



Atıf (cite): ŞAHİN, Rukiye Aslı, DOĞAN, Hilal Özge, KOCAGİL, Fatmanur, KIRKIÇ, Kamil Arif (2025). From Screens to Classrooms: The Correlation Between University Preparatory Class Students' Parasocial Interactions With Fictional Characters And Their English Learning Motivation, *Disiplinler Arası Dil Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 11, 88-113. doi: 10.48147/dada.1789991

From Screens to Classrooms: The Correlation Between University Preparatory Class Students' Parasocial Interactions With Fictional Characters And Their English Learning Motivation¹

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Ekranlardan Sınıflara: Üniversite Hazırlık Sınıfı Öğrencilerinin Yabancı Dizi-Film Karakterleri ile Kurdukları Parasosyal Etkileşim ile İngilizce Öğrenme Motivasyonları Arasındaki İlişki

Özet

Bu çalışma İngilizce Hazırlık sınıfı öğrencilerinin yabancı TV programlarındaki kurgusal karakterlerle olan parasosyal etkileşimleri ile İngilizce öğrenme motivasyonları arasındaki ilişkisini araştırmaktadır. İki problem, öğrenciler arasındaki parasosyal etkileşim ve İngilizce öğrenme motivasyon seviyelerini belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Üçüncü problem, bu seviyelerin onların demografik özelliklerine göre ne ölçüde farklılık gösterdiğini araştırmaktadır. Dördüncü problem ise parasosyal etkileşim ve İngilizce öğrenme motivasyonu arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmaktadır.

Korelasyonel (ilişkisel tarama) yöntemi araştırması olarak tasarlanmıştır. Araçlarını Demografik Bilgi Formu, Parasosyal Etkileşim Ölçeği (PSEÖ), ve Dil Öğreniminde Motivasyon Ölçeği (DÖMÖ) oluşturmaktadır. Veriler Türkiye'deki 482 öğrenciden iki dönem boyunca toplanmıştır ve t-testi ile tek yönlü ANOVA testleri uygulanarak analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenme motivasyonlarının yüksek düzeyde, Parasosyal Etkileşim düzeylerinin ise orta düzeyde olduğu göstermektedir. Parasosyal Etkileşimin; özgüven, tutum ve kişisel kullanım alt boyutlarının pozitif yönde yordayıcısı olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Parasosyal Etkileşim, Dil Öğrenme Motivasyonu, Kurgusal Karakterler, İngilizce Dili Öğrenimi

From Screens to Classrooms: The Correlation Between University Preparatory Class Students' Parasocial Interactions With Fictional Characters And Their English Learning Motivation

Abstract

This study investigates the correlation between parasocial interactions of English preparatory class students with fictional characters in foreign tv shows and their motivation to learn English. The two problems aim to determine the levels of parasocial interaction and the English learning motivation among the students. The third investigates the extent to which these levels differ according to their demographic characteristics. The fourth examines the relationship between parasocial interaction and English learning motivation.

It was designed as a correlational study. Its instrument includes a Demographic Information Form, a Parasocial Interaction Scale (PSIS), and a Language Learning Motivation Scale (LLMS). Data were collected from 482 students in Türkiye during two semesters and analyzed employing t-tests and one-way ANOVA. The results demonstrate that students' motivation level was rated as 'strong,' whereas their parasocial interaction level was assessed as 'moderate.' Parasocial interaction emerged as a positive predictor of self-confidence, attitude, and personal usage.

Key Words: Parasocial interaction, language learning motivation, fictional characters, English language learning

Makale Türü: Araştırma Makalesi

Paper Type: Research Paper

¹ This study was presented as an abstract at the 2nd International Congress of 21st Century Educational Research (MAKU INER).

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Makale Geliş Tarihi (Received): 24.09.2025 Makale Kabul Tarihi (Accepted): 18.10.2025

1. Introduction

Considering the effect of globalization, English holds the first place when one observes the most used languages worldwide. The English language is spread all over the world into almost all fields, such as science, engineering and technology, medicine, trade and commerce, scientific research, education, tourism, internet, banking, business, advertising, film industry, transportation, pharmacy, and to name a few (Rao, 2019). For that reason, governments oblige schools to teach English and focus on teaching English to move their country up to a more outstanding position. Türkiye is one of the countries that actively makes efforts for teaching and the development of learning English. Nowadays, English, which has become a global communication language, is widely taught and learned as a foreign language both in the world and in our country (Özer & Korkmaz, 2016: 61). However, the teaching of English has not reach the intended success in Türkiye. The English performance in Türkiye is lower than the general education performance (TEPAV, 2011: 9). Therefore, studies continue to improve the process of teaching and learning English.

Accompanying the focus on teaching English, scientists have focused on and examined the factors that affect this process. Examples of these factors: the mother language, IQ levels and stress levels of students, the competence of the teacher, teaching methods and techniques, or cultural environment can be given (Can-Aran & Yılmaz, 2021: 285; Engin, 2010: 305; Özer & Korkmaz, 2016:70). Motivation is one of the most remarkable factors, in addition to others. Motivation can be described as the interest and desire that increase individuals' willingness and satisfaction to learn. The behaviors of a motivated individual are decisive, willing, and insistent. (Mehdiyev et al., 2016: 362). English learning motivation can be explained as having a positive attitude toward learning the language of English and a desire to do it. Consequently, to improve the English education process and generate a more qualified English education environment, the factors that affect it should be examined.

