

## A CORRELATIONAL STUDY OF TURKISH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TO LEARN ENGLISH

### ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENMEDEKİ MOTİVASYON DÜZEYLERİNE YÖNELİK KORELASYONEL BİR ÇALIŞMA

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#### Abstract

Motivation has extensively been studied in English as a second and/or foreign language context. Yet, it seems worthwhile to conduct more research with different populations, as motivation is a dynamic quality that depends on a great number of variables and is rather difficult to attain. The present study aims to examine a group of Turkish university students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language and types of motivation they have. A total of 81 students at the English Language Teaching (ELT) department of a large and well-established state university in Turkey took part in the study. A 20-item questionnaire which was used by Vaezi (2008, adapted from Gardner, 1985; Clement *et al.*, 1994) was administered to participants to find out ratio of integrativeness and instrumentality at participants' motivation. Besides, Pearson correlation test was used to investigate the relationship between participants' motivation and their age, gender and grades. Results showed that there was a weak correlation between motivation and age, and between motivation and the other two variables: gender and grade. It was also found out that students had high instrumental motivation, but that they also had a moderate degree of integrative motivation.

**Key Words:** Language Learning, Integrative Motivation, Instrumental Motivation, Age, Gender, Correlation

#### Öz

Motivasyon ikinci dil olarak İngilizce ve yabancı dil olarak İngilizce bağlamında yaygın olarak çalışılmış bir konudur. Bununla birlikte, motivasyon kavramının pek çok farklı değişkene bağlı olarak dinamik bir yapıya sahip olması ve motivasyonun zor kazanılması, onun farklı gruplarla daha fazla araştırma yapılmasına değer bir konu olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu çalışma bir grup Türk üniversite öğrencisinin yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenmedeki motivasyon düzeylerini ve sahip oldukları motivasyon türünü ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamıştır. Çalışmada Türkiye'nin büyük ve köklü üniversitelerinden birinde İngiliz Dili Eğitimi programına devam eden toplam 81 öğrenci yer almıştır. Katılımcıların araçsal motivasyon düzeylerini ve bütüncü motivasyon düzeylerini bulmak için daha önce Vaezi tarafından kullanılmış olan (2008, Gardner, 1985; Clement ve diğ., 1994'den uyarlanan) 20 maddelik bir anket katılımcılara uygulandı. Ayrıca, Pearson korelasyon testi ile katılımcıların motivasyon düzeyleri ile onların yaşları, cinsiyetleri ve sınıfları arasında ilişki olup olmadığına bakıldı. Sonuçlar motivasyon ile yaş, cinsiyet ve sınıf değişkenleri arasında zayıf bir korelasyon olduğunu gösterdi. Son olarak öğrencilerin orta düzeyde bütüncü motivasyona sahip olmakla beraber, yüksek düzeyde araçsal motivasyona sahip oldukları bulunmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Dil Öğrenme, Bütüncü Motivasyon, Araçsal Motivasyon, Yaş, Cinsiyet, Korelasyon

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Motivation is a complicated term which challenges researchers in terms of identifying factors behind it. This very nature of motivation brings about difficulties that are experienced while defining it. Therefore, numerous definitions have been made by different researchers including several classifications (Root, 1999). A substantial amount of research has been carried out on motivation and its impact on language learning in the last few decades (e.g. Clement & Kruidenier, 1983; Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Dörnyei, 1990; Sawhney, 1998; Strong, 1984; Vaezi, 2008; Wang, 2009), as it is believed to play a crucial role in language learning success. Results of these studies about motivation came to the conclusion that it is effective on frequency of students' using L2 learning strategies, communicating with native speakers and amount of input they get, and that success in academic performance largely depends on motivation (Oxford & Shearin, 1994 as cited in Hernandez, 2006). Engin (2009) also claimed that readiness and willingness of students' for obtaining knowledge and expanding their capability of using L2 are identified through motivation. Effective learning and teaching in a classroom environment depends on motivation to a great extent and motivation can stimulate students to continue their learning even outside of the classroom with activities such as reading books, magazines, listening to the radio and writing notes in the target language (Tudor, 2004).

