study**

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*Motivation is one of the significant factors that ensure effective teaching and learning of foreign languages. The present study explored the major motivational factors influencing EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners at the University of Barishal, Bangladesh. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches have been employed to collect the essential information from the randomly selected two hundred fifty students of the surveyed University. The study being a part of the Master's thesis has taken 50 respondents from each of the randomly selected five departments of Barishal University. From the study, several factors have been found that motivate EFL learners in Barishal University. Realizing the necessity in a broader aspect, this study sets several recommendations for the syllabus and curriculum committees of the surveyed university departments, which will cover English language syllabus and curriculum planners worldwide.*

*Keywords: motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic), motivational factors, English as a Foreign Language (EFL)*

## **INTRODUCTION**

English has been regarded as an international language and it has also been evaluated as the most familiar foreign language used for communicating and exchanging ideas among different nations and societies throughout the world. Advancements in technology have helped individuals around the world to draw closer and it is the Internet that has aided English to obtain its current status (Barnett et al., 2000; Barnett and Lee, 2003). Because of this current status, English is being taught and learned as a second or foreign language more than any other languages worldwide (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Accordingly, it has also become a fundamental need for people worldwide to learn English to secure their cultural, political, and economic requirements. Both teachers and researchers have widely accepted motivation as one of the key factors influencing the rate and success of foreign language (L2) learning. Motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the L2 and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process (Dörnyei, 1998). Thus, it can be presumed that motivation influences language learning success, which has relevant and essential value in learning a foreign language, especially English.

Students are always physically present in any classroom, but that does not necessarily mean that they are mentally engaged and attentive to the class lessons taught by their respective teachers. In an English Language classroom, if the students are not mentally prepared, if they are not participating with whole

engagement towards the lessons and not motivated through the classroom environment, they will not be successful in acquiring English as a foreign language. Finding specific motivational areas of the learners may lead to appropriate teaching input in both classrooms and out of foreign language learning and teaching activities. Curriculum and syllabus design mainly depend on appropriate need analysis. Detection of learners' motivation can make the need analysis strong and consequently, result in an effective design of syllabus and curriculum.

Barishal University Authority has full sovereignty as an autonomous body in designing its syllabus and curriculum for the departments. Considering the students' motivational factors to learn English, the departments may adjust their learners' needs and redesign their syllabus and curriculum with necessary contents, process and evaluation tools. Such need based syllabus and curriculum may inspire other universities to consider the requirements of their students assessing their specific learning motivations.

Taking all the mentioned factors and possibilities into consideration, the present study has been conducted by selecting students from the University of Barishal, which is a peripheral University in Bangladesh. Therefore, the motivational factors influencing these learners may be different from the learners studying at the central universities in the capital city, Dhaka or other universities due to social factors. These factors may also vary from any other privileged students around the country as well as the international students from different universities. So, it is essential to find out the different effective motivational factors influencing these students' EFL learning procedure at the University of Barishal.

## OBJECTIVES

The present study has focused on attaining the following objectives:

1. To determine the significant motivational factors influencing students to learn English as a foreign language at the University of Barishal.
2. To situate the learners' motivational area in learning a foreign language from the previous literature review.
3. To recommend required necessary steps to the authorities responsible for syllabus and curriculum development and execution.
4. To prepare recommendations or suggestions for future researchers.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

To resolve the previously mentioned issues, the present study has attempted to determine the answer to the following question: What are the major motivational factors that influence learning English as a foreign language by the students of Barishal University?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation is a very significant and effective element in the realm of learning a language. A significant number of researches have been conducted, particularly on L2 learners' motivation to learn English in foreign language settings in various areas of the world. Harmer (1991) has used the word 'goal' to categorize motivation in second language learning into two types: *Short-term goal* refers to a wish of students to succeed in doing something soon, for example, students who want to pass their exams or to get a good grade or high scores; *Long-term goal* refers to a wish of students or learners who want to get a better job in the future or to be able to communicate with people who use the language that they study or the target language (Harmer, 1991). Lukmani (1972), as cited in Madrid and Cañado (2001), has revealed that the secondary students have a strong instrumental motivation and a strong correlation with their English performance as a second language class. These were the instrumental reasons adduced by the students, in order of importance (1972: 271): *Get a better job; Continue university studies; Travel abroad; Become adapted to new times; Carry out advanced reading in the field of study; Have access to international books and maps; Be in touch with the main opinion leaders in the world* (Lukmani, 1972, as cited in Madrid and

