

LEARNING SPANISH LANGUAGE: MOTIVATION AND CHALLENGES AFFECTING ARAB COLLEGE STUDENTS

Ronel M. Sapungan, Ph.D.
AMA International University-Bahrain
KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

ABSTRACT

Concern over low performance in learning Basic Spanish as a foreign language is evident among the students whose first language is Arabic (L1). This alarming situation has become prevalent among the Bahraini college students who still have inadequacies in English as Foreign Language (EFL). The condition poses challenges to both teachers and students of Spanish language (L2) in the tertiary EFL classrooms as it is commonly observed by the language teachers and the researcher himself. Hence, the importance of this study which, by using a semi-structured interview and focused group discussion (FGD), was conducted with the primary objective of finding out the motivations and challenges affecting Bahraini students enrolled in four classes of Basic Spanish. The participants were purposively chosen based on the following considerations: students enrolled in Basic Spanish Class; had the ability to communicate in English; and had good class standing. The researcher noted that most of the participants had been motivated by their dreams of travelling to Spanish-speaking countries in the future and the desire to learn people's cultures. While learning basic Spanish language, the students were experiencing difficulty in applying vocabulary producing correct vowel and consonant sounds, grammar rules, translating Spanish phrases and sentences, and conjugating and using irregular verbs. Applying grammar rules was considered the most challenging tasks among the participants followed by translating and conjugating irregular verbs.

Keywords: Spanish language, language acquisition, motivations, challenges, foreign language.