Gardner, well-known Canadian researcher, and his colleagues carried out the most prevailing study in Second Language Learning motivation (Wang, 2009; Damavand, 2012). They aimed to identify reasons that may stimulate learners to learn a second language. Therefore, they conducted numerous studies on language learners in Canada, United States and Philippines for a long period of time. As a result of their detailed analyses, they concluded that learners studied language to achieve various goals. Getting a prosperous job, being respected by their society, travelling abroad, chatting with friends from other nationalities were just some of the reasons for the desire to learn a foreign language (Gardner, 1985). Developing Social-Psychological model, Gardner (1972) asserted that characteristics of motivation are perseverance and willingness for learning the language and willingness to know about the culture (cited in Damavand, 2012). Adopting a psychological approach, Gardner and Lambert (1972) proposed that learning success and achievement are affected by students' perception about a foreign language and its cultural values and lifestyles as well as the social context in which learning takes place. Furthermore, students' personal reasons for learning have certain impacts on their success or achievement (Gardner, 1985; Engin, 2009). Being pioneer of this study field, Gardner defined motivation as "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning plus favourable attitudes towards learning" (Gardner, 1985:10).

Attitudes toward the speakers of L2 and society constitute a crucial part of the Gardner's motivation theory. In his studies, he discovered that attitudes affect motivation of

students (Gardner, 1985 as cited in Csizer & Dörnyei, 2005). Gardner and his friends developed the famous Attitude and Motivation Test Battery (AMBT; Gardner, Tremblay & Masgoret, 1997). Although there are many motivational test series, AMBT gained great reputation and first being presented in Gardner's (1985) social-psychological theory of motivation, it has been changed several times (Huang, 2008).

Although several classifications of motivation were proposed by different researchers, Gardner and Lambert's classification had the highest influence and many studies on motivation were based on their classification. Gardner and Lambert (1959) first coined the terms "integrative" and "instrumental" orientations which are seen as the two main reasons for learning a language. Integrative orientation refers to students' having willingness to get involved in target community and their culture. In instrumental orientation, students learn the target language to ensure that they will achieve their personal goals or that they will get approval from elders (Vela & Vara, 2009). Integratively motivated students learn the target language as they want to be familiar with the target culture and integrate into the society who speaks that language. Instrumentally motivated learners, on the other hand, have pragmatic goals such as pursuing a demanding job, academic success or getting promotion (Gardner, 2001). Students are expected to achieve learning goals to a great extent through appreciating native speakers and their culture, and searching for ways to get involved in that society (Falk, 1978; Damavand, 2012). Therefore, integrative motivation was usually considered to be more effective than instrumental motivation in terms of second language learning success (Schumann, 1986).

Gardner's model was challenged by a number of scholars. Crookes and Schmidt (1991) contended that it is not reasonable to limit description of motivation and complicated nature of it to a questionnaire since motivation is affected by several environmental factors which may lead to changes in the degree and type of motivation. Dörnyei (1994) further asserted that Gardner's socio-educational model was far from meeting expectations of second language learning in educational contexts. Criticizing Gardner's model, Dörnyei (2001) proposed that motivation doesn't have straight impact on language production or success as it precedes behaviors that might lead to achievement, but not success per se. Besides motivation, there are several dynamics such as learners' proficiency, learning environment, teacher's competency, etc. that influence the association between motivation and outcome (Csizer & Dörnyei, 2005). Building on such claims and assumptions, Dörnyei came up with a different model. In his model, he mentioned three different levels: Language Level, Learning Level and Learning Situation Level. Language Level stands for the driving forces (instrumental and integrative motivation) associated with several components of language that are effective in identifying aims for language learning. These components are culture, society and practical benefits that result from

using that language. The second level is related with the learners themselves. In this level, learner's perception about language and language learning are addressed with reference to cognitive theories (Dörnyei, 1994). In the third level, Learning Situation Level, other motivational factors related to the environment in which learning takes place are considered. More specifically, the instructor, lesson or other students have effects on motivation (Schmidt et al., 1996). In this level, Dörnyei included the famous dichotomy of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation proposing that learners study the subject for some internal or external reasons (Root, 1999). Internal reasons are related with the subject itself, namely the learner study the subject because it appeals to his/her interest. On the other hand, external reasons refer to pragmatic goals (Noels, 2001; Deci and Ryan, 2000). There is not a strict border between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Actually, both of them are effective in determining our behaviors (Deci, 1975). Moreover, Dörnyei (1990) and Au (1988) claimed that motivation level of second language learners and foreign language learners are not the same. Foreign language learners may be less integratively motivated than second language learners. Besides, recent studies argue that instrumental motivation is also essential (Vaezi, 2008). Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) contended that students who are instrumentally motivated persevere in learning the language to take the advantages of knowing the target language. Furthermore, Oxford (1996) asserted that there was a need for further research on instrumental motivation, especially in foreign language context. For instance in China, students learn English to achieve their practical goals such as getting a career, pursuing science, technology, development, etc. Although, they are motivated instrumentally, most of them achieve learning goals to a great extent (Wang, 2009). On the other hand earlier research provides certain findings revealing that integrative motivation may not always have considerable positive effect on success of language learners (e.g. Strong, 1984). Actually, empirical studies carried out by some other researchers revealed that both types of motivation are efficient in language learning and degree of their effectiveness depends on the situations in which learning takes place (e.g. Wang, 2009).

