

## **Integrative Motivation as an Essential Determinant of Achievement: A Case of EFL High School Students**

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**Abstract:** Motivation is believed to be one very significant construct that imposes positive impact and enhances the learning in any second language learning context. Two types of motivation are known as the instrumental and integrative according to Gardner and Lambert's original work on attitudes and motivation. Any learner may have a motivation type based on his/her learning goals and the context they are studying in. In EFL contexts, it is assumed that the learners have more instrumental motivation and that their achievement may be affected by their motivation type. Therefore, this survey was planned to investigate the performances of 95 Iranian EFL students at the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of high school to firstly determine which motivation type dominates among them and also to find out the motivation type of high achievers and finally to determine whether there is significant difference on the achievement of these two groups over their English Final-year Achievement Test. The sample of this study was selected using cluster sampling method and took a standard motivation test to determine their motivation types. Then they took English Final-year Achievement Test. The analysis of the results revealed that the dominant motivation type among high school students was the instrumental orientation (58.9%), high achievers in this study were mostly motivated integratively (92.9%) and finally students with integrative motivation significantly outperformed those who were motivated instrumentally.

**Key words:** Integrative Motivation • Instrumental Motivation • Achievement • EFL Learners

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Motivation is a remarkable affective variable described by Brown [1] as "a star player in the cast of characters assigned to second language learning scenarios around the world". Based on Spolsky, the more motivation a learner has, the more time he or she will spend learning an aspect of a second language [2]. Countless studies and experiments have demonstrated that motivation is a key in second language learning [3]. Motivation currently refers to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language [4]. Moreover, the students' motivations influence the degree of their desires to contribute in the learning process [5]. Motivation, among other L2 influencing factors, is considered as an innermost reason for different achievements [6]. Moreover, motivation is defined differently by theorists demonstrating the complexity of describing it in clear and simple terms. As it is stated by Peipei and Guirong [6],

motivation is assumed as an inner state of need or desire stimulating any individual to do something. Furthermore, motivation equals the forces that account for the arousal, selection, direction and continuation of a certain behaviour [6]. Similarly, motivation is constructed as a state of cognitive and emotional arousal which makes the individuals to act based on a conscious decision. It also maintains a period of continual intellectual and physical endeavour through which a previously set goal would be achieved [7]. All these demonstrate that motivation is one very complex variable being used to explicate individual differences in language learning [5].

There are two kinds of motivations known as the instrumental and integrative motivations [8]. The instrumental side of the dichotomy refers to acquiring a language as a means of attaining instrumental goals [8, 1]. It refers to wish by a learner to benefit practically from language learning [4] i.e. to gain some advantages by learning a second language. A learner with instrumental motivation regards language as an instrument to get a

reward [8]. On the other hand, the integrative side describes the learners who wish to integrate themselves into the culture of the second language group and become involved in social interchange in that particular group [8,1]. Integrative motivation reflects an interest in learning another language because of a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other language group [4,9]. Integrative motivation in L2 learners bring a desire to learn the language in order to communicate with the members of the second language community. It is characterized by those who learn the second language as to identify themselves with the language speaking group and ultimately join it [8].

Brown [1] highlights that each person is motivated differently and acts uniquely in their environment; however, these unique acts are carried out within a cultural and social milieu and cannot be completely separated from that context [1]. Moreover, it is believed that individuals with different motivation types will have different achievements over their L2 learning. A study in China revealed that instrumental motivation affects both high achievers and low achiever; while high achievers have greater integrative motivation than the lower ones [6]. Another significant issue is that learners have two contexts including either academic/career related or socially oriented context. The first one is instrumental while the latter is integrative each of which might fulfil different needs in learning a second/foreign language and that within either orientation, one can have high or low motivational intensity" [1]. In a country like Iran, teaching and learning of English seems to be a complicated task for both EFL learners and teachers because of the lack of resources and little contact with the target language [10]. One of the most serious problems Iranian EFL students encounter is their inability to communicate and handle English after graduating from high school/university [10,11]. This is because of their weaknesses in general English that also affects their academic success [11]. Such an EFL context accordingly imposes fewer positive effects on the L2 learning process. In Iran, students graduate from high schools without being able to use the English language communicatively. These individuals have different achievements and abilities in English and it seems necessary to determine the dominant motivation types in such a context to better understand the learning process [3]. In Iran, the amount of the exposure to the English language is inadequate simply because the natural social context is missing and the motivation to learn the language fades and the learning opportunities which are also stimulated or affected by this social context

