SRI LANKAN URBAN AND RURAL UNDERGRADUATES’ MOTIVATION TO LEARN ENGLISH

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Abstract—English plays an important role in higher education of Sri Lanka as a medium instruction and as the medium of the globalization. In fact the current study examined 918 Sri Lankan undergraduates’ motivational profile by utilizing Dornyei’s L2 Motivational Self System to identify the factors affect for their English learning motivation based on the regional variations of the country. The adapted motivational questionnaire was used to collect the data from the students related to their motivated learning behavior, ideal L2 self, ought to L2 self, social goals, mastery goals, performance goals, attitudes towards L2 community and attitudes towards English learning. Multi-group structural equation modelling was used to examine the similarities and differences between the participant groups of urban- rural and war affected and non- war affected. Interestingly, in contrast to the previous studies current study found the strongest ideal L2 self among the rural and war affected learners. Furthermore, attitudes towards learning English appeared as a significant contributory factor of the English learning motivation of the rural and war affected learners. In addition, social goals also had a significant contribution to the learners’ motivation and their ideal L2 self. Further, ought to L2 self, mastery goals and attitudes towards L2 community showed no contribution to the learners’ motivation. In accordance with, the study specially highlights the country specific motivational picture of learners in Sri Lanka.

Key words: Motivation, Urban Learners, Rural Learners, War Affected Learners, Non- war Affected Learners.

I. INTRODUCTION

Decolonization and globalization have emerged as two major movements in the Post- Colonial world today which the power to coerce developing economies to realign existing language policies to meet the demands of internal and external forces from both within and outside the nations. The rise and widespread use of information communication technology in many of these nations has increased the voices of both majority and minority language communities making it necessary for nations to listen and ‘reform’ from time to time or risk being displaced. Thus, depending on the strength and popularity of each movement, and at the cost of the more or less expensive transformation, which appears to be the precondition for its efficacy, the choice of selecting one language over another appears to be mired in the social construct of Bourdieu’s Capital and its different guises. In other words, economic capital which has more to do with legitimizing a language based on the need for money and property rights; cultural capital which has to do with educational qualifications, and social capital which is concerned with social obligations “connections” and institutionalized rights [2] and this has a direct implication on how the society, the citizens are motivated to learn in a particular language. Placed within the context of developing economies in South East Asia, decolonization which typically refers to resistance of English and other colonial languages in favor of the local vernacular to build a nation state [3]; and globalization which is best seen through Friedman’s [14] metaphorical lens of the “flat word” where porous national borders and common languages enabled developing and developed communities to ‘prosper’ cannot be seen as separate entities rather as accumulated labor forces which when appropriated on a private basis by agents or interested groups, enables each movement to appropriate immense social energy that to motivate society to view one language as more valuable compared to another, profitable and worthy of reproducing in its pure form. This will in turn set off a chain reaction that will lead to the language/variety being made to be acquired in its identified form and other agencies will come in to persist on its growth and ask for it to remain that way. This is applicable for both movements. Interestingly, the common thread running through both movements will be motivation, emotion and cognition. However, the problem with conceptualizing these three factors as fundamental to both movements is the very fact that human behavior which is at the core of both movements is easily influenced, coerced and shaped in a wide variety of ways, ranging from external motives which include the sociopolitical setup of the learning environment and internal factors that range from curiosity, interest and intellect of the masses. The study of motivation among developing economies in the Post- Colonial world is therefore important because it concerns the fundamental question of what is going to change the developing world in the 21st. Century and what can probably happen to local identities when society begins to gravitate towards a particular language by choice and by force and the direction of the other languages for communities caught up in between the tug of war between the two movements, learners choice, persistence and maintenance. In other words, a study of the factors that motivate nations to continue learning English in a nation which has a history of going to war over languages will be useful for charting the direction of why people insist of studying a particular language, the cultural capital for studying English in the Post- Colonial world and the extent of learner investment to succeed in the language.

II. MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING ENGLISH IN SRI LANKA

Education in multiethnic societies has often been a subject of considerable debates worldwide and such debates have invoked strongly felt positions between competing groups over a host of issues. In communities where one vernacular is given primacy in education as well as social life in the form of affirmative actions, there have been subtle resistance from the local community [9] and where English has been encouraged, a near chauvinistic resurgence of local languages [32] have emerged. Some countries [26][27] have witnessed
embarrassing deviations when the local language is introduced by teachers and students in subtle ways to negotiate the desired values, identities and interest [3] despite the nation’s insistence on using English suggesting that motivation for learning or using a particular language can come from internal and external pressures. Taken from a broad lens perspective, much of the resistance in developing economies can be related to Post-modern conditions that create significant changes in how people accept certain language rights and pursue them. Specifically, people have begun to think in existentialist terms where their language is seen as ‘pure’ and their community homogeneous and all other intrusions and interventions are largely uninvited. Though these constructs may be fast losing their stronghold in many parts of the world, scholars are beginning to doubt that such beliefs will fade away so soon in regions where such nebulous construct appear to be grounded firmly as in many parts of Asia. In particular, when we consider Sri Lanka, the country that went to war over its mother tongues and brutal blood shed that followed. It is against this socio historical and geopolitical context that this study is situated. The next section will provide an overview of historical and social cultural motivation for learning English in Sri Lanka from the Colonial era till present.

III. SRI LANKA AND THE LEARNING OF ENGLISH

The motivation to learn English in Sri Lanka has its roots in the British invasion of 1796. In 1833, the Colebroke Cameron British reforms replaced the local languages with English as the official administrative language of the country requiring Sri Lankan to learn the English Language and use it in business communication until today. Thus began close to two centuries of English education in Sri Lanka and the motivation for continuing to like and dislike English has existed in a number guises based on Bourdieu [2] Cultural capital, i.e.; in the embodied state -a long last disposition of English as the undisputed language of power, money, authority over other vernaculars; in the objectified state, in the form of desire to acquire cultural goods (e.g. pictures, clothes, dictionaries, religious beliefs) which sets them apart from the common people and in the institutionalized state, which is a form of which sets them apart in terms of educational qualifications where an English education is seen as the highest form of guarantee of cultural capital. Thus when it comes to mastering English and the desire to honor only those maintain it in its pure form, there are a number of levels and this is historically motivated. From the beginnings, access to English education was limited to few based on region, religion, political needs, and economic needs. During the British period, English education was limited to the urban population who benefitted from the various social, educational, economic and political benefits of the colonialists. This helped create a privileged community of English speakers who saw the value in learning English and the importance of maintenance in it its ‘Pure’ form so that only a few were seen a worthy. This resulted in restriction being placed for others to rise to the same level (e.g. English literature, knowledge, songs and mechanisms). This marginalization separated them from the rural population who were economically, socially and politically divided due to their monolingual status [31]. These communities were forced to rely on the English speaking Sri Lanks for a variety of reasons. As such, from the very Sri Lankan learners have been divided into two groups namely urban and rural English Language learners.

The motivation for learning English can also be seen from access and privilege accorded through social cultural conditions. During the colonial period (1796-1948) urban learners were motivated to master English due to the various privileges its accorded to the English educated and the promise of good career, higher education, social recognition and economical success, [33][3]. In other words it was largely instrumental. In addition, a selected number were given the option of furthering their education in the British universities such as Oxford and Cambridge [30]. In addition, an English education enabled them to move from their caste based traditional society into the British education based class system. Over time, this created an English educated urban middle class in Sri Lanka. English became instrumental to elevating the social status. While most properties of cultural capital is linked to the individual in terms of culture and cultivation, it also presupposed a personal cost of investment, a socially constituted libido, sacrifice, a standard length of acquisition where more time must be spent in acquiring this knowledge, according to the type of instruction. This embodied capital subsequently became an integral part of the person, the habitus which cannot be transmitted like money. In other words the motivation for learning English became integrative and parents and family played a role in playing up the importance of English. Parents who did not have the economic and cultural means to prolong their children’s education beyond the minimum necessary for the reproduction of the labor power and those who sent their children to the Universities where knowledge is provided in English saw the need to insist on their children mastering the language in various forms. This motivation was further facilitated when there were native language teacher teaching in such schools [36] resulting in parents competing for convents and mission schools.