The aim of this paper was to analyse Turkish ELT department students' motivation and the type of motivation they have. It also aimed to reveal whether or not motivation level is related to age, grade and gender. Although similar studies were carried out to examine the role of motivation among undergraduate students in different contexts, this study probes into motivation of Turkish university students studying at the department of English Language Teaching. This study is based on the definition of motivation by Gardner, which is given above. This study is aimed at answering following research questions:

1. What is the motivation level of ELT department students?
2. What kind of motivation do ELT department students have?
3. Is there a statistically significant relationship between age and motivation?

4. Is there a statistically significant relationship between gender and motivation?
5. Is there a statistically significant relationship between grade and motivation?

## 2. METHOD

### Participants

Data were collected from 81 participants studying at ELT Department of the Faculty of Education at a large State university in Turkey. Of these, 22 of them were freshmen, other 22 of them were sophomores, 24 of them were juniors and the remaining 13 students were seniors. Their ages varied between 18-34 years. Students were asked whether they want to contribute to the study or not and data were collected only from volunteers. A questionnaire was administered to volunteers. Participants had passed the university entrance exam to become students at ELT department. In that exam their language scores were between 85 and 100 points. Therefore, their academic success levels in English were accepted as identical to each other when they became undergraduate students at ELT department.

### Data Collection Tool

Quantitative data were collected through a 20-item questionnaire. The questionnaire was a slightly modified motivation scale utilized by Vaezi (2008, adapted from Gardner's Attitude/Motivation test battery, 1985; Clement et al., 1994), as some items were omitted. It was a 5- point Likert scale. The reliability statistics confirmed the reliability of the scale with the Cronbach Alpha being 0.918. In this scale, 11 items were related with instrumental motivation while remaining 9 items were aimed at measuring integrative motivation of students. The purpose of the study was explained by the researchers before administering the questionnaire. The questionnaire was translated into Turkish to prevent misunderstandings and ambiguities. Results of the questionnaire were analysed through SPSS according to three variables: age, grade and gender. Students were divided into four groups according to their age before data were analysed. The first group included students whose ages were between 18-22, the second group included the ones whose ages ranged between 23-27, the third group was between 28-32 and the last group included those who were 33 and above. First, mean score of each item was found and then, the difference between integrative and instrumental motivation of students was revealed through the paired sample T-test. Pearson correlation test was used to examine the association between motivation and students' genders, ages and grades.

## 3. RESULTS

This study was conducted for the purpose of investigating students' motivation levels to learn English in general and the type of motivation they have. The possible existence of a relationship between motivation and students' gender, age and grade was also examined. In this

section, descriptive statistics were given with the overall means of students' integrative and instrumental motivation level. Then, inferential statistics were given to clarify the question of possible existence of an association between motivation and students' gender, age and grade. Results of correlational analysis were also given in this section to answer the research question of what kind of motivation students have.

### Descriptive Statistics

The overall mean scores of both instrumental motivation items (M=4.05) and integrative motivation items (M=3.58) showed that students were motivated enough to learn English (Table 1). Items 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 16, and 20 were related with integrative motivation, while items 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18 and 19 were related with instrumental motivation. Integrative motivation items were labelled as A1, A2, and A3 etc. and instrumental motivation items were labelled as B1, B2, B3, and so on when analysing data. In the interpretation process of the data, the mean scores of 3.4 and above were accepted as moderate in terms motivation level and the scores of 4.2 and above were assumed to be high scores. The mean scores below 3.4 were considered as the indicator of a low level of motivation. Participants' responses to items A1, A3, A5, A6 and A7 showed that the students had a moderate degree of integrative motivation with the mean scores above 3.4. The students seemed to be highly motivated to learn English so that they can feel more at ease with other people who speak English (Item A9) whereas they had a low degree of motivation in the questions A2, A4 and A8. With an overall mean score of 3.58, the students had a moderate degree of integrative motivation. They rated high in questions related with meeting and interacting with different people from difficult cultures to improve their English, but they weren't curious about the target culture.