There are many factors that affect language learning motivation, and it is not that simple to categorize them. Therefore, there are different approaches and classifications toward motivation. The Behavioristic Approach explains this term as an external desire and expectation of reward that is effective on the performance of one's action. According to the Cognitive Approach, however, it is defined as the self-actualization of a person in accordance with his own beliefs, values, and goals rather than the influence of the external environment. On the other hand, motivation is defined as a power that comes from within the individual and directs him or her to the aim according to the Humanistic Approach.

Also, motivation has been subjected to different classifications depending on the factors affecting it. The most common categorization is intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is based on external factors such as reward and punishment, and the influence of these elements. The fundamental factor affecting language learning desire is the reward people will receive if they learn the language or the challenges they will face if they do not learn it. According to Nguyen (2019: 53), that kind of motivation can have a negative impact on students because they are only motivated by rewards or punishments. They do not have a strong desire and might abandon learning when this system is removed. On the other hand, intrinsic

motivation is the pure desire that an individual has toward learning a language. Motivation is considered intrinsic when the conditions are more enjoyable and desired, and the actions come from within (Mehdiyev et al., 2016: 363). Someone with extrinsic motivation would have no further interest in learning the language when external factors intervening in the process are removed, whereas a person with intrinsic motivation would not need such factors to be interested in learning the language.

Another common categorization that is encountered is Integrative and Instrumental Motivation. Gardner and Lambert (1959: 267) noted that the Orientation Index classifies purposes in two different ways: “integrative,” where the aim of language study is to learn more about the language group or to meet more and different people; “instrumental,” where the reasons reflect the more utilitarian value of linguistic achievement. If the individual’s reason to learn the language arises from the benefits of language that contribute to his or her life, it means that Instrumental Motivation has developed.

Many studies have been conducted on the environmental factors that improve motivation, and the findings are tried to be integrated into learning English. Another factor that became the topic of research is series and movies. Series and movies often take place in our lives now. So, research has been conducted on the question of whether it motivates students to learn a language. In time, these studies have shown that watching series or movies can contribute to language learning motivation as it contains different dimensions such as attractiveness, arousing interest among peers, and unconscious learning. Furthermore, in one of these studies, Azarudeen et al., (2024: 11) reveal that movies have a positive influence on students’ motivation and self confidence, concurrently alleviating anxiety in their language learning journey. Students in general affirmed that learning English through movies, especially ones with rich dialogue scenes, can ease their anxiety and tension when communicating, and is a great source of motivation.

Another dimension that requires consideration in the increase of language learning motivation through watching series and movies is Parasocial Interaction, which is believed to be the relationship between individuals and fictional characters. The term Parasocial Interaction is described as a sense of one-way affinity that the audiences develop towards a media character (Horton & Wohl, 1956, as cited in Ayar-Şentürk, 2022: 13). Identification with the character means that the audience feels as if they experience the events experienced by the characters and evaluates the events from their perspective. In other words, audiences want to put themselves in the characters’ shoes. Also, the characters can become counselors or models for the audience (Batgün-Durak & Sunal-Büyükşahin, 2017: 53).

People can engage in parasocial interaction with fictional characters in movies and TV series. (Tian and Hoffner, 2010: 250) revealed in their work that audiences feel identification to the extent that they try to change aspects of themselves to be more like the character. Therefore, it is possible to observe that people watching movies and series want to obtain the features of those characters with whom they had parasocial interaction. The general common feature of the TV series and movie characters covered in the study is that they speak English.

It is feasible to mention that motivation is related to how an individual wants to be and be seen. Therefore, the question of whether motivation could be related to parasocial interaction

comes to mind. Scientists conduct research on new factors that will increase individuals' motivation every day. In addition, watching series and movies is considered to be a fun way to get motivated to learn English. Although parasocial interaction was first associated with media characters in traditional formats, it has expanded to include digital figures such as YouTubers, Instagram celebrities, and other influencers, who are reported to impact attitudes and behaviors in various domains (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017: 1-7; Nafees et al., 2021; Reinikainen et al., 2020: 279-298). However, whereas there are lots of studies on the effects of watching series and movies on English learning motivation (Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Oruç, 2010; Kabooha, 2016; Ryan, 1998; Ünal, 2018; Yuzulia, 2021; Zhang, 2013), there is not any research encountered that addressed the possible relationship with parasocial interaction.

Although no study directly examines parasocial interaction in the context of English learning motivation, one exploratory study has considered its role in digital learning more broadly. Kharitonova et al. (2024: 78-80) investigated whether forming a parasocial bond with an online educator could support learning performance. Their findings suggested that parasocial engagement might enhance attention and comprehension in certain cases, though the results were inconsistent and limited by the study's small scope. While this research does not address motivation specifically, it indicates that parasocial processes may play a role in educational contexts, highlighting the relevance of exploring this relationship within English language learning.

Considering the place of English in the world today, it is important to better understand the motivation factor that takes English learning to a higher level. This study, considering the importance of motivation in language learning and based on the literature gap, aims to investigate whether there is a relationship between English language learning motivation and parasocial interaction. It also aims to examine this relationship's sub-dimensions and the influencing factors. For this purpose, the following questions are answered:

- 1- What is the Parasocial Interaction level of college preparatory class students?
- 2- What is the motivation level of college preparatory class students for English learning?
- 3- Do the English learning motivation of college preparatory class students and their Parasocial Interaction level differ significantly concerning the students' demographic features?
- 4- Is there a significant relationship between the English learning motivation of college preparatory class students and their Parasocial Interaction level?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Model

In this study, the correlational research model, one of the quantitative research models, was used. Correlational research involves studies that examine the relationship between variables within a group and often provides insights into the possibility of cause-and-effect relationships between variables (Büyüköztürk et al., 2008: 16-17).