By contrast, the rural learners who remained as monolinguals under the British rule began to see English as an objectified state [25] whereby English writings, literature, instruments were seen as more valuable compared to local capital and viewed their own cultural artifacts as of lesser value. However, when the preconditions for possessing or ownership was not forthcoming despite their children working for it, they had to find a way of appropriating the embodied capital and to possess the machines and economic capital they had to attain the economic capital (either in person or by proxy) and that was when the Tamils went on to form their own cultural capital. Due to that their motivation to learn English was demotivated by the learning environment and available facilities [13]. Over time, the absence of these objectified state, equipped select rural communities with strong negative attitudes toward the L2 community and the local English speaking community [21] and strong sense of cherishing the local vernacular over English emerged due to their proximity to India among the Tamil rural population. The desire to align themselves with their own capital probably served as a catalyst for establishing a pure form of Tamil in the Jaffna peninsula. In fact Jaffna Tamils are considered to speak an authentic form of Tamil [15]. In addition, Stever insist that the verbal forms in Jaffna Tamil happen to be retentions of Classical Tamil. Thus by virtue of its virtue of retaining classical literary elements that began during the colonial era, Jaffna Tamil is often considered more pure than all other varieties of Tamil. The ‘speak only’ Tamil movement of the LTTE in Canagarajah’s [3] works are merely a small indication of the motivation for retaining the local vernacular.
Post-independence Sri Lanka did try to bring balance to the linguistic rights of the rural population through the ‘Free education’ policy in 1945 where English education was liberalized all over the country via the central colleges. This was to provide a supportive English learning environment for the rural learners. Unfortunately, the divide between the urban and rural communities had widened further giving rise to strong anti-English sentiment among rural dominant communities and the rural learners’ were discouraged further [13]. This marginalization gave rise to a new reform movement, among the rural people to empower in the society which gave rise to the ‘Sinhala Only Act’ or ‘Swabasha Panatha’ in 1956. This was just a façade to appease the rural Sinhalese population since the lucrative positions were continuously held by the urban English educated bilinguals in the country who had become a community to separate from the others. However, there was no such support for the Tamils. This further gave rise to the Tamil monolingual polity civil war (1983-2009) in the Northern and Eastern parts of the country. This regional policy failed to empower the rural Tamils, since the economic capital was on English language [3],[35]. The subsequent civil unrest in Jaffna, the loss of Tamil strongholds, animosity, bitterness and sanctions brought forth reforms where Sri Lanka’s leaders were forced to acknowledge that there was a need to bring the three communities together. Then again, English was seen as the bridging language [34]. This situation should be seen as a turning point given the various capitals associated with Globalization and ICT and it was perceived that emphasis in English would bring forth new opportunities for both rural and urban Sri Lankans to succeed. As Sri Lanka rises out of the ashes to make itself acceptable and competitive, it is hoped that the motivation for learning English is well placed.

IV. A CONSTRUCT FOR STUDYING LEARNER MOTIVATION

Much change has happened in the field of motivation theories due to globalization, because English has become the global language [6], international lingua franca [20] and necessary educational skill [16]. This augurs well for Sri Lanka. In fact, this trend has challenged the socio-psychological perspective of integrative, because global English has no particular cultural and geographic boundary and English is said to belong to the multi-linguistic ethnic communities around the world [29]. While Robert Gardner may have initiated the motivation theory by developing the socio-education model to examine the factors affect for the L2 acquisition, the late 1980s and 1990s cognitive psychologists emphasis on the significance of learner abilities, possibilities, potentials, limitations and past performances in motivation has changed the macro perspective of motivation in socio-psychological to micro perspective of situated analysis of motivation educational setting like classroom making both nationalism and globalization significant in education and language reforms. Crookes & Schmidt [5] discussion of motivational factors based on the learner motivation, cognitive processing of second language stimuli, classroom level, syllabus level, out of class and long term factors makes classroom learning practices important while Dornyei’s [10] three level L2 motivation construct based on the language level, learner level and learning situation level has become extremely useful to identifying factors that affect for L2 motivation in L2 settings. While macro level factors such as culture, community, intellectual and pragmatic values and benefits are situated in social constructs, the learner level focused on to the characteristics learner brings to the classroom and learning situation level involved with situation specific motives rooted in various aspects of language learning within the classroom (course specific, teacher specific, group specific) is situated in emotion, cognition and L2 theories. Based on these arguments, Csizer & Dornyei [7] redefined the L2 motivation based on the learner self and this was extended to form the L2 Motivational Self System consisting of the three main components of ideal L2 self, ought to L2 self and L2 learning experiences [11]. This construct will be used for this study.