cannot assist the language learning process precisely [3]. Therefore, examining the motivation pattern in EFL contexts where the exposure is limited seems crucial as this study tried to do so by determining whether Iranian EFL students tend to have a stronger integrative motivation or instrumental one and whether their achievement is different depending on their motivation types.

**Review of Literature:** Motivation is one of the foremost determinants of foreign language learning achievement which has attracted the attention of many investigators. Countless studies and experiments have demonstrated that in general motivation is a major contributor to learning but it is particularly a chief contributor in second language learning [3,12]. As it can be pinpointed, motivation has an undeniable role in learning and mastering L2. Many studies in Iran have revealed that people with different types of motivation differ in learning style and strategy use [12-14], in second language learning [11,15], in communicative ability [16] and on the selection of learning approaches and academic achievements [17]. Motivation was also reported to be as the predictor of second language learning outcomes and affective writing strategies [18]. Working merely on the motivation pattern gave rise to studies such as [19-21] among Iranian EFL students to investigate their motivation. In 2000, a study [22] examined the effect of the two types of motivation (integrative and instrumental) on the English proficiency of the EFL senior students in Kerman city showing a significant difference between the means of the English proficiency scores of the integratively motivated students and the instrumentally motivated ones and there were significant correlations between the integrative and instrumental motivation with the students' English proficiency scores. In a survey, 500 Iranian university learners were chosen for examining their motivation towards learning EFL. This study demonstrated that although some learners learn English in Iran for 'instrumental' reasons, the 'integrative motivation' was the dominant motivational orientation for this group of the Iranian learners to learn English as a foreign language [23]. In a different way, Ebrahimi [24] found no significant differences between two groups of bilingual and monolingual EFL learners in Iran regarding their motivation in English as well as proficiency. This was an investigation of EFL female learner's cognitive and affective factors including the use of language learning strategies, attitudes and motivation with special reference to their linguistic background among third grader high

school students. Interestingly, in a large study by Hooman and Asgari [25], it was revealed that the motivation for achievement for all grades of high school education were higher among female students. Also those who majored in mathematics and physics, experimental and general science exhibited higher achievement scores as compared to subjects majoring in humanities and technical-vocational tract. Furthermore, Baleghizadeh [26] surveyed some influencing factors on L2 concluding that attitude, motivation and learning strategies are likely to change. Therefore, teachers were proposed to help poor learners by changing their attitude, giving them motivation and teaching them the right strategies.

At this point, it needs to be asserted that the majority of these studies were conducted in academic settings, colleges and universities [11] and that the results and findings of such studies conducted in Iran revealed a lot of inconsistencies and sometimes contradictions. This necessitates more research especially in a different context such as high schools because the educational system and the courses are thoroughly different. It is known that in colleges and universities the English is for academic purpose (EAP) while at schools English is taught for general purposes and thus does not proceed to higher levels of proficiency. While both types of motivation seem to be necessary for the acquisition of second language [2], the integrative motivation is commonly more effective as compared to the instrumental motivation in the study of second language [27,28]. Integrative motivation in Gardner and Lambert's study was more significant in structured learning environments [27]. Generally, integrative motivation has major impact on language learning in the school setting, too [29].

However, there are many studies that advocate instrumental motivation in learning of a second language. Based on Brown's notion [30], people working with second language acquisition are instrumentally motivated i.e. in a context like Iran where students have no chance (or little chance) to use target language and no opportunity to interact with people of the target community, instrumental motivation is promoted. Results of an Iranian study revealed that instrumental motivation was a strong predictor of second language learning outcomes in addition to integrative motivation which depend on different factors among them the learning context, target community support and the learner's attitude towards the target community [18].