Cañado, 2001). Adachi (2009) has investigated Japanese college students' motivation in learning English and found three important motivational orientations, which are: Integrative orientation: *To learn about and understand people of U.S. and U.K.; To speak English like American or English people.* Instrumental orientation: *To get a good job; To get information through the Internet; For future career; travel or work abroad.* Intercultural orientation: *To exchange views and opinions with people of India, the Philippines, Hong Kong, China, Russia, and Brazil; To learn about and understand people of various countries; To avoid friction and misunderstanding when speaking with foreigners* (Adachi, 2009).

Shahriar, Pathan, Mari, and Umrani (2011), in their research, to find out the current English learning motivational situation in the University of Sindh, Pakistan noted that the factors affecting learners' motivation are: *The teaching and learning environment; the teacher or the teaching method; the content of the syllabus and the testing and assessment* where the most dissatisfying factor brought forward by this research is the assessment system, so the research called for the introduction of a proper improved assessment system and they have finally included these suggestions; *teacher training, interesting improvements in the course books, monthly tests and careful assessment* (Shariar, Pathan, Mari and Umrani, 2011). Ullah, Sagheer, Sattar, and Khan (2013) have found that many factors significantly influence increasing or decreasing the students' level of motivation towards their process of learning. These factors include class size, the teachers' attitude towards their students, and the student's internal motivation. On the other hand, the teachers' non-verbal encouragement to their students, the establishment of a cooperative learning environment, and adequate incentives given to the students have an imperative influence on increasing the students' motivation level towards their process of learning (Ullah, Sagheer, Sattar and Khan, 2013).

Ahmed, Aftab, and Yaqoob (2015) have thrown light upon the very facts of motivation concerning the factors like a student-teacher relationship, classroom environment, self-esteem or self-respect, and willingness to communicate. They have identified that motivation plays a major part in learning a second language. Their findings create compelling communicative factors by planting in them the seeds of self-confidence. It is the responsibility of a teacher to create a comfortable environment in the class. The research recommended that the teachers make the environment student-centered because if a student feels valued in the class, they would be more interested in learning a second language (Ahmed, Aftab, and Yaqoob, 2015).

Aggouni (2015) has stated that social factors motivate EFL learners, and these factors are the teachers, classmates, and parents. The personality of the teacher affects the student's motivation. This study's findings have also shown that family members' positive attitudes influenced the participants to continue learning English, and the students are motivated by their classmates to learn (Aggouni, 2015). Chilingaryan and Gorbatenko (2015) have looked through the reasons for motivation growth of law students at the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia in learning a legal language as part of LSP and finds out some important goals of motivation in *fulfilling university requirements, improving one's education, improving critical and creative thinking skills, increasing job opportunities and salary potential, increasing global understanding,* and some others (Chilingaryan and Gorbatenko, 2015).

Nawaz, Amin, and Tatla (2015) have explored the factors affecting the students' motivation to learn English as a second language in Pakistan's public university context. These factors include integrativeness, instrumentality (promotion), instrumentality (prevention), international posture, English anxiety, attitudes towards learning English, ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, interest in English language, travel orientation, linguistic self-confidence, criterion measures, family and teacher influence, and fear of assimilation. The study has revealed several other factors, including English as an official language, the respect and status associated with the English language, the importance of English for the Pakistani general public and professionals, globalization, international language, the language of international organizations, the media, and science and technology which affect the students' motivation for English language learning (Nawaz, Amin and Tatla, 2015). Rahman, Nuruzzaman, and Chanda (2016) have exhibited integrative motivation is the major motivational orientation for the undergraduate level to learn English as a foreign or second language in Khulna University. They have stated that to motivate the students to learn the English language, the surrounding environment can play a significant role. In this regard, teachers can emphasize learning for the sake of learning apart from academic achievements. Along with the teachers, classmates, friends,

seniors, relatives, and parents can inspire them to learn the English language for its global importance and acceptance (Rahaman, Nuruzzaman and Chanda, 2016). These specific findings made the present study's researchers realize that certain motivational factors may come from the same type of research, taking Barishal University students as subjects.

