

Language Learning Motivation among Iranian Undergraduate Students

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to describe and examine Iranian's undergraduate students' integrative and instrumental motivation toward learning English as a foreign language. In the study, 79 non-English major students from the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) were selected to complete a questionnaire reflecting their motivation for learning English. In order to determine the students' tendency towards the two kind of motivation a modified 25-item survey was administered to undergraduate students in a university located in east of Iran. The results have shown that Iranian students had very high motivation and positive attitudes towards learning English and they were more instrumentally motivated. Finally, based on the findings some suggestions and recommendations for teachers have been highlighted.

Key words: Attitude % Integrative Motivation % Instrumental Motivation % Iranian students

INTRUCTION

For the past three decades, motivation has been a central area for empirical research and theoretical work within the context of learning a language other than one's mother tongue, in other words in the context of second language learning (L2). Motivation represents one of the most appealing, complex variables used to explain individual differences in language learning [1].

Upon review of the literature available in the area of students' motivation for learning foreign languages, many studies attempted to explore the learners' integrative and instrumental motivation and most of them took Gardner's (1985) theory of motivation [2] and its role in L2 learners' attained level of proficiency as a basis for research in the 60s, 70s and 80s. According to this theory, there are two types of motivation: integrative and instrumental. An integratively motivated L2 learner shows interest in learning about the culture and the people of the target language, whereas an instrumentally motivated learner has more pragmatic considerations in his/her mind regarding L2 learning, such as obtaining a job or earning more money. "The integratively motivated student," wrote Masgoret and Gardner [3] "is one who is motivated to learn the second language, has openness to identification with the other language community and has favorable attitude toward the language situation."

Teaching of English has long been a difficult task for both EFL students and teachers in Iran due to reasons

such as lack of resources and little contact with the target language [4]. The present study intends to highlight the extent of Iranian undergraduate students' motivation in learning English as a foreign language and the differences in instrumental and integrative motivation.

In Iran, a few similar studies have been conducted with different groups of students that most of them were college students. [5-7] have done some researches among Iranian students to investigate their motivation. Sadighi & Maghsudi in [8] investigated the effect of the two types of motivation (integrative and instrumental) on the English proficiency of the EFL senior students and the results of their study showed a significant difference between the means of the English proficiency scores of the integratively motivated students and the instrumentally motivated ones.

Integrative Versus Instrumental Motivation: Despite the fact that both kinds of motivation are essential elements of success in learning L2, much debate and controversy among researchers and educators have been taking place about which, kind of motivation is more important L2 learners. For a long time, integrative motivation was regarded as superior to instrumental motivation for predicting the success of second language learning [9]. Because if students respect the target culture, they may read literature or practice the language and thereby be able to improve their language skills [10]. From another perspective, instrumental motivation is meaningful for the

learner who has had limited access to the L2 culture, or foreign language settings [11]. For example, Dornyei's study [12] of the Canadian bilingual situation revealed that students tried to develop their language ability for the sake of their future careers. In some of the early research conducted by Gardner and Lambert [13], integrative motivation was viewed more importance in a formal learning environment than instrumental motivation. Dornyei in [14] opposed Gardner by claiming that instrumental motivation and the learner's need for achievement are more important than the integrative motivation.

English Language Teaching (ELT) in Iran: Considering the growth of international relations of Iran with other nations and the extended interest towards today's growing technology and science throughout the world, learning English language as an international language has found a greater importance compared to previous years. Increase in the numbers of language institutes and their students, also increasing interest of parents for their children to learn English can be a good evidence for the recent value of English language in Iran. In this country English is taught at guidance schools, high schools and universities. Due to limitations in state schools, private language institutes have simply attracted an increasing number of interested learners including young children and adults. Many parents send their children from the age of six to learn English in these teaching centers. In universities Non-English Majors study English in a maximum of 6 credits: 3 credits of general English instruction and 3 credits of ESP in which they focus on their field related English texts and learn the related terminology. In Iran English is the dominant language of the foreign trade, international conferences, air traffic in international airports and sea navigation. International book fairs and the trade exhibitions held annually in the country demonstrate the country's readiness and its dependable capacity to maintain its world relationship in English. Iran's cooperation with the UN, Islamic Conference Organization, OPEC and other regional and world organizations makes English quite practical for the involved nationals. According to [15] and [4] one of the most serious problems that Iranian EFL students face in their field of study is their inability to communicate and handle English after graduating from university. This is due to their weaknesses in general English, which influence their academic success. Having passed some courses and having graduated, Iranian EFL students in general seem not to be as proficient and qualified in language use and components as might be expected [16].

