

## How to Enhance the Communicative Ability of L2 Learners: A Case of Afghan Cadets

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**Abstract** This qualitative study explored the perceived experiences of Afghan English language teachers teaching at the Afghanistan National Army Officers Academy in terms of the student's communication, motivation, and willingness to communicate. The study also investigated the challenges faced by language teachers when teaching English communication skills to military students and the most effective instructional strategies for enhancing student communication skills and motivation levels. Data was collected through Skype interviews with five Afghan teachers and analyzed through deductive thematic analysis coding. The findings revealed the challenges faced by instructors and the most effective instructional strategies for enhancing communication skills and motivation among students. The study highlights the importance of considering the experiences and challenges faced by language teachers in enhancing the acquisition of English communication skills and motivation levels among students and the need for considering the context and challenges faced by instructors in developing effective pedagogical approaches.

**Keywords:** *Communication, Willingness to communicate, Motivation, Military contexts, EFL learning contexts*

### 1. Introduction

In the context of learning English as a foreign language, specifically for spoken communication, significant interest has arisen among researchers. However, the motivation to acquire English in military environments, particularly in developing countries, has been relatively understudied. In the case of Afghanistan, it appears that the motivation of military cadets to learn English for verbal communication has not been thoroughly examined. In this article, I describe an educational setting in which I taught English to military cadets and observed varying motivation levels and attitudes toward English studies. While many students displayed low motivation, a small group of highly driven individuals pursued military scholarships and sought further training abroad. For these students, communication skills were of utmost importance, but their motivation did not always align with this need.

To address this discrepancy, I investigated the challenges faced by other instructors teaching similar student populations within this context and explored

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the strategies they employed to overcome obstacles and improve students' communication skills and motivation. The primary objective of this paper is to examine and discuss a range of approaches for inspiring Afghan military cadets to recognize the value of English as a crucial spoken communication tool essential for their military education and future endeavors.

This article argues that effective communication strategies for Afghan Army officers in multinational operations require understanding the unique challenges and motivational factors in their context. To support this argument, I examine the challenges faced by language instructors teaching English communication skills to military students at the Afghanistan National Army Officers Academy, discuss the attitudes and motivation levels of Afghanistan National Army Officers Academy students, and explore the instructional strategies and techniques found to be most effective in enhancing the communication skills and motivation levels of students in this context.

### **1.1. Contextualizing the Study**

During my time as a language instructor with the British Council in Afghanistan, I taught English at the Afghanistan National Army Officers Academy. This institution was part of the Marshal Fahim National Defense University, overseen by the Ministry of National Defence. Located in the nation's capital, the academy accommodated approximately one thousand young military officers. They were between 18 and 30 years old and completed a one-year academic program.

The government, at the time, prioritized English language proficiency for these officers. Their goal was to enable effective communication with foreign mentors and advisors upon graduation. Students studied core military subjects such as radio operations, weaponry, international relations, and field exercises. They also received English language instruction from a team of 20 educators, including myself.

Students were assigned to proficiency levels based on placement tests and oral interviews. Each class consisted of approximately 30 students, with a demographic distribution of 80% male and 20% female. Core language skills were emphasized alongside sub-skills such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The curriculum predominantly focused on communication skills, which are essential for military contexts. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, instruction was delivered in person. However, the pandemic necessitated a transition to online learning. This shift to digital platforms was a novel experience for many instructors, myself included. Despite initial challenges, the transition proved successful. Reduced teaching hours during the pandemic allowed for the development of additional instructional materials.

Prior to teaching in this military context, I assumed that the students would exhibit strong discipline and motivation in their English studies. However, upon commencing my instruction, I discovered that their behavior and performance deviated significantly from my expectations, with their performance levels being considerably lower than anticipated. I attribute this primarily to the students' unfavorable perception of English as a subject. In other words, they struggled to identify practical applications for English once they completed their studies.

The unfortunate reality is that Afghanistan has experienced ongoing conflict, and these officers were frequently deployed to the frontlines by the government. Consequently, some students expressed that English was not a necessity on the battlefield. Their priority appeared to be honing their military and physical skills to succeed in combat. This mindset seems to be uniquely influenced by the pervasive nature of war in Afghanistan. Moreover, I observed that students attended classes with a low level of preparedness, demonstrated reluctance to engage in pair work and group activities, and often failed to complete their homework accurately and thoroughly.