Although it is discussed by researchers [31] that high achievement causes positive attitudes and high motivation, Gardner's model [4] explicitly suggests

reciprocity between these variables. Gardner and Lambert [8] suggest that motivation is the independent variable and achievement is the dependent one in the L2 acquisition. Motivation is believed to be interdependent with achievement. Students' motivation promotes their achievement; on the other hand, achievement can lead to higher motivation [6]. As Burstall argues, the successful experience in the process of language learning affects motivation at a later stage [6]. Moreover, achievement might actually be the cause instead of the effect of integrative motivation. Brown [30] also claims that the students can work simultaneously with both forms of motivation [30]. But at the same time instrumental and integrative motivations are not necessarily reciprocally undivided i.e. students use a combination of the two forms of motivation. Although integrative motivation is believed to bring interest in the target speech community, Karimnia and SalehiZade [16] confirmed that in Iran there are not many English majors who desire to be part of an English speaking community and that the majority of English majors choose such majors because of finding a job more easily compared to other majors [16] and not necessarily integrating with the target language communities.

Whatever the motivation type might be, it affects learning because those who are motivated more will allocate more time on learning an aspect of the second language [2]. As a result, more materials will be learned if more time is spent learning any aspect of a second language [2]. To sum up, language achievement chiefly depends on the amount and kind of exposure to the target language. It is the fact that the outcome of language learning largely depends on the amount and kind of exposure to the target language. This per se is rooted from the motivation type a learner has [3]. Nonetheless, it is not crystal clear, as there are inconsistencies, what type of motivation affects the achievement significantly. To bring more understanding to the motivation research area and to examine high school setting which has been neglected in many previous studies of Iran, this study was established to determine the dominant motivation type among Iranian EFL high school students at the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (Last Grade) and to find out whether their achievement differs significantly if they have either of the motivation type.

**ELT in Iran:** Learning normally occurs through social interaction with others within specific contexts and communities. Social factors influence the achievement and students in a classroom learn in a social situation affected

by social influences from outside the classroom. Social context is critical in development of attitudes towards the target language, its speakers and the language learning situation. This results in development of the learners' motivation accordingly [3]. It is in the social context that the learner's language is occurring. Lantolf and Johnson [33] assert that the argument is not that social activity influences cognition, but that social activity is the process through which human cognition is formed (p. 878). To sum up, a learner's L2 learning can be positively impacted all through the contact and exposure to the social context [2]. Regarding the context of this research, Islamic Republic of Iran is an EFL context where the exposure to English language is limited [34]. Nonetheless, English is principally the first foreign language being widely used for the foreign trade, international conferences, air traffic, international airports and sea navigation. Teaching English as a foreign language in educational system of Iran begins formally from junior high schools when the students are 12 years old. This trend continues until the end year of high school which totally takes a period of 6 years. In addition, students might also go to pre-university level in which they also take an English course for a year (7 years). No English teaching occurs in national elementary schools of Iran. In Iran's current educational context, English is predominantly considered to be the first foreign language [35]. Teachers in this context use a combination of grammar-translation method and audiolingual method in most schools [34]. The curriculum in high schools is a top-down curriculum; the Ministry of Education dictates all the decisions regarding the textbook selection and the exams. However, not much control is exerted on teaching methodology. The culture of teaching is basically a teacher-centered one in Iran [34]. Similar to EFL learners in other countries, Iranian EFL students do not have much exposure to English outside the classroom. Very few English programs are broadcasted on TV or radio. According to Jahangard [36], students' aural and oral skills are not emphasized in Iranian prescribed EFL textbooks and such skills are not tested in the final exams of English courses at junior and high schools. Teachers put much less emphasis on oral drills, pronunciation, listening and speaking abilities than on reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary. The main focus is to make students pass tests and exams and because productive abilities of students are not tested, most teachers then skip the oral drills in the prescribed book [37]. Teachers are more implementers of prescribed initiatives and schemes without recourse to their own professional knowledge and experience [38].