Research Questions: The aims of this study will be investigated through the following research questions:

1. To what extent the university students of Iran are instrumentally or integratively oriented towards English language learning?
2. Have students' motivation for learning English changed after entering university or not?

Participants: In this study 79 first and second year non-English majors (41 females & 38 males) were selected from the total populations of one university located in the east of Iran. 68.4% were from the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering and 31.6% were the Humanities and Social Sciences majors. The fact that all subjects pursue knowledge in different departments at university provided a variety of opinions about their L2 learning. All of the participants with the mean age of 19 had been learning English for approximately 7-8 years before starting their university education.

Data Collection Procedures: The Integrative and Instrumental motivation scale of the original 7-point Likert Scale format of Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) [2] and Clement et al.'s [17] were 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 Gardner's questionnaire have been supported [18]. The purpose and different terms of the questionnaire were explained before the distribution by their teachers. During the completion process of the questionnaire, the teachers helped the respondents to understand all parts. Students were informed that the information they gave would be kept confidential and be used for research purposes only. Followings are the variables that were investigated:

Integrativeness (INT): On this scale, there are 12 items (items 1-12, see Appendix) that would show their Integrativeness towards the target language.

Instrumentality (INS): This scale includes 13 items (items 13-25, Appendix) and the respondents are asked to measure their utilitarian reason for learning English.

An Open-Ended Question: As a measure to language self efficacy or students' perception of themselves as learners, an item for respondents to rate their own English proficiency level was also included in the survey questionnaire on a scale rating from very bad to very

good to indicate how proficient they are at English. Also an open-ended question was constructed to elicit qualitative information to check whether there is any change in their motivation after entering the university and why?

Data Analysis Procedures: The data was fed into the computer and then was analyzed by using SPSS. Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency & standard deviation) were carried out for all items involved in this study. The paired samples T-test was used to find out the difference between integrative and instrumental motivation of students.

RESULTS

Integrativeness: Comparison between the mean scores of the questions in integrative part illustrated that students were strongly motivated in questions 1, 2 and 5. The other questions (3, 4, 6, 8, 9 and 10) showed the students' moderate motivation among these 12 questions (Table1).

In comparison to other questions, Q7 (the more I get to know native English speakers, the more I like them) and Q11 (the British are kind and friendly) with mean score of above 2.5 showed low level of motivation and Q12 (the Americans are kind and cheerful, M= 2.67) had the lowest mean in integrative part. With an overall mean score of 3.47, respondents have quite high integrative motivation and in general agree that studying English can allow them to interact with other English speakers and to meet various cultures and people. However, they are neutral in viewing British and Americans as kind and friendly people. It might due to their lack of contact with native speakers and political issues happening in the world, as well. Many of them never had a chance to know the native English speaker or even to have a clear idea about their culture. Their knowledge about the target language community is very much limited to books, novels or English movies. Therefore, an integrative orientation may be harder to foster as an important driving force for learning English.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Integrative Motivation (n=79)