Through the implementation of L2 Motivational Self System, a number of motivation studies were able to identify specific L2 motivation factors brought about through the expansion of globalization. Taguchi et al. [38] found attitudes to learn English to be the strongest contributory factor of motivation among Japanese and Iranian learners. In contrast, ideal L2 self was found to be a strong contributory factor among Chinese learners. Papi [28] contradicted Taguchi et al. [38] when he found learning experiences to be the strongest contributory factor among Iranian learners resulting in Taguchi [37] confirming the significance of attitudes to learn English among the Japanese learners. Thus, there have been a number of contradicting factors for L2 learners depending on the context and cultural inclination of the L2 speakers. In terms of classroom research, Csizer & Kornos [8] emphasized the significant role of L2 learning experiences among the secondary students and the role of ideal L2 self among university students English learning motivation. Kormos et al. [23] emphasized the strongest contribution of ideal L2 self among secondary and university students in Chile while Islam et al. [19] brought in the South Asian learners’ learning experience to be the strongest contributory factor of L2 motivation.

It must be noted that at this juncture, context specific factors like urban- rural and class have not been explored in motivation studies deeply. Only the studies of Lamb [24] and You et al. [40] found the weak ideal L2 self of rural learners in Indonesia and China. Perhaps this could have been a non-imperative issue for many of these countries. However, for a nation that went to war over language rights due to historical and socio political origins and the increase in voice of minorities in the region, the rural urban context is significant since multiracial nations are made of different ethnicities who continue to place their race before their nationality. It is within this context the current study is situated. The study examined the English learning motivation of Sri Lanka’s urban and rural learners by utilizing Dornyei’s construct of the L2 Motivational Self System. The following research questions were answered via the study.

1. Is there difference between urban and rural undergraduate learner’s motivation for learning English?
2. Where are the similarities and differences in factors that motivate undergraduates from war affected and non- war affected regions in Sri Lanka?

V. METHOD

Participants
Participants of the current study were Sri Lankan English medium science undergraduates (n=918) studying a required English course. These students were from the agriculture,
applied science, geomatics and science and technology course and aged between 22-25 years.

Instrument
A questionnaire adapted from Lamb [24], Islam et al. [19], Taguchi et al. [38] and Clement et al. [4] was used to collect the data. The pilot study was conducted among the 32 Sri Lankan undergraduates. The final questionnaire consisted of 49 items and 8 categories. The categories are as follows:

a. Motivated learning: measure the intended effort to learn English for the improvement of English competency at the university and outside the university (adapted from [24], [19]).

b. Ideal L2 self: measure the future vision of learning English related to the communication and profession (adapted from [24], [19]).

c. Ought to L2 self: measure the contribution of learners’ obligations, responsibilities and duties for their English learning motivation (adapted from [38], [24]).

d. Social goals: measure the contribution of social factors for the English learning (adapted from [38], [19]).

e. Mastery goals: measure the learners’ need to develop English fluency to develop themselves (adapted from [4]).

f. Performance goals: measure the learners’ needs to demonstrate English fluency or avoiding the demonstration of lack of English fluency to survive in the university (adapted from [38]).

g. Attitudes toward learning English: measure the learners’ attitudes toward the classroom learning (adapted from [24], [19]).

h. Attitudes towards L2 community: measure the attitudes toward the English speaking community (adapted from [24], [19]).

VI. DATA ANALYSIS
Collected data were keyed in SPSS 22.0 and cleaned to skip for human errors. Then data screening was done to prepare the data for further analysis. To draw a meaningful motivation model for the Sri Lankan undergraduates, multiple-group structural equation modelling (SEM) was applied to the data. Incidentally, SEM is a combination of regression analysis, factor analysis and path analysis and it allows the researcher to for cause and effect relationships between the multiple variables [1]. Thus, this study applied SEM to examine the cause effect relationships between the variables and compare the motivational features of the urban-rural and war affected – non-war affected learners’ AMOS 22.0 was used as the analysis tool. The SEM analysis consisted of two parts, the measurement model and the structural model. At measurement stage number of modifications was done and 27 questionnaire items were deleted in order to satisfy the requirements of the measurement model. To assess the overall model fit chi-square statistics and the CMIN/df and additional indices of Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Standardized Root- Mean –Square Residual (SRMR) and Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) used to have a good-fit model [17].