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics of Integrative Motivation

Items	Mean	Std. Dev.
A1-to meet and converse with more and varied people	3.88	1.08
A2-to better understand and appreciate English art and literature	3.32	1.06
A3-to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups	3.90	1.10
A4-to know the life of the English-speaking nations	3.38	1.10
A5-to understand English pop music	3.41	1.13
A6-to know various cultures and people	4.14	1.10
A7-to keep in touch with foreign friends and acquaintances	3.59	1.22
A8-The British are kind and friendly	2.41	1.10
A9-to be more at ease with other people who speak English	4.23	0.93
Overall mean score	3.58	

The overall mean score of the students' instrumental motivation level was 4.05, which showed that participants' instrumental motivation was higher than their integrative motivation. Findings related with items B1, B2, B3, B8 and B9 revealed that the students were highly motivated. The item B4 was about whether students wanted to learn English to be respected by others had a mean score of 3.31, which was the lowest mean score concerning instrumental motivation.

**Table 2:** Descriptive Statistics of Instrumental Motivation

Items	Mean	Std. Dev.
B1-I'll need it for my future career	4.65	0.67
B2-it will make me a more knowledgeable person	4.26	0.77
B3-it will someday be useful in getting a good job	4.54	0.92
B4-other people will respect me more if I know English	3.31	1.21
B5-I will be able to search for information and materials in English on the internet	3.74	1.07
B6-I will learn more about what's happening in the world	3.83	1.06
B7-language learning often gives me a feeling of success	4.17	0.97
B8-language learning often makes me happy	4.25	0.88
B9-an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English	4.21	0.95
B10-I can understand English-speaking films, videos, TV or radio	3.86	1.09
B11-I can read English books	3.81	1.08
Overall mean score	4.06	

Students exhibited a moderate level of instrumental motivation in their responses to other items (B5, B6, B7, B10 and B11). According to the results of mean scores, it is clear that students regard English as a tool to achieve their future goals. The overall mean scores of both instrumental and integrative motivation showed that the students' instrumental motivation level in general was higher than their integrative motivation level. Figure 1 is given below to visualize this difference between the types of motivation.

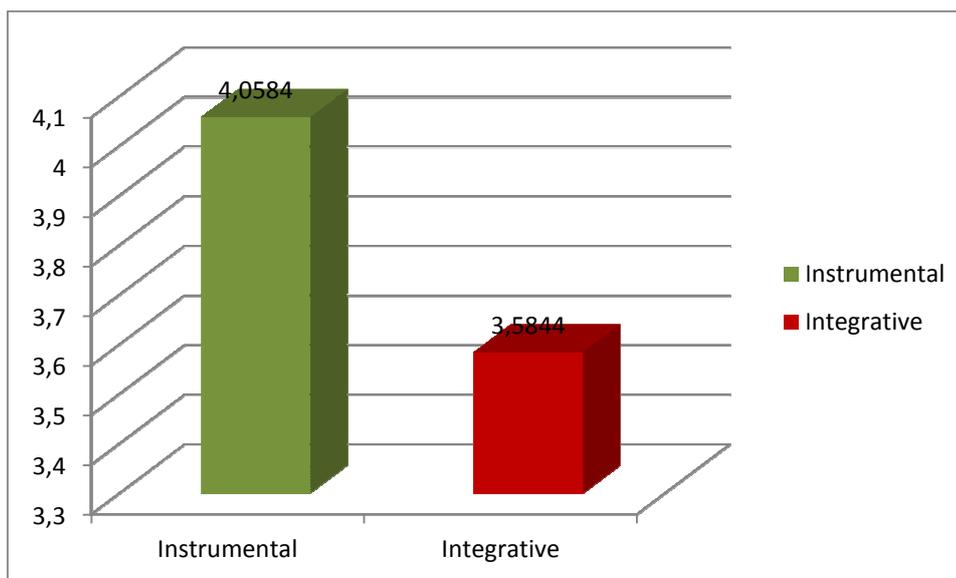


Figure 1: The mean scores for integrative and instrumental motivation

**Inferential Statistics**

The second research question was about the type of motivation students had? In order to answer this question, paired samples t-test was applied after finding the overall mean scores for both instrumental and integrative motivation level. The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference between students’ instrumental and integrative motivation levels ( $p= 0.000$  and  $p<0.05$ ). It was revealed that students’ instrumental motivation was significantly higher than their integrative motivation.