Items: I study English	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
Q1: to be more at ease with other people who speak English	1	0	2	37	39	4.43	0.673
Q2: to meet and converse with more and varied people	0	3	21	30	25	3.97	0.862
Q3: to better understand and appreciate English art and literature	5	8	26	29	11	3.42	1.057
Q4: to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups	3	4	33	23	16	3.57	0.996
Q5: to know the life of the English-speaking nations	1	4	17	34	23	3.94	0.911
Q6: to understand English pop music	10	11	22	20	16	3.27	1.288
Q7: The more I get to know native English speakers, the more I like them	8	20	32	10	9	2.90	1.116
Q8: to know various cultures and peoples	5	4	14	38	18	3.76	1.065
Q9: to keep in touch with foreign friends and acquaintances.	6	5	21	31	16	3.58	1.116
Q10: to know more about native English speakers	5	6	26	28	14	3.51	1.073
Q11: The British are kind and friendly	12	17	40	4	6	2.68	1.044
Q12: The Americans are kind and cheerful	9	22	40	2	6	2.67	0.983
Overall mean score						3.47	

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Instrumental Motivation (n=79)

I study English because....	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
Q13: I'll need it for my future career.	1	3	4	14	57	4.56	0.859
Q14: it will make me a more knowledgeable person.	2	3	13	23	38	4.16	1.006
Q15: it will someday be useful in getting a good job.	0	2	13	23	41	4.30	0.837
Q16: other people will respect me more if I know English.	11	17	20	17	14	3.08	1.308
Q17: I will be able to search for information and materials in English on the Internet.	1	2	3	25	48	4.48	0.798
Q18: I will learn more about what's happening in the world.	3	1	8	35	32	4.16	0.940
Q19: language learning often gives me a feeling of success.	3	3	21	32	20	3.80	0.992
Q20: language learning often makes me happy.	6	8	23	26	16	3.48	1.153
Q21: an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English.	0	5	9	41	24	4.06	0.822
Q22: I can understand English-speaking films, videos, TV or radio.	1	0	15	33	30	4.15	0.818
Q23: I can read English books.	0	0	6	26	47	4.52	0.638
Q24: to know new people from different parts of the world.	1	4	21	30	23	3.89	0.934
Q25: without it one cannot be successful in any field.	17	22	17	17	6	2.66	1.249
Overall mean score						3.94	

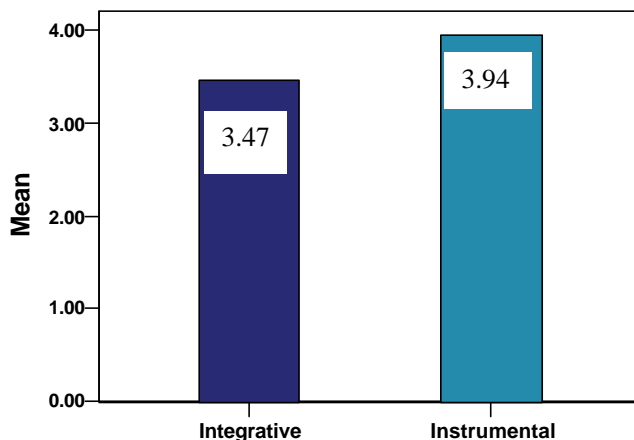


Fig. 1: The overall means of Iranian students' integrativeness & instrumentality

Table 3: Paired samples T-test for Iranian student

Integrative & Instrumental Motivation		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean				
Pair 1	INT	3.4747	79	0.60098	0.06762				
	INS	3.9464	79	0.55379	0.06231				
Paired Differences									
Integrative & Instrumental Motivation		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	INT								
	INS	-0.4717	0.4520	0.05085	-0.5730	-0.3705	-9.277	78	0.000

Instrumentality: A close examination of the frequency distribution and mean scores of the instrumental items, indicates that questions 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23 with the mean scores above 4 and questions number 19 & 24 with the mean scores approximately 4 show the students very high motivation (Table 2). With the overall mean score of 3.94 we can conclude that most of the university students have high instrumental motivation toward learning English. But questions number 16 (Studying English can be important for me because other people will respect me more if I know English, $M=3.08$) and 25 (Studying English is important to me because without it one cannot be successful in any field), have the lowest mean ($M=2.66$) in this category. Only 30% of the students agreed with it. The question which has the highest mean score (Q13) concerns future career. And Q17 with the mean score of 4.48 shows the students' need for searching the information and materials in English on the Internet.