Sant (2018) has investigated the influence of factors affecting students' motivation in the English classrooms of Maija Yang Institute of Education Myanmar, Kachin State, Myanmar. The study's findings have shown that the *Teacher, Teaching Methodology, Text, Task, and Test* have both influenced Kachin students' English language classroom motivation in a negative way. According to the researcher, this study's outcome has shown that motivation is central to students learning, especially in the English language classrooms, as it encourages students to become more active and involved in taking charge of their learning (Sant, 2018).

Ahmed (2018) has shown that several socio-economic factors (such as family, encouragement, occupation, and education of the parents, exposure to schools) positively or negatively influence students' motivation toward learning English in their tertiary classrooms. She has stated that motivation to learn English differs according to the learners' education mediums and institutions. Her findings have also indicated that parental encouragement is directly related to their education and backgrounds and noted that tertiary English teachers could effectively deal with students in their classrooms as far as their English language skills are concerned. She has concluded that when teachers understand the differences of motivation according to the learners' backgrounds, they would be able to develop efficient classroom management and teaching strategies. This understanding of students' motivation in terms of their socio-economic backgrounds can yield better teacher performance in English classes (Ahmed, 2018).

From all the studies mentioned above, it can be concluded that different learners from different learning contexts have different kinds or types of motivation to learn English for their career enhancement. Therefore, this study is relevant in looking for the major motivational factors that influence Barishal University students to learn English as a foreign language. The study may open a new gateway for the researchers and education policymakers to motivate foreign language learners in Bangladesh and global learners to learn English to make them more interested, engaged, and enthusiastic in the whole learning process.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A mixed-method has been applied for the present study. A questionnaire survey, individual interviews, and focus group discussion have been included in the present study to ensure both quantitative and qualitative forms of data collection. This research has been conducted through randomly selecting two hundred and fifty (250) students of the University of Barishal. All of them have participated in the questionnaire survey. Ten students among this population have been selected for the individual interviews, while eight students have been chosen to participate in the focus group discussion from this specific number of two hundred fifty students. All of them have been related to this particular foreign language learning process, which is English, and they have also manifested great enthusiasm to contribute to the study through their active and sincere participation. This research has been carried out from September 1<sup>st</sup> to September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019, as part of an MA thesis in the department of English of Barishal University. The questionnaire survey's quantitative data collection has been carried out from September 1<sup>st</sup> to September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The qualitative data collection through individual interviews has been conducted from September 16<sup>th</sup> to September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019. These interview sessions have been carried on for thirty minutes per day and two interviewees have been interviewed on each day of the sessions. Fifteen minutes have been taken for each interview to get the required information in the best possible manner. The qualitative data collection through focus group discussion has been arranged from September 22<sup>nd</sup> to September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019. This research has been established as valid since the objectives have been achieved by measuring all the important elements or items or variables that the research is supposed to measure. It can be claimed as reliable since the methodology of this research has been assured of producing the same, stable, and consistent results while being conducted in the same context with the same participants using different research instruments.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

A questionnaire survey with an in-depth interview and focus group discussion has been conducted to bring out data, answering the present study's research question. In this section, data have been represented and delineated along with the instruments used for data collection. After the representation, the results of the study have also been summarized in this segment. The results of *strongly agree* has been merged with the results of *agree* and the results of *strongly disagree* has been merged with the results of *disagree* for easy analysis and calculation.