The Ethics Committee approval was obtained from İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University in May 2023. Participants were included in the study after accepting the informed consent form.

2.2. Study Group

The convenience sampling method was used for the sample selection. In this sampling method, each student unit from different levels of the preparatory class of universities was included in the sample (Büyüköztürk et al., 2008: 95). English preparatory class students from various public and foundation universities in Türkiye constitute the data group of this study. Four hundred eighty-two students participated in the study, 37.6% male and 62.4% female. The youngest student was 17 years old, and the oldest was 43, with an average age of 19.45. Of these students, 95.4% were citizens of the Republic of Türkiye, and 4.6% were foreign (other) nationals. Although the data were obtained from various universities in Türkiye, its generalizability is limited as the study covers only certain universities located mainly in Istanbul.

Before starting their English preparatory studies, students were subjected to a placement test to determine their levels and began their preparatory education based on the results of this assessment. At the time of data collection, 22.2% of the students were at A1, 19.3% at A2, 22.6% at B1, 29.7% at B2, and 6.2% at C1 level and above levels. Of the students participating in the study, 26.1% were taking English preparatory education voluntarily, while 73.9% were taking it compulsorily.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

When collecting data from participants, the following forms and scales provided below were used via Google Forms, distributed online.

2.4. Demographic Information Form

This form consists of questions regarding the personal information of the participants (e.g., gender, age, nationality), as well as questions about their favorite characters in TV series and movies (e.g., whether they have a favorite character). The purpose of collecting these data is to observe whether the Parasocial Interaction Scale (PSIS) and Language Learning Motivation Scale (LLMS) data are influenced by the participants' characteristics and how these data vary based on those characteristics.

2.5. Parasocial Interaction Scale (PSIS)

Levy (1979) developed a 42-item psychometric scale to measure the strength of parasocial interaction, based on focus group interviews with viewers. This scale has been associated with the demographic characteristics of participants. Various versions of the parasocial interaction scale, developed by Rubin et al. (1985), have been used. In fact, using these scales, studies have been conducted on TV characters (Rubin & Perse, 1987), comedians (Auter, 1992: 179), TV and radio show hosts (Grant et al., 1991: 779), romance novels (Burnett & Beto, 2000), and favorite television characters of all kinds (Rubin & McHugh, 1987), (Turner, 1993: 445-446). The scale is reliable in these studies (Ayar-Şentürk, 2022: 14). The Turkish adaptation and validity-reliability studies of this scale were conducted by Arda (2006). This study used the Turkish-adapted version of the Parasocial Interaction Scale (PSIS). Additionally, when the

researchers retook validity and reliability tests, the PSIS total score was calculated as a reliable and valid scale (Cronbach's Alpha = .916 > .7).

2.6. Language Learning Motivation Scale (LLMS)

The Language Learning Motivation Scale (LLMS) has generally been accepted as demonstrating a good fit. Considering all findings, the scale, whose validity and reliability studies were conducted to measure university students' motivation to learn English, can be considered a helpful tool for determining students' level of motivation in learning English (Mehdiyev et al., 2017:35).

After retesting the validity and reliability, each subdimension of the LLMS was calculated as a reliable and valid scale (Self-efficacy subdimension Cronbach's Alpha = .861 > .7, Attitude subdimension Cronbach's Alpha = .832 > .7, and Personal Use subdimension Cronbach's Alpha = .815 > .7). However, as a result of the tests, it was revealed that LLMS is not a collectible scale. For this reason, only the sub-dimensions of this scale are presented in the findings section of the study, and the LLMS total dimension is not included.

2.7. Data Collection

The data used in this study were collected from participants voluntarily through online channels using Google Forms, which included the demographic form prepared by the researchers, PSIS, and LLMS. To be more comprehensive according to the students' level of education, the data was collected in two sessions, in the 2022-2023 spring and 2023-2024 fall semesters. The literature review was conducted between 2021 and 2025.

2.8. Data Analysis

IBM SPSS version 26 was used for data analysis. The mean values of the collected data were calculated to determine the parasocial interaction level and English language learning motivation level of university preparatory students in response to the research questions. Subsequently, t-tests and one-way ANOVA tests were applied to each demographic variable. Finally, in response to the main research question, correlational analysis and regression tests were conducted to measure the parasocial relationship between university preparatory students' parasocial interaction with foreign TV series and movie characters and their motivation to learn English.

3. Results

Table 1 addresses one of the research objectives: "What is the level of parasocial interaction among university preparatory class students?"

Table 1. Scores of Parasocial Interaction Levels for University Preparatory Class Students

<i>Subscales</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>
Friendship	10.79	4.339	.198
Empathy	15.98	4.779	.218
Interest	16.67	5.354	.244
Total PSIS	43.44	13.058	.595

According to Table 1, the PSI scores for university preparatory class students are as follows: 10.79 for the friendship sub-dimension, 15.98 for empathy, 16.67 for interest, and 43.44 for the total PSI score. Based on the scale's scoring criteria, these results quantitatively indicate that students' level of parasocial interaction is moderate across all sub-dimensions as well as overall.

Table 2. Mean Scores of English Language Learning Motivation Levels for University Preparatory Class Students

<i>Subscales</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>
Self Confidence	14.3	4.427	.202
Attitude	20.04	4.111	.187
Personal Use	28.52	5.319	.242

Table 2 answers the question, "What is the level of English language learning motivation among university preparatory class students?" The students' scores on LLMS are as follows: self-confidence sub-dimension at 14.3, attitude sub-dimension at 20.04, and personal use sub-dimension at 28.52, indicating high motivation level across all sub-dimensions.