To sum up, Iranian EFL context inside and outside classrooms does not impose much force on students to learn English practically and communicatively and this might imply that the identifying the motivation pattern among the students of this context can effectively help curriculum designers and teachers to devise methods and take actions which can positively foster and enhance ELT in Iran. This study was aimed to examine the dominant motivation type among high school students and high achievers and to see if there is significant difference in the achievement of students who have either integrative or instrumental motivation.

#### Research Objectives:

- To determine the dominant motivation type among EFL students.
- To determine the motivation type of high achievers at high schools.
- To determine whether there is significant difference in achievements of EFL students having integrative or instrumental motivation.

#### Research Questions:

- What is the dominant motivation type among EFL students?
- What is the motivation type of high achievers at high schools?
- Is there any significant difference in achievements of EFL students having integrative or instrumental motivation?

#### Methodology

**Subjects:** The participants of this study were 95 male students who were all at the third (Last) grade of high school from four classes in one of the districts of Mashhad, Iran. These participants were divided into two groups including low achievers and high achievers according to their Final Year Achievement Scores of the English Subject. They ranged in age between 17 and 18 with the same educational backgrounds.

**Instruments:** For the purpose of this study the validated Motivation test of Vaezi's [11] was employed. As she reports, the *Integrative And Instrumental Motivation Scale* of the original 7-point Likert Scale format of *Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery* (AMTB) [4] and Clement *et al.* [39] had been adapted to a 5-point

scale ranging from ‘Strongly Disagree’ to ‘Strongly Agree’ and they were coded as (Strongly Disagree=1. Disagree=2. Neutral=3. Agree=4. Strongly Agree=5). The reliability and validity of the Gardner's questionnaire is reported to be supported [40,11].

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In order to test the research questions of this study, the obtained data were transferred to SPSS Version 16.0 for the data analysis procedure. The descriptive data and results of this survey include:

**Research Question 1: What Is the Dominant Motivation Type among Efl Students?:** Based on the results shown in Table 1, the dominant motivation type among high school EFL learners is the instrumental orientation as almost two third of the participants of this study reported to be motivated instrumentally (58.9%). Nonetheless, a considerable percentage of the students participated in this survey had the integrative motivation (41.1 %). Regarding the dominant motivation type which was the instrumental motivation, this finding accords with the notion declared by Brown [30] saying that people working with second language acquisition are instrumentally motivated i.e. in EFL contexts (like Iran) where students have no chance (or little chance) to use target language and no opportunity to interact with people of the target community, *instrumental motivation* is promoted. This finding also confirms the finding of Vaezi’s study [11] stating that instrumental motivation was dominant. Similarly, Abdollahzadeh reported that the instrumental motivation was a strong predictor of second language learning outcomes [18]. In line with this, Karimnia and SalehiZade [16] emphasized that in Iran not many English grandaunts have reasons for integrating with the community of the target language which means they mostly choose to pursue English studies for instrumental reasons. Moreover, results of the study conducted by Sayadian and Lashkarian [23] showed that the learners in Iran learn English for ‘instrumental’ reasons although the dominant motivational orientation was the ‘integrative motivation’ for the Iranian learners to learn English as EFL in their study [23]. This contradiction, as predicted before, is probably because of conducting the research in a different context from the context of this survey as the former was in an academic setting while this research was conducted among the high schoolers.

Table 1: Motivation Dominance

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Instrumental Motivation	56	58.9 %
Integrative Motivation	39	41.1 %
Total	95	100.0%

Table 2: Profile of High/Low Achievers

Achievement Rank	Frequency	Percentage
Low Achievers	67	70.52%
High Achievers	28	29.48%
Total	95	100.0%

The other fact is that both types of motivation exist among Iranian EFL learners in high schools i.e although instrumental motivation is dominant, some students reported to have integrative motivation. This finding had been consistently reported by many other conducted studies in Iran such as [11,12,15-18,23,35] and a lot more.