Another factor contributing to low motivation levels was the practice of awarding 'passing grades'. Despite initially receiving failing marks on my result sheets, students were ultimately granted passing grades. While I am not entirely certain of the rationale behind this decision, it is possible that military officials were reluctant to fail students solely due to their English performance, especially if they excelled in military subjects and demonstrated exceptional physical prowess.

In this educational context, I observed that many students exhibited low motivation and negative attitudes toward English studies. This mindset was prevalent, though a small subset of highly motivated students pursued military scholarships. They sought further training abroad. Communication skills were critically important for these students, but their motivation levels did not always reflect this necessity. Consequently, I explored the challenges faced by other instructors teaching similar student populations within this context. I investigated the strategies employed to overcome these obstacles and enhance students' communication skills and motivation levels.

Despite a lack of research specifically examining the motivation to learn English among military cadets in Afghanistan, prior studies on English language learning motivation have been conducted in various settings. Orfan and Noori (2021) conducted a study that found that Islamic scholars in Afghanistan have a favorable attitude towards learning English for three primary reasons: to travel abroad, to promote Islam, and to attain higher education degrees. Similarly, Alimyar (2020) conducted a study that focused on the attitudes of university students toward English language learning and found that most learners in Afghanistan possess a positive attitude toward learning English. However, some participants mentioned feeling demotivated if NATO and US forces were to withdraw from Afghanistan. These studies highlight the significance of investigating the motivation levels of military cadets, particularly in the realm of communication and their willingness to communicate in English. The present study aimed to delve deeper into this matter by exploring the following research questions:

1. How do Afghan English language teachers perceive their experiences teaching Afghanistan National Army Officers Academy students in terms of the student's communication, motivation, and willingness to communicate?
2. What challenges did language teachers face when teaching English communication skills to military students within the context of the Afghanistan National Army Officers Academy, and how did these challenges influence their pedagogical approaches?
3. Which instructional strategies and techniques were found to be most effective in enhancing the communication skills and motivation levels of students at the Afghanistan National Army Officers Academy, and how can these best practices be adapted and implemented for similar educational contexts?

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1. English Language Education in Afghanistan**

The teaching and learning of English in Afghanistan have been greatly impacted by political, economic, and social factors. As noted by Rabbidge and Zaheer (2022), the frequent shifts in political ideology in Afghanistan have led to a decline in learners' motivation to learn English. This decline is further exacerbated by the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan, which has resulted in a loss of perceived opportunities to use English in careers such as interpretation, translation, teaching, or construction work. Additionally, the frequent shifts in regimes in Afghanistan have caused significant disruptions in the English language teaching (ELT) curriculum, syllabus, and materials, as highlighted by Nazari et al. (2020). These rapid changes can lead to decreased motivation among learners as they struggle to adapt to new teaching methods, ultimately affecting their confidence and success in learning English.

Orfan (2020) also highlights the role of cultural knowledge in language learning, pointing out that Afghan learners' limited cultural awareness can contribute to difficulties in understanding English idioms. This highlights the importance of incorporating cultural sensitivity and awareness into ELT curricula and materials to improve learners' understanding and motivation.

Teaching in the Afghan context presents several challenges for educators, as noted by Nazari et al. (2020). They emphasize that the formation of professional identities for teachers in Afghanistan is impeded by sociocultural, institutional, and pedagogical barriers, which can significantly affect the quality of teaching and the overall learning outcomes for students. To address these challenges, they believe that a multifaceted approach is required, involving policy changes, provision of resources and support, and teacher training programs that are responsive to the unique needs and contexts of Afghan educators.

Other studies have explored various aspects of English language education in Afghanistan, including the challenges faced by female students (Noori & Orfan, 2021), instructors' perceptions of teaching methods (Orfan et al., 2021), and the relationship between self-efficacy and speaking anxiety (Tahsildar & Kabiri, 2019). Furthermore, Kakar et al. (2020) investigated the attitudes of both teachers and students toward large English language classes at Herat University, while Kakar and Sarwari (2022) explored the use of creative teaching methods in EFL classrooms in Afghanistan. These studies provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities in ELT in Afghanistan and suggest areas for improvement.