Tables 3 to 10 address the question, "Do English language learning motivation and parasocial interaction levels among university preparatory class students differ significantly based on demographic characteristics?"

Table 3. t-Test Results for PSI Sub-Dimensions and Total Scores by Gender

<i>Subscales</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p value</i>
Friendship	Male	181	10.58	4.314	.321	-.817	.414
	Female	301	10.91	4.314	.251		
Empathy	Male	181	16.34	4.876	.362	1.261	.208
	Female	301	15.77	4.714	.272		
Interest	Male	181	16.8	5.697	.423	.395	.693
	Female	301	16.59	5.145	.297		
Total PSIS	Male	181	43.71	13.479	1.002	.355	.722
	Female	301	43.28	12.818	.739		

Table 3 presents the t-test results for the PSI sub-dimensions and total scores by gender. The scores for the PSI friendship sub-dimension are 10.58 for male students and 10.91 for female students, both reflecting a moderate level. The difference between genders is not statistically significant ($p=.414 > .05$). For the empathy sub-dimension, male students scored 16.34, while female students scored 15.77, with no significant gender difference observed ($p=.208 > .05$). The interest sub-dimension scores are 16.8 for males and 16.56 for females, showing no significant difference between genders ($p=.693 > .05$). The total PSI scores are 43.71 for males and 43.28 for females, with no significant gender difference detected ($p=.722 > .05$).

Table 4. t-Test Results for LLMS Sub-Dimensions by Gender							
<i>Subscales</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p value</i>
Self Confidence	Male	181	14.3	4.366	.325	-.018	.986
	Female	301	14.31	4.47	.258		
Attitude	Male	181	19.78	4.3	.32	-1.073	.284

	Female	301	20.2	3.992	.23		
Personal Use	Male	181	28.51	5.151	.383	-.04	.986
	Female	301	28.53	5.427	.313		

Table 4 summarizes the t-test results for the LLMS sub-dimensions by gender. The scores for the LLMS self-confidence sub-dimension are 14.3 for male students and 14.31 for female students, with no significant difference between genders ($p=.986 > .05$). For the attitude sub-dimension, males scored 19.78, and females scored 20.2, showing no significant attitude difference based on gender ($p=.284 > .05$). The personal use sub-dimension scores are 28.51 for males and 28.53 for females, with no significant difference observed ($p=.986 > .05$).

Table 5. t-Test Results for PSI Sub-Dimensions and Total Scores by Preparatory Class Enrollment Type

Subscales	Prep Choice	N	M	SD	SE	t	p value
Friendship	Voluntarily	126	11.45	4.086	.364	2.005	.046
	Mandatorily	356	10.55	4.407	.234		
Empathy	Voluntarily	126	17.03	4.458	.397	2.887	.004
	Mandatorily	356	15.61	4.839	.256		
Interest	Voluntarily	126	17.82	4.526	.403	3.115	.002
	Mandatorily	356	16.26	5.567	.295		
Total PSIS	Voluntarily	126	46.3	11.264	1.003	3.143	.002
	Mandatorily	356	42.43	13.507	.716		

Table 5 illustrates the t-test results for the PSI sub-dimensions and total scores based on preparatory class enrollment type. The scores for the PSI friendship sub-dimension are 11.45 for students who chose to attend preparatory classes voluntarily and 10.55 for those who attended

mandatorily. A significant difference in the friendship sub-dimension scores is observed based on preparation choice ($p=.046 < .05$).

Voluntarily preparatory class students scored 17.3, indicating a high level, whereas mandatorily preparatory class students scored 15.61, indicating a moderate level, for the empathy sub-dimension. That result indicates the significant difference in the empathy sub-dimension based on preparatory class enrollment type ($p=.004 < .05$).

Considering the interest sub-dimension, voluntarily preparatory class students scored 17.82, and mandatorily preparatory class students scored 16.26. A significant difference is noted for the interest sub-dimension based on preparatory class enrollment type ($p=.002 < .05$).

For the total PSI scores, students who are voluntarily preparatory class students scored 46.3, whereas mandatorily preparatory class students scored 42.43. A significant difference was found in the total PSI scores based on preparatory class enrollment type ($p=.002 < .05$).

Table 6. t-Test Results for LLMS Sub-Dimensions and Total Scores by Preparatory Class Enrollment Type

<i>Subscales</i>	<i>Prep Choice</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p value</i>
Self Confidence	Voluntarily	126	13.92	4.346	.387	-1.128	.26
	Mandatorily	356	14.44	4.453	.236		
Attitude	Voluntarily	126	20.29	3.874	.345	.794	.427
	Mandatorily	356	19.96	4.193	.222		
Personal Use	Voluntarily	126	29.08	4.306	.384	1.557	.121
	Mandatorily	356	28.32	5.627	.298		

Table 6 presents the t-test results for the LLMS sub-dimensions and total scores according to preparatory class enrollment type. The self-confidence sub-dimension scores are 13.92 for students attending preparatory classes voluntarily and 14.44 for those attending mandatorily. There is no statistically significant difference between these groups ($p=.26 > .05$). The attitude sub-dimension scores are 20.29 for voluntary preparatory class students and 19.96 for those mandatorily preparatory class students, with no significant difference observed ($p=.427 > .05$). The personal use sub-dimension scores are 29.08 for students attending voluntarily and 28.32 for those attending mandatorily, with no significant difference found ($p=.121 > .05$).