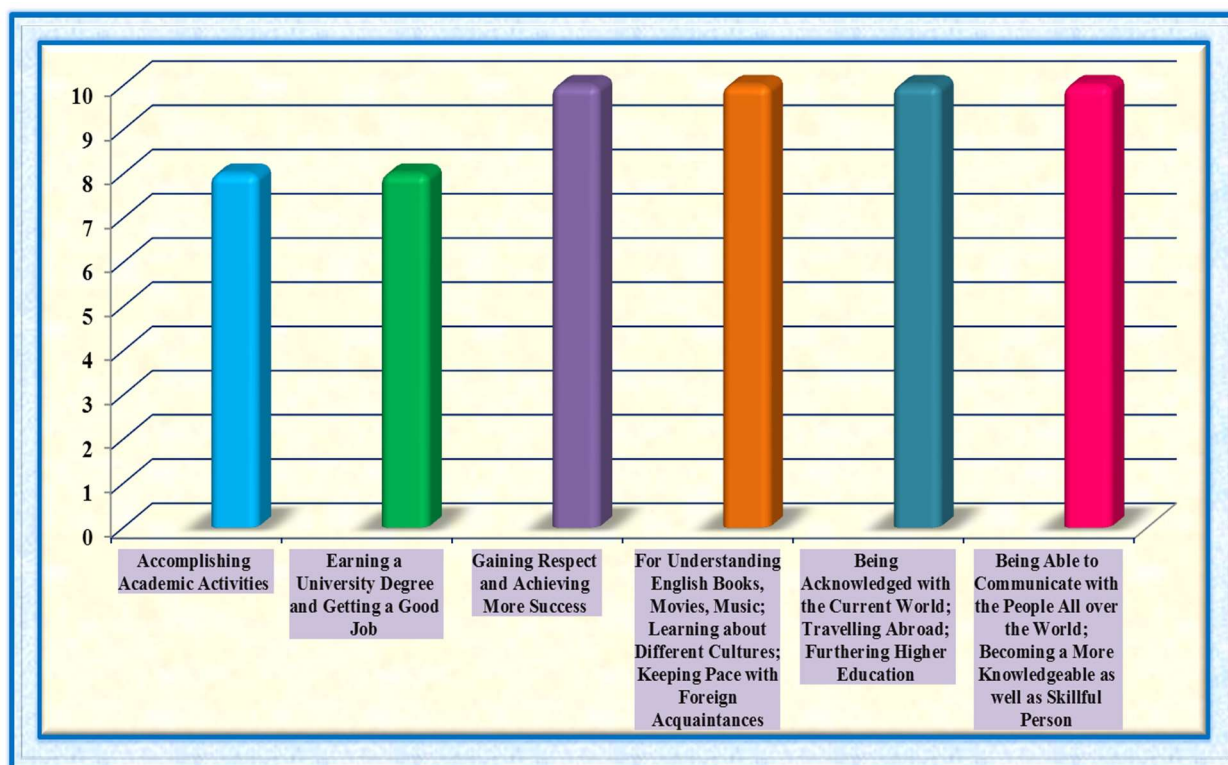
## RESULTS FROM THE QUANTITATIVE STUDY (QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY)

**TABLE 1**  
**RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY**

		Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
For Accomplishing Academic Activities	Agree	172	68.8%	1.60	0.909
	Neutral	5	2.0%		
	Disagree	73	29.2%		
For Earning a University Degree and Getting a Good Job with Handsome Salary	Agree	161	64.4%	1.63	0.888
	Neutral	20	8.0%		
	Disagree	69	27.6%		
For Gaining Respect from others and Achieving More Success in Life	Agree	178	71.2%	1.46	0.766
	Neutral	30	12.0%		
	Disagree	42	16.8%		
For Travelling Abroad and Attaining Higher Education	Agree	228	91.2%	1.14	0.486
	Neutral	08	3.2%		
	Disagree	14	5.6%		
For Understanding English Books, Movies, Music and Learning about Different Cultures Along with Keeping Pace with Foreign Acquaintances	Agree	157	62.8%	1.67	0.904
	Neutral	19	7.6%		
	Disagree	74	29.6%		
For Making Friends from Other Nationalities and Discussing Interesting Topics with Them	Agree	140	56.0%	1.81	0.946
	Neutral	18	7.2%		
	Disagree	92	36.8%		
For Participating Freely in Any Activities among Other Cultural Groups	Agree	185	74.0%	1.44	0.786
	Neutral	19	7.6%		
	Disagree	46	18.4%		
For Being Acknowledged with the Current World	Agree	175	70.0%	1.52	0.837
	Neutral	19	7.6%		
	Disagree	56	22.4%		
For Behaving like Native English Speakers	Agree	96	38.4%	2.14	0.944
	Neutral	23	9.2%		
	Disagree	131	52.4%		
For Being Able to Communicate with the People All over the World and Becoming a More Knowledgeable as well as Skillful Person	Agree	131	52.4%	1.82	0.916
	Neutral	33	13.2%		
	Disagree	86	34.4%		