## 2.2. Motivation in Military English Learning

Motivation, as described by Dörnyei (1998), is a crucial component of the learning process. It acts as an internal force that propels an individual towards a specific goal, activating learning. In the context of English language teaching and learning, motivation plays a vital role in determining learners' engagement, effort (Gürbüz et al., 2023), and ultimately, their success in acquiring the language for effective communication (Zeynali et al., 2019).

There are several relevant issues surrounding motivation and English language learning and teaching. First, teachers play a significant role in fostering motivation among learners (Pishghadam et al., 2021). By refining their behavior, establishing a meaningful rapport with students, and creating an environment of mutual trust and respect, teachers can facilitate an enthusiastic learning atmosphere that promotes communication. Second, learners' autonomy can be enhanced by fostering a classroom environment where students are encouraged to express their opinions and feel supported and appreciated for their efforts (Hosseini Fatemi et al., 2022). Autonomy promotes a sense of ownership and responsibility for the learning process, which can further enhance motivation and improve communication skills.

In the context of military language learning, motivation is of paramount importance, as it directly impacts the effectiveness of communication, collaboration, and decision-making during military operations (Alqahtani, 2017). Studies on motivation in military language learning settings have revealed that military officers generally display positive attitudes toward learning English for communication purposes (Kurum, 2011; Mahdavi Zafarghandi & Jodai, 2012). Factors such as envisioning themselves as proficient L2 users (Ideal L2 Self), parental encouragement, and religious interest contribute to their motivation (Alqahtani, 2017).

Furthermore, military learners often engage with English language content through various media, such as movies and music, as well as actively using the language when traveling and interacting with foreigners outside of the classroom setting (Mahdavi Zafarghandi & Jodai, 2012; Miller & Crowther, 2020). However, limited contact with native English speakers may impede their ability to acquire the language naturally and develop effective communication skills.

Incorporating motivational learning strategies is crucial for helping military officers develop their Ideal L2 Self, which can contribute to a successful L2 learning experience and enhanced communication abilities (Jodaei et al., 2018; Kurum, 2011). Teachers working in military contexts should employ various motivational techniques to promote active learning and inspire learners to strive for success in both language acquisition and communication (Miller & Crowther, 2020; Momenzadeh et al., 2023). In summary, motivation is a central aspect of English language teaching and learning, particularly in military contexts where effective communication is critical. By understanding the factors that influence motivation and implementing strategies that foster it, teachers can significantly enhance language learning outcomes and communication skills for military personnel.

## 2.3. Willingness to Communicate in Military English Learning Contexts

The concept of willingness to communicate (WTC) has become a crucial factor in L2 acquisition, as it significantly impacts success in learning another language, particularly in contexts where effective communication is essential, such as military operations (Alqahtani, 2017; MacIntyre, 1994). WTC in an L2 context differs from that in one's native language and can be influenced by factors such as personality traits, anxiety levels, and learning environment (MacIntyre et al., 1999; Miller & Crowther, 2020).



Consequently, researchers strive to identify factors that can enhance WTC in L2 learning, given the emphasis on communication in this area, especially in specialized contexts like military language learning (Kurum, 2011). MacIntyre et al. (1998) proposed an explanatory model to elucidate WTC in L2 learning, incorporating potential driving forces and outcomes. They defined WTC as the readiness to participate in a conversation using L2 at a specific moment with individuals (McCroskey & Richmond, 1991). WTC is considered a situational component shaped by a variety of linguistic, communicative, and social factors. MacIntyre et al. (1998) suggested that the primary objective of L2 instruction should be to foster students' eagerness to seek communication opportunities and actively engage in them, which is particularly relevant for military personnel who need to communicate effectively in diverse situations.

Numerous studies have examined WTC in ESL contexts, investigating various aspects of the topic (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). Additionally, prior research in education has shown that teachers' perceived credibility can influence multiple aspects of student motivation (Zarei, 2022) and outcomes (Dewaele, 2019), such as language proficiency, appreciation for the teacher, technology adoption, and WTC (Pishghadam et al., 2021). However, despite the emphasis on communication and the central role of WTC in L2 instruction (Elahi Shirvan et al., 2019), existing literature suggests that WTC has not been extensively explored in EFL contexts, particularly within military settings (Bektas-Cetinkaya, 2009; Jodaie et al., 2018).