<i>Subscales</i>	<i>Favorite Character</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p value</i>
Friendship	Yes	423	11.3	4.2	.204	8.552	.000
	No	59	7.08	3.451	.449		
Empathy	Yes	423	16.55	4.563	.222	7.287	.000
	No	59	11.95	4.365	.568		
Interest	Yes	423	17.39	4.93	.24	8.462	.000
	No	59	11.51	5.475	.713		
Total PSIS	Yes	423	45.24	12.133	.59	8.705	.000
	No	59	30.54	12.254	1.595		

Table 7 shows the t-test results of the PSI sub-dimensions, and total scores based on the presence of a favorite character. For the PSI friendship sub-dimension, students with a favorite character scored an average of 11.3, while those without a favorite character scored 7.08. This difference is highly significant ($p=.000 < .01$). The empathy sub-dimension scores are 16.55 for students with a favorite character and 11.95 for those without, also showing a high significance level ($p=.000 < .01$). The interest sub-dimension scores are 17.39 for students with a favorite character and 11.51 for those without, with a significant difference ($p=.000 < .01$). The total PSI scores are 45.24 for students with a favorite character and 30.54 for those without, with a highly significant difference ($p=.000 < .01$).

<i>Subscales</i>	<i>Favorite Character</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p value</i>
Self Confidence	Yes	423	14.25	4.394	.214	-.726	.468
	No	59	14.69	4.673	.608		

Attitude	Yes	423	20.13	4.076	.198	1.271	.204
	No	59	19.41	4.332	.564		
Personal Use	Yes	423	28.87	4.992	.243	3.113	.003
	No	59	26.02	6.789	.884		

Table 8 examines the effects of having a favorite character on the LLMS subscales.

Students with a favorite character scored 14.25, while those without scored 14.69 for the self-confidence sub-dimension. This difference is not statistically significant ($p=.468 > .05$).

Students with a favorite character scored 20.13, and those without scored 19.41 for the attitude sub-dimension. This difference is not statistically significant ($p=.204 > .05$).

Students with a favorite character scored 28.87, while those without scored 26.02 for the personal use sub-dimension. This difference is statistically significant ($p=.003 < .05$).

Table 9. One-Way ANOVA Analysis of PSI and Subscales by Proficiency Level											
<i>Subscales</i>	<i>Course Level</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p value</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>	<i>Post-Hoc</i>		
Friendship	A1	107	11.58	4.808	.465	8.786	.000	.05	A1>B1		
	A2	93	12.18	3.753	.389					.079	A1>C1+
	B1	109	9.24	4.509	.432					.070	A2>B1
	B2	143	10.87	3.836	.321					.124	A2>C1+
	C1+	30	8.87	3.73	.681						
	Total	482	10.79	4.339	.198						
Empathy	A1	107	16.33	5.214	.504	5.363	.000	.054	A2>B1		
	A2	93	17.24	4.347	.451					.071	A2>C1+
	B1	109	14.67	5.009	.48						
	B2	143	16.31	4.278	.358						
	C1+	30	14.07	4.479	.818						
	Total	482	15.98	4.779	.218						
Interest	A1	107	16.98	5.29	.511	6.282	.000	.108	A2>B1		

	A2	93	18.43	4.267	.442			.343	A2>C1+
	B1	109	15.17	6	.575				
	B2	143	16.88	5.09	.426				
	C1+	30	14.5	5.538	1.011				
	Total	482	16.67	5.354	.244				
Total PSIS	A1	107	44.89	13.649	1.319	8.141	.000	.041	A1>B1
	A2	93	47.85	10.7	1.11			.086	A2>B1
	B1	109	39.08	14.336	1.373			.116	A2>C1+
	B2	143	44.07	11.761	0.983				
	C1+	30	37.43	12.675	2.314				
	Total	482	43.44	13.058	.595				

Table 9 shows significant differences in PSI sub-dimensions and total scores by course level. For the friendship subscale, students in A1 and A2 courses scored significantly higher than those in B1 and C1+ groups. The effect sizes were calculated as weak (Cohen's $d=.05, .079, .070, .124; <0.2$).

For the empathy subscale, students in the A2 course had significantly higher scores than those in B1 and C1+ groups. The effect sizes were weak (Cohen's $d=.054, .071; <0.2$).

For the interest subscale, students in the A2 course scored significantly higher than those in B1 and C1+ groups. The effect sizes were weak (Cohen's $d=.108, .343; <0.5$).

For the total PSI scores, students in the A1 course had higher scores than those in the B1 group, and students in the A2 course had higher scores than those in the B1 and C1+ groups. The effect sizes were weak (Cohen's $d=.041, .086, .116; <0.2$).

Table 10. One-Way ANOVA Analysis of LLMS Subscales by Proficiency Level

Subscales	Course Level	N	M	SD	SE	t	p value	
Self Confidence	A1	107	14.07	4.435	.429	.761	.551	
	A2	93	14.88	4.418	.458			
	B1	109	14.5	4.407	.422			
	B2	143	14.09	4.417	.369			
	C1+	30	13.67	4.619	.843			
	Total	482	14.3	4.427	.202			
Attitude								

	A1	107	20.18	3.933	.38	2.271	.061	
	A2	93	20.49	3.703	.384			
	B1	109	20.58	3.963	.38			
	B2	143	19.55	4.418	.369			
	C1+	30	18.57	4.576	.836			
	Total	482	20.04	4.111	.187			
	Personal Use	A1	107	29.05	5.016			
A2		93	29.16	4.55	.472			
B1		109	28.06	5.538	.53			
B2		143	28.48	5.471	.457			
C1+		30	26.53	6.611	1.207			
Total		482	28.52	5.319	.242			

Table 10 indicates that there are no significant differences in LLMS sub-dimension scores by course level ($p=.551, .061, .116 > .05$). Average scores for the self-confidence sub-dimension were 14.3 (moderate level), for the attitude subscale 20.04 (high level), and for the personal use subscale 28.52 (high level).

