

## **Motivational and Attitudinal Behaviors of Turkish EFL Learners at the Outset of the Preparatory Program at a State University: Socio-educational Model Perspective**

Derya Uysal and Sevgi Gökçe

### **Abstract**

This study aims to define the motivational and attitudinal features of EFL learners at the outset of the preparatory program from the Socio-Educational Model perspective. Research was conducted via exploratory mixed methods design. First, the quantitative data of the study were obtained via a questionnaire in Turkish, including 19 five-point Likert scale items taken from Pulat (2010) who adapted Gardner's (1985) motivation and attitude test battery to an identical EFL context. During the second week of the academic year 2019-2020, 182 EFL students at the School of Foreign Languages at a state university in Turkey participated in this quantitative study. For the qualitative data, nine students selected by a process of purposeful sampling were addressed four open-ended questions in Turkish about what they do to improve their English, their opinions on the importance of learning English, how they interact with English-speaking people, and their lifestyle. Results revealed that learners' instrumental motivation outweighed their integrative motivation and that students lacked regular interactions with target community people.

**Keywords:** Motivation, English as a Foreign Language, EFL

*Dr. Derya Uysal is an ELT instructor in School of Foreign Languages in Eskisehir Osmangazi University in Eskişehir, Turkey. She can be reached at [dkorucu@gmail.com](mailto:dkorucu@gmail.com)*

*Dr. Sevgi Gökçe is an ELT instructor in School of Foreign Languages in Eskisehir Osmangazi University in Eskişehir, Turkey. She can be reached at [sevgokce@gmail.com](mailto:sevgokce@gmail.com)*

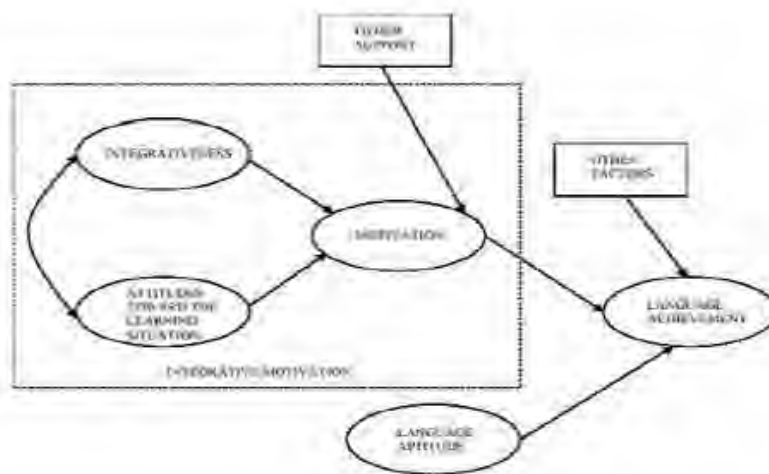
Motivation is one of the most influential determinants of EFL achievement, which explains why it is the individual variable drawing constant attention in the related body of literature (Lasagabaster, 2011). Beginning with Gardner's (1979, 1985) Socio-Educational Model, initial attempts aimed to define motivation in those learning a second language. According to him, aptitude cannot solely explain second language (L2) learning; individual differences are the key factors that determine language acquisition. Thus, the cultural context of a learner which has a significant impact on the motivation and attitude is an important factor to consider when understanding how learners approach a second language. The model mentioned here postulates that motivation and attitude of a learner correlates with her / his proficiency. Attitudes influence the learner's motivation, which in turn influences subsequent attitudes and motivation.

The original socio-educational model has undergone changes. Gardner and Clément (1990) expanded the original model to include three additional classes of individual differences; cognitive characteristics, attitude and motivation, and personality attributes. First, cognitive characteristics are related to the learner's ability and approach to the task at hand, and the two major cognitive variables put forward by Gardner and Clément (1990) are language aptitude and learning strategies. Second, motivation and attitude include two variables; integrativeness (attitudes toward other language groups, outgroups and so on) and motivation, or indices of attitudes towards the context of learning (like the desire or effort to learn the language). Last, are personality attributes. Among the most popular characteristics studied are sociability (extroversion/introversion), field dependence or independence, empathy, anxiety, and self-confidence. Additionally, Gardner and Clément (1990) discussed the systematic conceptualization of conceptual aspects (social milieu) in language learning.

Gardner (2000) stated that two classes, namely, attitudes toward the learning situation and integrativeness, have an impact on L2 learner motivation and are the two correlated variables. Ultimately, two factors, language attitude and motivation, are effective in determining language acquisition.