From the questionnaire survey, it has been established that the following are the major motivational factors influencing the EFL students in Barishal University: *Accomplishing academic activities*: These EFL students learn English for class assignments, exams and for a better career; *Getting a good job with handsome salary*: These learners are motivated in EFL learning as they want goods jobs with better salaries; *Gaining respect from others and achieving more success in life*: Knowing English make other people respect them and they can achieve more success in life by using English language and thus, exploring the vast world of knowledge; *Travelling abroad and attaining higher education*: Learning English helps them to travel abroad and attain higher education as this language is the commonest medium of communication around this global world; *Understanding English books, movies, music and learning about different cultures along with keeping pace with foreign acquaintances*; *Making friends from other nationalities and discussing interesting topics with them*: They are highly motivated in learning this global language to fulfill these requirements; *Participating freely in any activities among other cultural groups*: Acquiring English helps them to participate freely in any activities among different cultures; *Being acknowledged with the current world and able to communicate with the people all over the world*: Students of these specific university are mostly motivated in English learning to become updated as well as to communicate with people all around the globe.

**FIGURE 1**  
**THE MOST INFLUENCING MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS ACCORDING TO THE RESPONDENTS OF BARISHAL UNIVERSITY**



It can be started from the *Figure* that the respondents of this present study at Barishal University are mostly influenced in EFL learning for *being able to communicate with the people all over the world; becoming a more knowledgeable as well as skillful person; being acknowledged with the current world; traveling abroad; furthering higher education; understanding English books, movies, music; learning about different cultures; keeping pace with foreign acquaintances; gaining respect and achieving more success; earning a university degree and getting a good job; as well as accomplishing academic activities.*

## **RESULTS FROM THE QUALITATIVE STUDY (IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION)**

In the previous section of the methodological approach, it has been stated that the researchers carried out in-depth interviews and focus group discussion by choosing ten interviewees and eight participants respectively from the same study population of 250 students of the specific university for the qualitative study. The study results have been cross checked with the results of the individual questions used for the questionnaire survey. Almost in all of the cases, same kinds of responses have been ascertained by the investigators though there is disagreement in one case. Through the in-depth interview, it has been brought to light that none of them learn English for behaving like native English speakers, and thus, this cannot be a motivating factor for these EFL learners of Barishal University. After the debate in focus group discussion, almost all the participants claimed that they are highly interested to learn English as a foreign language for accomplishing academic activities, earning university degrees, getting good jobs with handsome salary, gaining respect from others, achieving more success in life, understanding English books, movies, music, learning about different cultures, keeping pace with the foreign acquaintances, being acknowledged with the current world, traveling abroad, furthering higher education, being able to communicate with the people all over the world and for becoming more knowledgeable as well as a skillful person. In contrast, all of them asserted that they are zealous only to learn the English styles but not their behavior. Therefore, the main findings answering the research question from both the methodological approaches of quantitative and qualitative studies have established that the above mentioned motivational factors highly influence the EFL learners of Barishal University.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This specific section provides several suggestions in the following two segments after exploring the motivational factors to learn English as a foreign language at Barishal University.