**Table 3: Paired Samples T- Test**

Motivation Types	Integrative Motivation	Instrumental Motivation	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	t	df	p-value
	3.58	4.06	-.58	-.37	-8.95	80	.000

The third research question was about the relationship between age and motivation, the fourth was set to find out whether there was a statistically significant relationship between gender and motivation. The fifth one addressed the relationship between grade and motivation.

To answer these questions Pearson correlation test was used. Results of the Pearson Correlation test are given in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Correlations between Variables

Variables	Motivation
Gender	-, 172
Age	-,068
Grade	,224*

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As is clearly seen in Table 4, gender and motivation are weakly correlated with each other in negative direction ( $r = -.172$  and  $p = 0.124$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

When it comes to relationship between age and motivation, again, the correlation seems to be rather weak ( $r = -.068$  and  $p > 0.05$ ), and the direction of the relationship between existing variables is negative.

Lastly, the correlation between students' grades and their motivation levels was also found to be weak ( $r = .224$  and  $p = .044$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

To summarize, Pearson Correlation test results showed that there was a rather weak correlation between students' motivation and their age, motivation and gender, and motivation and grade.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

This study showed that students have enough motivation to learn English, but their instrumental motivation level was higher than their integrative motivation level. This finding confirms Dörnyei's criticism of Gardner's model, as he claimed that motivation level of Second Language learners and Foreign Language learners are not the same and that foreign language learners are chiefly instrumentally motivated (Damavand, 2012). As is evident in the study, there was a statistically significant difference between students' integrative motivation and their instrumental motivation. Findings of this study are parallel to those earlier research conducted by Sawhney (1998), Vaezi (2008), and Wang (2009). In her study on Indian students learning German as a foreign language, Sawhney (1998) aimed to find out impacts of instrumental motivation on mastery of language. In her findings, she wrote that learners studied German for the sake of satisfying their personal goals. These goals included pursuing a challenging job, being respected by the society etc. Results are identical in the present study: Students regarded English as a tool to achieve their goals such as passing exams, getting a good job etc. As is evident in the questionnaire results, students had some practical goals to learn English. They claimed that they studied English for their future career (Items B1 and B3). Vaezi's (2008) study on Iranian undergraduate students revealed that students' integrative motivation was overwhelmed by their instrumental motivation. They were obviously instrumentally motivated, and had some barriers with the target culture. In his study conducted in China, where English is taught as a foreign language, Wang (2009), also asserted that

instrumental motivation was a determinant factor in participants' learning success. In the present study, students were not enthusiastic for knowing about the target culture, either. According to the results students are eager to get into touch with different people from different cultures but they are indifferent to the target culture. Students' indifference towards to target culture may result from their lack of knowledge about the target culture. However, culture is a key component of language teaching, and as many researchers claim, it cannot be isolated from language (e.g. Byram, 1988; Stewart, 1982; Valdes, 1986; Alptekin, 1993). Therefore, teachers should ensure that students are exposed to the language in its real context through authentic materials. Teachers can integrate multimedia into their classrooms to create opportunities for students to interact with the target culture (Hernandez, 2006). Furthermore, students can benefit from foreign student exchange programs which will help them to develop awareness towards the target culture.

As is clearly verified by earlier research (e.g. Ellis, 1997; Wang, 2009) the context in which learning takes place determines significance of instrumental or integrative motivation. Ensuring success in the English classes largely depends on engaging students in the learning process. Chomsky (1988, p.181) stressed the importance of learner's engagement with lesson when he said that "[t]he truth of the matter is that about 99 percent of teaching is making the students feel interested in the material". Clearly, motivation is one of the most important factors contributing to language learning.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study obtained through Paired samples T-test showed that students were mainly instrumentally motivated besides having integrative motivation to some extent. In addition, the correlation coefficient analysis revealed that there was not a statistically significant correlation between students' level of motivation and their gender, age and grade. It is clear that students have both instrumental and integrative goals to learn English. Besides, this study confirms Dörnyei's view about motivation of students in EFL context, as he claimed that students are instrumentally motivated in EFL context. However, it is obvious that both types of motivation are at work in language learning and that the degree of their effectiveness depends on the context in which learning takes place. Therefore, in order to guarantee that learning process is continuous, interesting and enjoyable, teachers should provide activities that appeal to students' goals and interests.

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