VII. RESULTS & DISCUSSION
RQ.1. Is there difference between urban and rural undergraduate learner’s English learning motivation?

The initial structural model was subjected to the multi-group analysis based on participants’ urban and rural basis. First participants were grouped into two groups as urban (n=538) and rural (n=380). Then multi-group analysis was conducted to determine statistical significance. The results indicated the two groups to be statistically different (see the results of the model fit shows in Appendix Table 1).

Chi-square was significant at p<0.001, due to the bigger sample size. All the other fit indexes achieved the accepted level of model fit as GFI=.921, RMSEA=.043, SRMR=.0755, RMR=.078, CFI=.919 and AGFI=.895 and the normed x² was 2.672, denoting a good model fit. The final model for the urban and rural learners is as shown in the Figure 1 (Refer Appendix).The final models further confirmed the validity of L2 Motivational Self System by highlighting ideal L2 self as the strongest causative factor of English learning motivation among the learners.

The model indicates a significant difference between the urban and rural especially in their ideal L2 self. The rural learners had a very strong ideal L2-self compared to the urban learners and for them ideal L2 self was the strongest causative factor for learning English. This could be due to the fact that these learners and their communities suffered socially, educationally, economically and politically due to the lack of English competency from the British period onwards. The recent ethnic violence would have also created a mark in the minds of many who probably were of school going age during the crisis and scars would be plenty. Rising from the ashes, they had to gain the various guises of capital and English was probably the only way up. They could not rely on Tamil since they had lost the strength of the military and could not really look towards India for new opportunities. These were young people who were planning to rebuild Sri Lanka’s affected communities and since mastery of English is still valued, the rural communities probably see it as the only way out. This finding is different from the Lamb [24] and You et al. [40] who found weak ideal L2 self of the rural learners due to the lack of facilities. However, to the Sri Lankans the possibility that education and language are their only way up and way out. It cannot be denied that there was a significant number of asylum seekers who were Tamils who looked towards English speaking countries like Australia and Canada and this could also be a contributing factor for learning English within the self. On the other hand, for the urban learners both ideal L2 self and the social goals were seen as relevant for motivate their learning. Further, attitudes towards learning English is equally important for both groups to determine their motivation and attitudes towards L2 community does not seem very important to determine their motivation. The contribution of social goals to form the ideal L2 self and attitudes towards learning English do not show much difference in both groups. Social goals equally contributed to form the ideal L2 self of the both learner groups, because nation building aims are equally important for the all learners as matured adults in the country. To many urban learners, learning English may be important since it gave them a certificate for their career but it was not necessary to speak like the native speakers and they were not interested in emulating the native speakers. This was unlike the rural learners’ needs where performance goals seem to be a strong contributory factor and they were more in favor of being like the L1 community and this had implications for their social goals. This may be because of the instrumental need to perform in entry need of English at the university.
RQ.2.2. Where are the similarities and differences between the factors that motivate undergraduates from war affected and non-war affected regions in Sri Lanka?

The initial structural model was subjected to the multigroup analysis to answer the question. At first, the participants were grouped into two according the previous war affected areas in Sri Lanka as war affected areas (n= 136) and non-war affected areas (n=782). Then, data were tested to find whether there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups. The model fit measurements of the final model are shown in the Appendix Table2. In accordance with the results chi-square was significant at p=.001 due to the sample size. The model fit measures of GFI (.918), RMSEA(.044), SRMR(.090), RMR (.085), CFI(.911) and AGFI (.891) meet the traditionally accepted measures (see Table 2 in Appendix). Although SRMR value is higher than the accepted cut off value of 0.08, its value is below 0.10 which does not indicate problems for the model [17]. Further, the model has established its good fit with the norms x^2 of 2.812. The path model diagram of the two groups is shown in the Figure 2 in Appendix.