Integrativeness Versus Instrumentality: Comparing the overall mean scores of the items in instrumental motivation ($M=3.94$) to the integrative one ($M=3.47$), it can be concluded that the students are to a certain extent

instrumentally motivated but they still have a higher degree of integrative motivation toward foreign language learning (Figure 1).

Results of Paired Samples T-Test: A paired samples T- test was applied to indicate whether there is a statistically significant difference between the total scores of the integrative motivation items ($M=3.47$) and the instrumental motivation items ($M=3.94$) or not (Table 3). By applying the T- test it was found that there is a significant difference between the two scores.

T-observed = -9.277 and T-critical 1.6... (T-value table)
T-observed is larger than T-critical.

Conclusion: The difference is meaningful.

Or: $P = 0.000$ and " $\alpha = 0.05$ P is smaller than " α ".

Conclusion: The difference is meaningful.

Results of Perceived English Proficiency (Q26): Question number 26 asked students to rate their English proficiency on a scale from very bad to very good

Table 4: Respondents' perceived levels of English proficiency (n=79)

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Very Bad	7	8.9
Bad	16	20.3
Average	45	57.0
Good	9	11.4
Very Good	2	2.5

Table 5: Frequency distribution of (Q 27)

Rating	Frequency	Percent
More	53	67.1
Less	15	19.0
The same	11	13.9
Total	79	100.0

(table 4). The data analysis shows that more than half of the respondents perceived their English proficiency to be average (57%) and only 11.4% rated themselves as good in English language. Therefore, their high motivation might be related to perceived linguistic proficiency.

Analysis of Open -Ended Question (Q27): With the high motivation found in the present study, the majority of the students (67.1%) reported that they had actually become more motivated to learn English according to their responses to the open-ended Q27 (Are you more or less motivated to learn English than when you were a secondary school student? Why). Most of them believe that after entering university they have realized the importance of English for becoming more successful in their education, especially for using internet and finding scientific sources concerning their majors and studying reference books and journals. Especially those who were Computer majors needed English for making use of up-to-date computer and engineering technologies to be prepared for their future job. Most of them mentioned the importance of studying English as it is the most dominant international language and enables them to use the computer programs more effectively. One of them wrote, "We should be good in English language, in order to work with computer programs and use internet."

Some believed that in secondary school, the contact hours were only time they studied the English subject; but in university, although the class met for two hours a week, additional time and self-reading was needed when preparing for an assignment, usually in the form of a written report papers or sometimes an oral presentation, all of which required research, reading, writing and translating from English to Persian. A few of them have a

clear plan for going abroad for further education and their career. Some of them need English for higher education in Iran because the post graduate students have to pass the English Proficiency Test of the Ministry of science Research & Technology (MCHE) or the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Therefore, success in learning English will determine one's future progress. And the others like English because they can make more friends and talk to net friends from different parts of the world. Only 13.9% of the students' attitudes and motivation toward English didn't change much before or after they have entered the university. And the rest of them (19%) reported that they had become less motivated to learn English mainly because of the heavy burden of their major study, time limitation (Table 5).

DISCUSSION

The result of the study showed that Iranian students participated in the study had very high motivation towards learning English. And the students had a higher degree of instrumental motivation than the integrative one. Iranian L2 learners might preserve their identity by unconsciously selecting to be motivated instrumentally. Aspiration related to integrative motivation might affect their identity and fear of identifying with English (western) culture and values may be related to their socio-cultural and religious affiliation. Also the latest American colony and campaign against some countries in the area might affect their motivation. On the other hand, instrumental motivation was found more prominent in some situations particularly where there appears to be little desire to integrate.