**Research Question 2: What Is the Motivation Type of Efl High Achievers at High Schools?:** High achievers in this study had attained a score over 15 (out of 20) on their Final Year Achievement Exam of the English Subject. Low achievers’ scores were regarded to be between 10 (which is a passing score) and 14.99. Table 2 displays the profile of high achievers and low achievers participated in this study.

Based on the data demonstrated in table 2, majority of high school students in Iran achieve on a low rate over the English Final Year Achievement Exam (70.52%). This implies that there is a considerable weakness among EFL learners of Iran. As it was highlighted earlier, Iranian high schools students are weak regarding the English language as teaching and learning of English seems to be a complicated task for both EFL learners and teachers because of lack of resources and little contact with the target language [10]. Moreover, it is believed that the Iranian learners’ inability to communicate and handle English after graduating from high school is a serious issue [10,11]. The reason for this low profile of the students, in addition to the abovementioned, is probably the EFL context where they educate as this context imposes fewer positive effects on the L2 learning process. We need to add other factors like the educational system, political reason and the media [3].

High achievers, those who attained more than three quarter of the score over their Final Year Achievement Exam of the English, constituted only a third of the whole sample. The point of discrepancy is whether

the motivation affects the achievement, or whether the success over the achievement test influences the students' high motivation to try more (Burstall, *et al.* 1974). Brown [30] claims that the students can use a combination of the two forms of motivation simultaneously. To identify the dominant motivation type among high achievers at high schools, descriptive data were obtained (displayed in table 3) which revealed that a large percentage of high achievers were motivated integratively (92.9%). This fact is consistent with the findings from Peipei and Guirong [6] who also reported that high achievers have greater integrative motivation than lower ones. Similarly, this finding confirms the findings of some other studies in Iran [22,25] and in other EFL countries [29,6]. Based on the findings of this research, integrative motivation plays a significant role for higher achievement of the students in high schools of Iran. As it was also mentioned previously, the integrative motivation is more effective as compared to the instrumental motivation in the study of second language [27,28] and it has main impact on language learning in school settings, too [29].

Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that based on table 3, few high achievers in this study had instrumental motivation (7.1%). Although this type is very limited among these EFL high achiever (less than a tenth), based on some notions [1,2,30] people with instrumental motivation can also perform well as they might expose themselves more to English learning and they might put more efforts to be successful. As it is asserted by Spolsky [2], both motivation types influence the second language learning because those who are motivated (in either way) will allocate more time on learning an aspect of the language, consequently, the more will be learned [2]. Although this may be true to some extent, integrative motivation in this study proved to be a significant determinant of the achievement among Iranian high school students.

**Research Question 3: Is There Any Significant Difference in Achievements of Efl Students Having Integrative or Instrumental Motivation?:** One of the most important issues to be addressed in this survey was determining the difference, if any, between two groups of EFL students with different motivation types over their scores of the *Final Year English Exam*. For this purpose, a t-test needed to be conducted to find out whether difference exists between the two independent groups. First, descriptive data were obtained for both groups regarding their final exam scores.

Table 3: Motivation Type of High Achievers

Achievement Rank	Frequency	Percentage
Instrumental Motivation	2	7.1%
Integrative Motivation	26	92.9%
Total	28	100.0%

Table 4: Achievement Test results of Both Groups

Motivation Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Instrumental Motivation	56	12.93	1.02
Integrative Motivation	39	15.47	1.36
Total	95		

Table 5: T-Values for the Difference between the Scores of the Two Groups

	d.f.	t-value	Sig
Achievement Scores	93	-10.32	.00

Table 4 shows the profile of the students in both groups. As it can be observed, the mean score of the achievement test for the group with the instrumental motivation was 12.93 (out of 20) and the standard deviation was 1.02. On the other hand, the mean score and the standard deviation of the other group with integrative motivation were 15.47 (out of 20) and 1.36, respectively (Table 4).