The data have shown statistically significant difference among the groups. In general, for the both groups ideal L2 self is the strongest causative factor of their English learning motivation, but notably war affected learners have stronger ideal L2 self than non-war affected. This result can be explained via the difficulties they face during the civil war. These learners were bound to the Tamil monolingual polity during the globalization era. Due to that they lost socio-economic and educational opportunities of the country. Further, English has become the link language of the country and neutral medium to reach the pluralized society. In fact, war affected learners may have strong ideal L2 self to meet the needs of the country. This could be due to pressure from within and outside. Further, for the students from war affected areas social goals and attitudes towards learning English appeared as equally important to determine their English learning motivation while from the students from the non-war affected areas social goals seem to be a much stronger predictor of English learning motivation than the attitudes towards learning English. This is because most of these war affected learners have no English competent parents to support them due to the restricted exposure to English during the civil war. Also, they did not have facilities nor proper teachers to teach them well in English. In fact, the classroom experiences may have been the only opportunity to be motivated. Also, the performance goals had a strong impact on the war affected learners’ attitudes towards L2 community, attitudes towards learning English and social goals. It was evident that the Sinhala community would not be speaking in Tamil and neither would the Tamil in Sinhala since they were divided in a number of learners. Specially, for these learners English may be the prefer medium of communicate with other students (Sinhala majority) and these students study in the universities of the south in the country where majority of the students are Sinhalese. The contribution of social goals to form ideal L2 self is quite equal for the both groups, because the nation building aims are equally important for all the learners. In sum, Sri Lanka’s historical, social and present context where English in its objectified state is presented with all the appearance of an autonomous, coherent universe which is fair for all and able to provide equal opportunities to all, it cannot be denied that the value of the English language being the product of historical action, has created its own laws and has been able to transcends individual wills in some communities to an extent where it might not be so easy to allegiance. For the present moment, the need to perform in English is necessary and the rural learners are commitment but allegiance can change over time and context. In the words of Bourdieu, “it should not be forgotten that it exists symbolically and materially active, effective capital in so far as the agents can appropriate.” [2]. While the objectification of cultural capital in the form of obtaining an academic qualification where English is the medium of instruction may be one way of neutralizing some of the properties, it remains to be seen if the paper qualification will ultimately give both the rural and urban undergraduates the cultural capital that they so desire and indirectly help them out of their present status. In other words, Sir Lanka’s context remains unique and there is much to be seen in terms of how the minority language will play out in decades to come.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study focused on two major research questions based on the Sri Lankan undergraduates by utilizing L2 Motivational Self System. The findings validated the L2 motivational self-system among the Sri Lankans by proving high ideal L2 self [23] and importance of learning experiences [38],[8],[28],[24],[19],[40],[37] to motivate their English learning. Additionally, the study suggests the contribution of social goals to motivate Sri Lankan learners. Since, this new to the motivation theory more studies on this needed to establish. Anyhow, social goals have strong impact on learner ideal L2 self too [19]. In fact, the finding suggests the significant role of English to the learners for the representation of the country. Specially, after the end of civil war, Sri Lanka was black listed among the United Nations related to the war crimes [18],[39].This has affected to the country’s development and reputation badly. In fact, the role of the social goal is critical for Sri Lankans, specially, for the adult learners who are getting ready to be the future leaders of the country. Interestingly, attitudes toward L2 community have no impact on learner motivation and this augurs for the nation state which aims to set its mark on its own. This further validates the invalidity of ‘integrativeness’ in Sri Lanka [22]. The findings remain challenging to the motivational studies and language policy makers, because this is against the established picture of rural learners. Added to that, the examination of war affected learners also reported a strong ideal L2 self. These findings suggest that, even though these disadvantaged learners lack the facilities for English learning, English continues to hold a strong allure and is very much the cultural capital that will continue to be glorified, sought after and valued but according to the globalized world’s terms.

REFERENCES


Appendix

### Table 1. Model Fit

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### Table 2. Model fit

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![Figure 1 Model for urban & rural undergraduates](image-url)
Figure 2 Model for war affected & non-war affected undergraduates
War affected/non-war affected

Urban/rural