In military contexts, fostering WTC among learners can significantly impact their ability to communicate effectively during operations, training, and collaborations with international counterparts (Alqahtani, 2017; Miller & Crowther, 2020). Further research on WTC in military language learning settings could provide valuable insights into strategies for enhancing communication skills and addressing potential barriers to WTC, such as anxiety or cultural differences. This could ultimately contribute to more effective language instruction and improved communication capabilities among military personnel.

### **3. Methodology**

This research adopted a qualitative approach due to its ability to provide an in-depth exploration of complex social phenomena and facilitate a comprehensive understanding of human experiences and perceptions (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The qualitative approach allowed for an exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions, providing rich data that could be analyzed and interpreted to identify underlying patterns and themes (Mik-Meyer, 2020).

#### **3.1. Participants**

The participants in this study consisted of 13 Afghan teachers, all of whom were male and CELTA certified. They were selected with the intention of providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing army officers' motivation to learn English. To ensure data saturation, purposeful sampling was used in the participant selection process. The criteria for choosing participants included being formal teachers at the academy, having at least one year of experience teaching English at the academy, and having a diverse range of educational and English language backgrounds.

Three of the participants had a background in English language and literature, with one of them holding an MA in TESOL. The other two participants held bachelor's degrees in economics and sociology, respectively. The teachers' experience ranged from one to ten years, offering a wide spectrum of perspectives on the teaching and learning process. They all shared the common goal of enhancing the English language skills of the army officers they worked with.

#### **3.2. Procedures**

For the data collection, semi-structured Skype interviews were conducted with the participants between December 2022 and January 2023 (Lo Iacono et al., 2016). The interviews were designed to last approximately 35 to 50 minutes, allowing participants to discuss their experiences and insights in depth. After transcribing the interviews, a follow-up focus group was organized via Skype to clarify any responses and address further questions.

Deductive thematic analysis coding was employed to analyze the data (Mik-Meyer, 2020). The findings were then shared with the participants for member checking to validate the accuracy of the interpretations and ensure the participants' perspectives were accurately portrayed in the study (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Throughout the research process, participants were informed of the study's purpose and provided informed consent prior to their involvement. They were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity, with any identifiable information in the final report being removed. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity and safety of the participants, and they were given the option to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any consequences.

## 4. Results

Following a thorough analysis of the data obtained from the interviews, I have categorized the key factors into two distinct groups: Internal factors, pertaining to the teachers and the English department, and external factors, encompassing all other stakeholders. Table 1 presented below, provides a summary of the key factors and suggested strategies for improving Afghan army officers' motivation to learn English, as identified in the research results. This concise overview will serve as a foundation for the in-depth discussion of the findings in the following three sections. The table is organized into two main categories: Internal and External factors which influence the officers' motivation. Corresponding strategies to address these factors are also outlined, aiming to enhance their language learning experience and motivation.

**Table 1**

*Factors and Strategies for Improving Afghan Army Officers' Motivation in Learning English*

| Category         | Factors   | Strategies                                       |
|------------------|---|--|
| Internal Factors | Ineffective Curriculum                            | Curriculum Revision                              |
|                  | Large, Multilevel Classes                         | Large Class Teaching Techniques                  |
|                  | Limited Resources                                 | Material Development                             |
|                  | Unclear Purpose of Learning English               | Induction Session                                |
|                  | Lack of Perceived Application of English          | Induction Session                                |
| External Factors | Gap between English Sessions                      | Gap Reduction, Practice Time, Resource Provision |
|                  | Limited Language Exposure outside the Classroom   | Gap Reduction, Practice Time, Resource Provision |
|                  | Perception of English as a Less Important Subject | Induction Session                                |
|                  | Insufficient Materials and Equipment              | Material Development                             |

### 4.1. Internal Factors

The study results suggested that several internal factors contributed to the demotivation of Afghan army officers to learn English.