It seems that the group with integrative motivation outperformed the one with instrumental motivation; however, the mean scores of the two independent groups need to differ statistically to prove the difference. Hence, a t-test was performed to determine whether difference exists between the achievement of the students who had integrative motivation and the ones who had instrumental motivation (Table 5). Because the first assumption of a t-test is distribution normality of the data, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was conducted which revealed that the data were distributed normally. Based on the findings of the t-test shown in table 5, there is statistically significant difference on the scores obtained on the achievement test of EFL students with integrative and instrumental motivation since the probability of error is  $<.05$  (t-value = -10.32,  $p = 0.00$ ).

Because the mean score of the group with the integrative motivation (15.47) was bigger than the mean score of the group with the instrumental motivation (12.93), it can be concluded that the students who were integratively motivated achieved far way better than the other group; a fact which was also proved statistically by the t-test results. This finding consistently supports the Gardner *et al.*'s assertion [9,4] saying that the motivation has a direct effect on second language achievement.

Such difference between the learners with integrative and instrumental motivation was also reported in respect to the English proficiency of the EFL senior college students in Iran [22]. One more time, it is accentuated that although instrumental and integrative motivation types are both useful for learning a second language, the latter seems to influence the achievement of L2 more significantly.

### CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results and discussions, the followings can be concluded in this study:

- Iranian students in high schools have both types of motivation namely integrative and instrumental.
- The dominant motivation, nevertheless, is the instrumental motivation (58.9 %) among the Iranian EFL students in high schools. This is consistent with many studies conducted in EFL contexts.
- High achievers in Iranian high schools have both integrative and instrumental motivation. However, the integrative motivation is proved to be prevailing considerably (92.9%).
- EFL students with integrative motivation differ significantly from those who are instrumentally motivated with regard to their scores of the final year English achievement test i.e. learners who are motivated integratively outperform the other group significantly.

**Implications:** The following implications are established considering the results of the study:

- Motivation plays a very important role in learning English as a foreign language successfully. As teachers in EFL contexts, we need to enhance language learning by motivating students to get high marks. If a student is more motivated, he will put in more effort resulting in better achievement. As Spolsky [2] puts it, the learners will spend more time and expose themselves more to second language learning. Consequently, the more will be learned if more time is spent learning any aspect of L2 [2]. This is in fact a micro implication in the form of in-class teaching.
- Teachers in EFL contexts need to notice that the learners learn differently and that their learning is

directed by different factors among which motivation of different types. Hence, it is important to know that initiating motivation is one thing and maintaining it is another fundamental task. Furthermore, motivation can change over time and vary by age. For these reasons, EFL teachers have to experiment and come with new ideas so that they can engage the whole class actively and efficiently.

- In Iran, Learners have more instrumental motivation i.e. they learn the language primarily for a purpose like getting or a promoting job/career, reading technical texts, or fulfilling an academic requirement. As a macro implication (in the form of curriculum adaptation and development, instructional design and language policy), developing curricula to prepare and direct students for/towards these purposes and planning courses in high schools based on the students' goals and needs can be done which will be more practical and accordingly enhance the learners' motivation and achievement as well.
- Based on the findings of this study, high achievement is in relation with the integrative motivation. Although the minority (41.1 %), EFL learners still tend to be accepted by another community i.e. to integrate themselves within a culture to become a part of that society. Even such reasons might motivate them to achieve more and perform better compared to the learners with the instrumental motivation.
- Based on some assertions, two motivation orientations are not mutually exclusive. Some learners learn better if they have integrative motivation whilst others are successful if they are instrumentally motivated and some learn better if they use both orientations. Whatever the case might be, improving and enhancing the motivation as well as sustaining it among EFL learners seem to be of premier value as better language learning occurs.
- Finally, it needs to be reminded that the low achievers in this study were the majority meaning that in an EFL context like Iran, the learners in high schools are not motivated highly and that their proficiency and achievement is weak. This is probably because of educational system, the context, or other reasons. Nonetheless, the authorities need to take quick and appropriate actions to enhance second language learning among EFL learners as it is a prerequisite and a demand of life in 21<sup>st</sup> century even in EFL contexts.

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