Table 11. Regression Analysis Results for Predicting English Learning Motivation from PSI Total Scores										
<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>(β)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Self Confidence	Constant	15.654	.699	-.092	22.400	.000	.092	.008	4.075	.044
	Total PSIS	-.031	.015		-2.019	.044				
Attitude	Constant	17.722	.642	.170	27.594	.000	.170	.029	14.241	.000
	Total PSIS	.053	.014		3.774	.000				

Personal Use	Constant	22.866	.799	.320	7.30	.000	.320	.102	54.600	.000
	Total PSIS	.130	.018		3.92	.000				

Table 11 addresses the research question, “Is there a significant relationship between English learning motivation of college preparatory school students and their Parasocial Interaction level?” According to the regression analysis, PSI total scores significantly predict the LLMS sub-dimensions as follows: self-confidence ($R^2 = .008$; $p < .05$), attitude ($R^2 = .029$; $p < .05$), and personal use ($R^2 = .102$; $p < .05$). PSI total scores explain 0.8% of the variance in the self-confidence subscale, 2.9% in the attitude subscale, and 10.2% in the personal use subscale.

The regression equations are as follows:

- Self-confidence = $15.654 + (-.031 * PSIS)$
- Attitude = $17.722 + (.053 * PSIS)$
- Personal Use = $22.866 + (.130 * PSIS)$

4. Discussion

This research aims to fill the gap in the related literature and contribute to it by examining whether there is a relationship between English learning motivation and the Parasocial Interaction level of preparatory class students. Also, the sub-dimensions of the relationship and the factors that affect that relationship were observed. Preparatory class students with various features from all over Türkiye participated in this research to achieve this purpose.

4.1. What is the Parasocial Interaction level of college preparatory class students?

The research findings indicate that parasocial interaction influences the motivation for English learning among preparatory class students. The subdimensions of friendship, empathy, and curiosity, together with the total amount of parasocial interaction among students, were found to be average. This conclusion aligns with the results of Balcı et al. (2020: 110) and (Yayla, 2019: 228-229). Nevertheless, an examination of the report by Balcı and Demir (2018: 399) reveals that the PSI level among university students is average. Nonetheless, it is inferior to the levels of basic and secondary school pupils, while superior to those of postgraduate students. The World Health Organization defines that between 10-19 is called puberty, and the Healthy People Report states that puberty continues until 25 (Healthy People Report, 2020, as referenced in Topan et al., 2021: 481). Adolescents are the majority of the group population with an average high PSI level. As the significance of family diminishes during adolescence (Cramer, 2001: 668) and reliance on peers escalates (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986: 848), Cohen (1999) asserts that adolescence is a developmental phase characterized by heightened experiences of Parasocial Interaction. Thus, adolescents tend to see media characters as friends, and their parasocial interaction level increases (Cohen, 1999, as cited in Aytulun & Sunal, 2020: 500). The contact

pupils cultivate with characters in foreign programs and films inspires them to emulate their talents and adopt their manner of speaking English, enhancing their motivation to study the language.

4.2. What is the college preparatory school students' English Learning Motivation level?

The findings of this study revealed that preparatory class students exhibit high levels of motivation, as evidenced by the subdimensions of the applied LLMS: self-confidence, attitude, and personal use. The analysis indicates that students enrolled in preparatory programs are highly motivated to learn English. These results are consistent with the findings of Aydın (2021) and Talayhan (2018), who similarly reported high levels of language learning motivation among preparatory class students. Furthermore, the case study conducted by Karcı-Aktaş and Gündoğdu (2020: 181) supports these conclusions. Overall, the existing literature suggests that English learning motivation among preparatory class students in Türkiye is generally high, and the findings of the present study further corroborate this body of research.

However, contrasting findings have been reported in studies conducted in different contexts. For example, Muriungi and Mbui (2015: 57) found that secondary school students in Kenya lacked sufficient motivation to learn English. Similarly, Lafaye and Tsuda (2002: 149), in their study with university students in Japan, observed that learners often held negative attitudes toward English learning, with more than two-thirds of the participants expressing a dislike for learning the language.

When the results of the present study are considered alongside previous literature, it becomes evident that the high motivation to learn English in Türkiye is predominantly driven by extrinsic factors. Karcı-Aktaş and Gündoğdu (2020: 186) noted that students are often motivated by aspirations related to future employment and career opportunities. Similarly, Bektaş-Çetinkaya and Oruç (2010: 4663), in their study involving both public and foundation university students, found that the primary source of motivation for both groups was securing well-paid employment. Özçalışan (2012: 54) also emphasized that the most influential factor behind the desire to learn English is the prospect of obtaining employment either domestically or abroad.

In conclusion, it can be stated that extrinsic motivation is more dominant among university students in Türkiye. A key factor contributing to this extrinsic motivation appears to be students' ambitions to secure employment on an international scale or to pursue opportunities abroad. Additionally, Yılmaz (2013: 131), in a study focusing on high school students, highlighted that factors such as the type of school attended and gender play a significant role in shaping students' motivation. A review of the relevant literature suggests that female students generally demonstrate higher motivation levels toward learning English. Consequently, Yılmaz (2013: 131) emphasized the need for educators and language instructors to take these variables into consideration when designing and implementing language education programs. However, it is also noted that the gap in motivation between genders may be narrowing due to the increasing role of technology in education. Male and female students both have equal access to the

technological tools. This can enable male students to keep pace with their female counterparts in terms of leveraging new learning opportunities.

4.3. Do English learning motivation of college preparatory class students and their Parasocial Interaction (PSI) level differ significantly concerning the students' demographic features?