### **Suggestions for the Departments and the Curriculum Designing Committees of Barishal University**

Since the departments are authorized at the first stage in the University of Barishal to initiate as well as execute the syllabus and curriculum, they are recommended to consider the following suggestions which are based on the findings:

1. The curriculum should contextualize EFL learning with the learners' real-life experiences and situations for better learning.
2. It should highlight all the four skills equally and adopt different ways to develop those skills in a balanced manner.
3. As the students reported to gain more respect acquiring success in English language learning, the departments and the authority should arrange more seminars, symposiums, National English Olympiads, International conferences, and workshops related to English as a foreign language to ensure their success in English Language learning.
4. The departments, with the help of University authority, should also establish a language center, language clubs, and language labs, where the learners' listening skill will be more highlighted for producing or speaking better English and an individual English language course should be included in these learners' study curriculum to develop them as motivated learners.
5. Departments should arrange English movie shows regularly, and contents that include English movies, music, paragraphs or essays with various histories, cultural and social activities may be included in the syllabus.
6. Contents that include traveling details, news and views on the current world, details on scholarships, ways to study abroad may be added to the English language syllabus. Documentary on these issues may be shown regularly with required departmental arrangements.

7. Since these students reported learning English to communicate with other countries, they must be given a chance to communicate in real life. By establishing virtual classroom arrangements, departments in collaboration with foreign universities may arrange view exchange programs regularly so that the students can interact with native English speakers. Besides, departments may help the university authority invite native speakers for interactions, which may take place regularly.
8. Departments may create a chance for their learners to attend education fairs arranged by foreign universities.
9. Departments may request university authority to run collaborative programs with foreign universities, which may motivate them to learn English more seriously.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Substantial number of researches should be carried out in the Barishal University context to determine the motivation of the Barishal University students towards English language learning in terms of their socio-economic backgrounds, age, and gender. The research may include teachers and potential employers too. The study is centered on Barishal University but such a study should be carried out in a larger context, including more universities. Research may include an in-depth study taking other social and psychological variables to get more reliable and valid data. Considerable studies should also be conducted to look for newer influential factors motivating the EFL learners of the University of Barishal towards English language learning. Moreover, the study has more potential variables for future researchers.

### **CONCLUSION**

The specific motivational factors acknowledged in this study may provide a guideline for Bangladesh's education policymakers to modify the curriculum so that they can motivate the Bangladeshi learners towards English language learning. This study also has limitations. Motivational factors vary in terms of age, gender, social factors, and situations. Nevertheless, the present study did not consider these particular variables. However, the study has brought out specific important motivational factors through which the teachers will get proper guidance in framing different strategies to motivate their students in successful EFL learning.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**FACTORS MOTIVATING BU EFL LEARNERS**

1. I mainly focus on using English for class assignments and exams and I am interested in reading English textbooks only for my university studies, but I do not read English newspapers, magazines, etc.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
2. English is essential for me to earn a university degree and get a good job with handsome salary.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
3. Being proficient in English makes other people respect me and helps me to achieve more success in life.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
4. Learning English is important for travelling abroad and attaining higher education.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
5. Studying English enables me to understand English books, movies, music etc. and to keep in touch with foreign acquaintances as well as helps me to learn about other cultures, values and thoughts.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
6. Studying English enables me to make friends from other countries and helps me to discuss interesting topics with them.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
7. Studying English allows me to participate freely in academic, social, and professional activities among other cultural groups.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
8. Studying English enables me to keep myself up to date and informed of recent world news.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
9. Learning English enables me to behave like native English speakers.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
10. Studying English helps me to understand and communicate with the people from all over the world and it is essential for becoming a more knowledgeable as well as skillful person.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

***Date:***

***Signature of the Respondent***

**APPENDIX B**  
**STATEMENTS FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION**

1. I learn English for accomplishing academic activities.
2. I learn English for Earning a University degree and getting a good job with handsome salary.
3. I learn English for gaining respect from others and achieving more success in life.
4. I learn English for understanding English books, movies, music and learning about different cultures along with keeping pace with foreign acquaintances.
5. I learn English for being acknowledged with the current world and for travelling abroad as well as furthering higher education.
6. I learn English for behaving like native English speakers.
7. I learn English for being able to communicate with the people all over the world and becoming a more knowledgeable as well as skillful person.