Iran has visibly been opening up to the world. Fortunately, many international conferences on different cultural, social and economic issues are being held here and moreover, Iran is the pioneer of the idea of dialogue among civilizations. In spite of all these, the significant role of the English language as the lingua franca of today's world in establishing foreign relations is simply neglected in Iran. As far as the author knows, a few native English speakers permitted to teach within Iran, therefore, Iranian students don't have the opportunity to benefit from native speakers' teaching language. We can see only a few English speaking foreigners in the country who are tourists or belong to business sector. Moreover, the places you may find the tourists are limited to tourist sites, hotels, or business companies. Therefore, students have no contact with foreigners except for a few cases.

According to responses collected in the questionnaire, one of the demotivating factors of Iranian students as they mentioned in their answers to question 27, was the fact that as the burden of their major study became heavier, many of the students had fewer chances to access English and made little effort to continue to learn the language. As a result, their English motivation would have probably decreased. To maintain the students' positive attitudes toward and motivation to learn English and ultimately improve their English proficiency, it might be beneficial for the Universities to offer ESP courses throughout the university years so that non-English majors could have constant contact with the target language. In the subject of English for non-English majors because in the limited hours of instruction they normally could not have the chance of learning English especially the most favored skills of listening and speaking as the program is not designed to do so.

Another problem concerning these students is that, while their secondary school teachers are not competent at spoken language skills, the university instructors are, but the problem is that students are not at the level of proficiency to make the professors communicate with them in English. The other pressing limitation the students mentioned in open ended item is the short hours which do not let university professors, work on four skills adequately. Overcrowded classrooms in universities, is another problem. The large number in the classroom results in instructor's limitation in applying effective communicative methods with almost no student talking time in the class.

If we have a better realization of English language as an international language and understand its different variations and the effect of the native languages on them then we can have a better plan for future consideration of the language and setting the standards for it. For this purpose, literary scholars must join the language teachers in a common concern for setting the goal. Recognizing learners' instrumental motives can be easily achieved by preparing learners for examinations and focusing more on practical skills such as how to communicate with other people when traveling abroad. On the other hand, raising their interests towards the culture of the target language (i.e., English) can be done by activities such as giving information on the lifestyle, geography, literature of the English-speaking countries through visual, written and audio forms, or even organizing group-sharing for learners who have been to English speaking countries.

At university level this may include, any number of foreign exchange programs with other universities, overseas "home-stay" programs, or any other activities which may help to motivate students to improve their target language proficiency. Encouraging students to become more active participants in a lesson can sometimes assist them to see a purpose for improving their communication skills in the target language. From an integrative point of view, it is important for the instructor to help students to realize that, even though they may see no need to become proficient in a second language, the study of another language and culture can only enhance their perception and understanding of other cultures.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study present a picture which establishes that Iranian students were instrumentally motivated and their integrativeness was high, too. This study also confirms the opinion of some researchers who believe that in a foreign language situation students are instrumentally oriented. Taken together, findings from both qualitative and quantitative data of the present study give a consistent picture, that instrumental and integrative goals, especially future career development, meeting more varied people and learning English in order to use the internet properly are very important for Iranian students.

It is clear that the teacher, the class atmosphere, the course content, materials and facilities, as well as personal characteristics of the student will have an influence on the individual's classroom learning motivation [19]. There is much work to be done before researchers, teachers and language learners will fully understand motivation and all its aspects.

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APPENDIX

Survey Questionnaire (English-learning Motivation Scale)

Below are a number of statements with which some people agree and others disagree. We would like you to indicate your opinion about each statement by ticking the boxes below which best indicates the extent to which you disagree or agree with that statement.

Gender -----	Age -----	Department -----					
Statements			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Studying English can be important to me because it will allow me to be more at ease with other people who speak English.						
2	Studying English can be important for me because it will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people.						
3	Studying English can be important for me because it will enable me to better understand and appreciate English art and literature.						

APPENDIX: Continued

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
4					
5					
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26.					

Open-ended question:

27. Are you more or less motivated to learn English than when you were a secondary school student? Why? -----