4.3.a. The Differentiation of The Scores of Parasocial Interaction Scale (PSI) concerning Demographic Variables

4.3.a.1. PSI and Gender

The data analysis indicated that both male and female students had average levels of Parasocial Interaction (PSI) across its subdimensions and overall scores concerning the gender variable. The results revealed no statistically significant difference between gender and PSI levels. Comparable results have been documented in other research, which similarly indicated no substantial gender-based disparities in PSI, including studies by Balcı and Demir (2018: 399), Cole and Leets (1999: 505), Gleich (1997: 42), and Orhan and Taştan (2019: 15). Nevertheless, several studies indicate that female participants generally achieve higher levels of PSI than their male counterparts. Studies conducted by Assad and Yanen (2005: 196), Cohen (1997: 524-525, 2003: 197, 2004: 192), Eyal and Rubin (2003: 94), and Perse (1990: 29-30) are included. The inconsistencies in the literature may stem from differences in sample group characteristics, the timeframes of the research, or imbalances in the gender distribution of individuals within the data sets.

4.3.a.2. PSI and Proficiency Level

No research has yet been undertaken to investigate parasocial interaction (PSI) in connection to students' English proficiency levels. This study demonstrates that whereas PSI levels vary considerably within proficiency groups, the effect size of this variation is minimal. The PSI scale results demonstrate that pupils at the A2 competency level exhibit markedly higher PSI scores than those at other proficiency levels. A plausible explanation for this observation is that A2-level students may possess a heightened necessity to enhance their English proficiency, thereby fostering a more robust drive to engage with foreign television shows as an integral component of their language acquisition process. Conversely, students at the B1 and B2 levels may feel less inclined to view such content, having attained a modest level of skill.

Moreover, the PSI levels of C1+ pupils are lower than those of all other proficiency categories. This decline may be ascribed to the students at the C1+ level having adequate English competence to understand information without viewing it as an educational resource. As a result, their main incentive for viewing English-language series and films may transition from language learning to amusement, so diminishing the parasocial interaction benefit over time.

Moreover, these findings must be regarded with care owing to the disproportionate distribution of participants among proficiency levels. The study sample comprised 93 students at the A2 level, 143 students at the B2 level, and merely 30 students at the C1+ level. Due to these discrepancies, establishing a strong correlation between PSI and variations in English skill

levels is challenging. Therefore, it would be hasty to assert a robust correlation between variations in PSI and students' language proficiency based on the current findings.

4.3.a.3. PSI and Preparatory Class Enrollment Type

The results demonstrate a notable disparity between enrollment type and both the subdimensions and overall scores on the Parasocial Interaction (PSI) scale. Students who voluntarily participate in the English Preparatory Program demonstrate elevated levels of PSI compared to those who are required to attend the program. A potential explanation for this disparity is that students who willingly enroll in preparatory lessons may have a heightened inclination to connect with or gain deeper insights into the characters they see in the media. This increased engagement may arise from a deeper innate motivation to enhance their English skills through these exchanges. An examination of the current literature indicates that previous research on PSI has predominantly concentrated on wider and more diverse age cohorts. Theran et al. (2010: 271-272) investigated PSI in adolescent girls during puberty, whereas Wang et al. (2008: 96) concentrated on young adults aged 18-25. Conversely, Rubin et al. (1985) encompassed a more extensive sample with ages spanning from 18 to 62. Nonetheless, no prior research has been uncovered that directly quantifies the PSI levels of college students participating in English preparatory courses. This study aims to significantly enhance the current research by offering insights into the PSI levels of this particular group.

4.3.a.4. PSI and Favorite Character

A notable distinction was observed between the subdimensions and overall scores of the Parasocial Interaction (PSI) scale contingent upon participants' reports of having a favorite character. This finding is consistent with prior research, which has similarly shown the impact of favorite characters on parasocial interaction levels (Auter & Palmgreen, 2000; Aytulun & Sunay, 2020; Hoffner, 1996; Tian & Hoffner, 2010). The findings indicate that possessing a preferred character in a television program or film may increase an individual's degree of parasocial interaction. This can be attributed to factors including sympathy for the character, a perceived friendship, identification with the character, self-reflection in the character, aspirations to emulate the character, or a personal connection to the character.

The theoretical framework of parasocial interaction posits that the presence of a favored character strengthens the one-sided relationship established with the fictional entity, consequently enhancing the individual's level of PSI. This bond, though imagined and unreciprocated, operates psychologically akin to actual social relationships, enhancing the depth of parasocial experiences.

4.3.b. LLMS

4.3.b.1. LLMS and Gender

This research also examines the impact of gender on motivation for learning English. The results demonstrate that male and female students show comparable high levels of motivation to learn English, with no significant gender differences identified. The results align with Karakış

(2020: 249) and Lin et al.(2025: 64) who also found no significant gender-based differences in English learning motivation.

Contrasting results have been reported in other studies conducted in Türkiye. Özçalışan (2012: 69) and Sakiroğlu and Dikilitaş (2012: 3219) found that female students exhibited higher motivation levels than male students in studies involving college preparatory classes. In a similar study, Daif-Allah and Aljumah, (2020: 69) found that female university students in Saudi Arabia exhibited higher motivation levels for learning English. Similar to these results, Bayazit (2025: 93) found that female students reported higher agreement (strongly agree and agree) to both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation items than male students. Conversely, Öztürk (2014: 385) conducted a study with college preparatory school students and found that male students demonstrated higher levels of motivation compared to their female counterparts.