#### 4.1.1. Ineffective Curriculum

Amir, one of the participants in the study, reported that despite the course being labeled as "English for Military", it was a general English course that utilized Headway textbooks, which may not have been perceived as relevant to their field of military studies (Adarbah et al., 2022). This finding aligned with the postulations of Kumaravadivelu (2001), who stated that the effectiveness of teaching depends on the practicality, possibility, and particularity of teaching materials and methods. In this case, the materials and method used were not tailored to meet the needs and interests of the students, leading to decreased motivation and lack of communication.

#### 4.1.2. Large, Multilevel Classes

The results also indicated that the military English courses sometimes comprised classes with 40-50 students, which posed a challenge in motivating and engaging students (Noori & Orfan, 2021). Large class sizes limited the attention that students received from the teacher, opportunities for interaction with other students, and the ability of the teacher to monitor all students, as outlined by Harunasari and

Halim (2019). Furthermore, the difficulty of finding resources and contextualized teaching materials was compounded in large, multilevel classes, leading to a reduction in the quality of instruction (Kakar et al., 2020). Ali, another participant, reported that even though a placement test was conducted before each course to ensure the appropriate level of study for each student, some students still struggled, leading to disparities in the pace of task completion.

#### *4.1.3. Limited Resources*

The library available to the participants contained only materials related to general English, whereas the teacher participants noted that the students were interested in materials related to the military field, such as vocabulary, reading, success stories from other military institutions, magazines, and films showcasing military advancements (Orfan et al., 2021). This finding was supported by Nazari et al. (2021), who noted the lack of context-sensitive materials as a barrier due to the content of the textbooks not matching the sociocultural idiosyncrasies of Afghanistan. Jafar, a teacher participant, highlighted this lack of relevant resources as a common concern among Afghan teacher-scholars (Golzar et al., 2022; Orfan et al., 2021).

#### *4.1.4. Unclear Purpose of Learning English*

The study participants reported that their study of English was mandated by the government, but they were not informed about the importance of the language and its potential role in their future careers. This lack of understanding of the purpose of learning English contributed to their demotivation (Anwari, 2019). Reza, another participant, emphasized the importance of clearly communicating the purpose and benefits of learning English (Alrabai, 2022). In conclusion, the results of the study, as reported by Amir, Ali, Jafar, and Reza, highlighted the importance of addressing the internal factors that contributed to the demotivation of Afghan army officers in learning English. Efforts were needed to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs and interests of the students, reduce class sizes, provide relevant resources, and clearly communicate the purpose and benefits of learning English (Borsipour et al., 2019; Makiabadi et al., 2019; Pishghadam, 2016; Weda et al., 2021).

## **4.2. External Factors**

The study findings also revealed several external factors that affect the motivation of Afghan army officers to learn English and are beyond the control of teachers. These factors include the lack of perceived application of English in the future, the gap between English sessions, limited language exposure and practice outside of the classroom, the perception of English as a less important subject, and insufficient materials and equipment.

#### *4.2.1. Lack of Perceived Application of English in the Future*

One of the teacher participants, Reza, reported that some students responded that they did not see the value of learning English in the future when asked about their lack of interest in the subject (Anwari, 2019). The students expressed fear of being sent to war against the Taliban and death in combat, as well as a belief that they would not be able to use English in their future careers after graduation (Tahsildar & Kabiri, 2019). This lack of perceived purpose in learning English was found to contribute to their demotivation. This finding contradicts previous research by Noori et al. (2021), who found no significant impact of the major or discipline of learners on their attitudes toward learning English. However, this study concludes that the military background of the learners, who do not see a specific application of English in war, may result in lower perceived importance of the subject (Katawazai et al., 2019).

#### *4.2.2. The Gap Between English Sessions*

Jafar, one of the participants, reported that there was a substantial gap between English sessions, with lessons being scheduled only once every one to two months (Noori & Orfan, 2021). This led to students losing track of their lessons and forgetting what they had learned by the time they returned to class (Orfan et al., 2021). This is supported by the findings of Orfan (2020), who found that students have more positive attitudes toward English the longer they have been studying it.

#### 4.2.3. *Limited Language Exposure and Practice Outside the Classroom*

The study also found that students were not exposed to an English environment outside of the classroom, as it was an English as a foreign language (EFL) context (Kakar et al., 2020). Their schedules were tightly planned, leaving little opportunity for them to practice English among themselves (Orfan, 2020).

#### 4.2.4. *Perception of English as a Less Important Subject*

The students were required to take eight subjects each term, and English was given less attention compared to other military subjects (Adarbah et al., 2022). English did not face any penalties, and the students knew that they would receive a passing grade regardless of their performance, which was determined by the military department and not the teachers (Alrabai, 2022). This led to English being perceived as a symbolic subject rather than a subject of importance (Pishghadam, 2016; Makiabadi et al., 2019).

#### 4.2.5. *Insufficient Materials and Equipment*

Ahmad, one of the teacher participants, reported that the students were not only facing a shortage of English learning resources but also a shortage of basic supplies and equipment necessary for their military studies (Orfan, 2020). This included food, clothing, and boots, which were often not provided by the military department. The students were required to purchase these items on their own, which added to their financial burden and reduced their motivation to learn (Kakar et al., 2020). Furthermore, the students also faced a lack of access to modern communication technology and equipment, such as computers and the Internet, which limited their ability to connect with other English language learners and engage in independent language learning activities (Adarbah et al., 2022).

This contrasted with the findings of previous research that noted access to technology and the internet had a positive impact on the motivation of language learners (Alrabai, 2022). The lack of technology and resources in the current study may have contributed to the students' demotivation in learning English (Orfan et al., 2021). In conclusion, the shortage of basic supplies and equipment, as well as the lack of access to modern communication technology, has a detrimental impact on the motivation of Afghan army officers to learn English (Noori et al., 2021). Addressing these issues may require collaboration with relevant stakeholders, such as government agencies and military departments, to provide the necessary resources and support for Afghan army officers to effectively engage in language learning activities and improve their communication skills (Katawazai et al., 2019).

## 5. Discussion

Based on the results of the research and the recommendations provided by the participants, the following strategic approaches can be employed to enhance the motivation of Afghan military officers towards recognizing the significance of the English language on par with their military coursework:

### 5.1. Induction Session

Amir emphasized the importance of addressing the demotivating factors faced by Afghan military officers in their English language learning journey through an induction session. The goal of this session, as stated by Amir, is to instill a sense of purpose and direction for their education and to inform them of their potential as a second language learner (L2 Self) and its impact on their future career prospects (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009). The three major demotivating factors, according to Amir, are the perceived lack of practical application of English, the perception of English as a less important subject, and uncertainty about the necessity of learning English (Noori & Orfan, 2021). By highlighting the crucial role of English in effective communication, both in their personal and professional lives, this induction session aims to increase the motivation of Afghan military officers towards English language learning (Orfan, 2020).

### 5.2. Curriculum Revision

Ali suggested revising the curriculum to align the teaching materials with the needs and interests of the discipline and the students (Kakar et al., 2020). This, according to Ali, will increase motivation as



students will find the coursework relevant to their field of study and enjoy the learning process. Jafar added that incorporating authentic materials, such as news articles and video clips, would provide students with real-life context and make the language learning experience more meaningful (Tahsildar & Kabiri, 2019). Additionally, Reza suggested incorporating interactive activities, such as role-playing and simulations, to create an engaging and dynamic learning environment (Anwari, 2019). By emphasizing communication skills, such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing, the curriculum revision aims to equip Afghan military officers with the necessary skills to communicate effectively in English (Orfan et al., 2021).

### **5.3. Material Development**

Jafar emphasized the importance of developing military-related resources to enhance the existing library and provide students with a more engaging experience when utilizing the resources (Katawazai et al., 2019). Amir suggested creating a resource repository where students can access online learning materials, such as podcasts, videos, and e-books, to supplement their in-class learning. Additionally, Ali proposed incorporating technology, such as virtual and augmented reality, to create interactive and immersive learning experiences for the students. By providing students with a range of resources and materials to support their language learning journey, material development aims to foster an environment that encourages communication and language use.

### **5.4. Large Class Teaching Techniques**

Reza noted the need to convince the military department to reduce class sizes. If this is not feasible, Reza proposed designing a small-scale training program for English language teachers to equip them with the necessary skills to manage large classes effectively (Orfan, 2020). This program, as suggested by Reza, will focus on techniques such as providing feedback on assignments, promoting group and pair work, monitoring student progress, and delivering clear instructions (Noori et al., 2021). Ahmad added that implementing techniques such as gamification, where elements of game design are incorporated into the teaching process, would make the class experience more engaging and enjoyable for the students. By promoting interaction and communication within the large class setting, these teaching techniques aim to increase the motivation of Afghan military officers toward English language learning.