The discrepancy between the findings of these studies and the current research may be due to the different time periods in which the studies were conducted. Recent studies align with the current research findings, whereas earlier studies exhibit divergent outcomes. Ongoing social and technological developments may have contributed to reducing the motivational gap between genders in recent years, especially regarding foreign language learning.

4.3.b.2. LLMS and Proficiency Level

This research also examines students' English proficiency levels. The results indicated no significant differences among the subdimensions of the Language Learning Motivation Scale (LLMS) in relation to students' proficiency levels. This indicates that students exhibit motivation to learn English, irrespective of their proficiency level in the preparatory program. Some studies indicate that proficiency level may affect motivation in English language learning. Öztürk (2014: 385) found that A2-level students exhibited lower motivation than their A1 and B1 level peers in a study involving college preparatory class students. Sakiroğlu and Dikilitaş (2012: 3219) found that students with higher proficiency levels demonstrated increased motivation.

Conversely, Shaaban and Ghaith (2000: 640-641) conducted a study in Lebanon that revealed students with lower proficiency levels exhibited greater motivation to learn English. This outcome was attributed to economic factors and the intensive nature of preparatory programs, which may enhance motivation among lower-level students.

The variations observed in these studies can be attributed to differences in the teaching contexts and educational environments in which the research was carried out. The current study revealed that motivation levels were comparable across proficiency levels when examining the subdimensions of LLMS. This outcome suggests that the sources of language learning motivation are consistent across varying proficiency levels, despite differences in students' actual language abilities.

4.3.b.3. LLMS and Favorite Character

This study examined the impact of a favorite character on students' motivation for learning English and analyzed its influence on the subdimensions of LLMS, specifically self-confidence, attitude, and personal use. Research indicates that students' preferences for their favorite

characters do not influence their self-confidence or attitudes. It was found that the subdimension of personal use among individuals who favor their preferred character is greater than that of the other group. The motivation for personal use is attributed to individuals' desire to engage with English broadcasting and their capacity to stay informed about the agenda. Additionally, students' inclination to closely follow their favorite character serves as a significant motivator for personal use of English. A review of the literature reveals a lack of studies examining the relationship between an individual's favorite character and motivation for learning English.

4.4. Is there a significant relationship between the English learning motivation of college preparatory class students and their Parasocial Interaction level?

This study's findings indicate that the total score on the Parasocial Interaction (PSI) scale is a significant predictor of the subdimensions of self-confidence, attitude, and personal use in the Language Learning Motivation Scale (LLMS). The findings suggest that students in college preparatory classes who develop parasocial interactions with characters from series and films exhibit increased motivation to learn English. This relationship may be explained by the notion that students' attitudes are influenced by their desire for proximity to and resemblance with these characters.

Parasocial interaction is the audience's general identification with the character, putting himself in the character's shoes and his desire to be in his place. Characters can become a model for the audiences (Batıgün-Durak & Sunal-Büyükşahin, 2017: 53). Characters frequently act as exemplars for audiences, leading to the expectation that individuals will attempt to replicate the traits of characters with whom they form parasocial connections. Characters in English-language series and films typically exhibit fluency in English. Thus, it can be concluded that the aspiration to attain English-speaking skills, as exemplified by favored characters, enhances individuals' motivation to learn the language. Similarly, recent findings indicate that audiences may not only identify with characters but also internalize new information through the act of watching, as series viewing has been shown to reinforce both learning and coping motivations (Kılınc & Çalışkan, 2024: 477).

The strongest correlation identified was between the PSI subdimension of personal use and the LLMS subdimension of motivation. This can be attributed to the use of everyday, natural language by characters in these series and films, which encourages students to aspire to attain similar proficiency for practical, personal application. This desire likely enhances their motivation to learn English.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Analysis of the research findings reveals two key conclusions. Students in college preparatory classes demonstrate moderate levels of PSI and elevated levels of motivation for English learning. PSI levels are a significant predictor of motivation in English learning. Given these findings, it is advisable to conduct future qualitative research to gain a deeper understanding of students' PSI levels, to examine the impact of PSI on English learning motivation more comprehensively, and to identify the underlying factors influencing students' attitudes toward these two constructs.

This research highlights the importance of a concept that teachers can integrate into their classes directly. This concept is that authentic materials are described as not explicitly designed to teach a foreign language and give a chance to the students to comprehend the learned foreign language better and use it in real life (Oguz & Bahar, 2008: 330). Incorporating multimedia and diverse authentic materials more frequently may enhance students' PSI levels and, consequently, their motivation to learn English. Considering these factors, the parasocial interactions that students form with fictional characters should be acknowledged and utilized as a valuable resource in the English language teaching process.

Research and Publication Ethics

The Ethics Committee approval [Document number: E-20292139-050.01.04-54475] was obtained from İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University in May 2023. Participants were included in the study after accepting the informed consent form.

Authors' Contributions to the Article

The study was carried out with the contributions of all four authors. Conceptualization, formal analysis, investigation, writing-review&editing were performed by all of the authors; Rukiye A. Şahin, Hilal Ö. Doğan, Fatmanur Kocagil, and Kamil A. Kırkıç. Writers Rukiye A. Şahin, Hilal Ö. Doğan, and Fatmanur Kocagil contributed to the data curation, project administration, and writing-original draft. In addition, Rukiye A. Şahin and Kamil A. Kırkıç contributed to the methodology. Rukiye A. Şahin undertook visualisation. Funding acquisition and supervision was performed by Kamil A. Kırkıç.

Statement of Support

The project was supported by TÜBİTAK [Project Number 919B012216742; Grant Number 2209-A]. This research has been transformed from a project of TÜBİTAK 2209-A to an article.

Declaration of Competing Interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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