### **5.5. Gap Reduction, Practice Time, and Resource Provision**

Ahmad discussed the challenges faced in implementing these tasks, which are directly tied to external factors and have limited influence from the English language department (Noori & Orfan, 2021). Reza suggested initiating active discussions with the military department to address each issue separately. Meanwhile, Ali emphasized the importance of providing sufficient time and resources for students to practice their English language skills outside of the classroom (Kakar et al., 2020). To increase motivation, as noted by Ahmad and Ali, it is crucial to allocate sufficient time and resources for students to practice their English language skills outside of the classroom (Anwari, 2019). By providing opportunities for students to communicate and use the language, gap reduction, practice time, and resource provision aims to enhance the motivation of Afghan military officers towards English language learning (Orfan, 2020).

Jafar proposed establishing an online exchange program to connect Afghan military students with their counterparts from other institutions, providing an opportunity for language exchange and improvement (Tahsildar & Kabiri, 2019). However, this idea may not be realistic or achievable given the resource and budget constraints and the complexities of the government approval process, as noted by Reza (Katawazai et al., 2019).

Overall, the participants claimed that some aspects of the proposed innovation could be easily and effectively implemented. For instance, Amir stated that the design of an induction session is a highly motivating and novel idea that would be simple to execute (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009). Similarly, Ali expressed that the implementation of a small-scale training program for teaching large classes would not only improve the motivation levels of the students but also the teachers, as they would feel better equipped and more confident in their abilities (Orfan et al., 2021).

However, regarding curriculum revision, Jafar and Reza pointed out that changes could only be made at the elementary and pre-intermediate levels. The implementation of such changes at the beginner level may not be feasible as the students' general English proficiency is not yet sufficient to comprehend the military content directly (Noori et al., 2021). As for material development, Ahmad mentioned that some materials, such as vocabulary lists, reading and listening passages, and stories, could be easily developed online. However, the acquisition of military books, magazines, and dictionaries could pose a challenge due to their cost and the difficulties in obtaining them on a regular basis regularly (Kakar et al., 2020).

Drawing upon the insights and findings from this research, the following section presents a synthesis of key insights and their implications, along with a recognition of limitations inherent in the study's context. This study highlights the significance of communication strategies in influencing the motivation of Afghan army officers to learn English, among other factors such as attitudes, emotions, willingness to communicate, teaching methodologies, classroom environment, and instructor credibility. Communication, both internal and external, plays a crucial role in shaping motivation and success in EFL learning contexts.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, including the influence of the collapse of the Afghan government to the Taliban on the study's context and the participants' responses. Additionally, the practical suggestions offered by the participants could not be fully evaluated without opportunities for data triangulation, such as collecting perspectives from other stakeholders (e.g., students, policymakers, etc.).

Despite these limitations, the implications of these findings for research and practice are significant. Researchers can further investigate the complex relationship between various factors and their impact on motivation in EFL learning contexts, with a particular focus on the role of communication strategies. Furthermore, future research can explore the connection between emotions, emotioncy (Naji Meidani et al., 2022; Pishghadam, 2016), communication strategies, and learner motivation, providing valuable insights into the interplay between these elements.

For practitioners, these insights emphasize the importance of tailoring teaching approaches to address specific factors influencing motivation and promoting effective communication strategies. Instructors can adopt creative teaching strategies (Kakar et al., 2020), be mindful of their behaviors in the learning environment (Noori et al., 2021), and implement culturally responsive frameworks (Adarbah et al., 2022) and post-method pedagogies (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) to cater to the diverse needs of learners. They should also be aware of the challenges faced by different groups of students, such as married female students (Noori & Orfan, 2021), and adjust their teaching practices accordingly.

In conclusion, the significance of communication and relationships in shaping motivation and success in EFL learning cannot be overstated. Understanding the factors influencing motivation, particularly the role of communication strategies and strategies to address them, is crucial for both researchers and practitioners. Continued investigation into these factors is necessary to improve EFL teaching and learning experiences, ultimately enhancing motivation and success among learners while considering the unique context and limitations of the study.

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