**Figure 1**

*Basic Model of the Role of the Aptitude and Motivation in L2 Learning (Gardner, 2001)*



The integrativeness variable represents openness and respect for other culture groups and their lifestyle; thus, learners with variables of this class demonstrate an interest in learning the language and cultures of other groups. The attitudes toward the learning situation variable denotes the attitudes of the learner towards their classroom environment, including but not limited to the place of learning, materials, teachers, classmates and so on. If any of them is ineffective or negative, this will influence learning L2 negatively. Motivation refers to the driving force in learning and includes the desire and consistent/inconsistent effort of the learner to learn. Motivated learners want to achieve a goal; they express a desire for achieving the goal and strive for it. Integrative motivation includes three variables: attitudes toward the learning environment, motivation, and integrativeness. Thus, a learner with an integrative motivation is

motivated to learn L2, s/he desires to identify with the L2 community, and has a tendency to positively evaluate his or her learning environment. As seen in Figure 1, motivation is the driving force behind achievement while integrativeness and attitudes towards the learning situation exist as supporting factors.

Additionally, Figure 1 illustrates that while there may be other factors that uphold motivation, they are not directly related to integrative motivation. Thus, they are instrumental factors that contribute to motivation; the combination of these factors with motivation is labeled as instrumental motivation. Therefore, motivation can be driven by instrumental factors as well as integrative ones. Last, some other factors that indirectly affect L2 acquisition are self-confidence, anxiety, and learning strategies (Gardner, 2001). These results were brought forth by Gardner (2001) in his first empirical research on the socio-educational model in 2001. He attributed this study to the research conducted by Lambert (1995) on the development of bilingualism.

In 1985, Gardner developed the “Attitude Motivation Test Battery” (AMTB) in order to predict L2 outcome/performance of learners and to measure the main factors and their sub-units (Gardner, 1985). The test battery was originally developed for Canadian English speakers learning French as a second language. Later on, it was validated by a number of studies (Gardner, 2001). Different variations of the test battery adjusted to different contexts exist in other related bodies of literature. Recently, research on motivation in language learning has been flourishing with new developments (Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Noels, 2005). However, Gardner's socio-educational model is still one of the most effective models in L2 motivation. There is still much to learn from the model; thus, L2 researchers should not lose sight of it (MacIntyre, 2007).

L2 learning context in Turkey shares much commonality with others all over the world. Motivation and attitude of students toward language learning are two significant determinants of Turkish students' ultimate success. In Turkey, students are given the opportunity to learn English both prior to and during higher education. For example, students are offered compulsory English courses from the outset of the second grade in primary school. Similarly, in higher education institutions, a significant number of universities in Turkey offer a one-year prep class (or two-year, should students fail the prep-class) compulsory English preparatory program for students enrolled in English-medium departments. In preparatory programs, students receive an intensive EFL education both to become proficient in English and to fulfill language requirements to enter their departments (Sarıçoban & Sarıçoban, 2012). However, these preparatory programs face their own challenges in terms of students' mastery of the English language. These problems result from various factors such as the short duration of the preparatory program, the programs' objectives being inconsistent with academic purposes and internationalization, and pre-conceived notions students associate with EFL after receiving English courses for eleven years such as repetitive and grammar-centered content (British Council-TEPAV, 2015; Uysal & Güven, 2018).

The studies exploring motivational and attitudinal features of Turkish EFL learners exist in related bodies of literature. One of these studies conducted by Genç and Aydın (2017) aimed to determine the motivational attitudinal features of students and their correlation with students' achievement. The results revealed that students who had positive attitudes towards the English language had above-average motivation levels. Additionally, although the correlation between motivation and achievement was found to be low, there was not any significant correlation between variables of achievement, the students' attitudes, and parental involvement. Moreover, a case study carried out by Yükselir (2018) in the optional preparatory program of a Turkish state

university discovered that students lost their motivation toward lessons due to reasons like teaching strategies and language curricula, learning processes, or subjective factors even though they believed it was necessary to complete the preparatory program to master English. In another study by Altiner (2018), Turkish EFL learners' motivation when studying a second language in the English preparatory program at a state university was explored. The results of the investigation concluded that the most influential three factors in predicting students' achievement was 1) interest in community, culture and travel, 2) positive learning experience/attitude, and 3) intended efforts.

These existing studies aiming to explore learners' motivation and attitudes were carried out during the ongoing education process. However, defining and measuring motivational attitudinal behaviors of learners at the beginning of an academic year is vital in terms of studying the change in the attitude and motivation of students throughout the academic year. While students might begin the program with positive or negative feelings due to their prior English learning experiences, they could develop contrary feelings throughout the year while taking English courses in preparatory classes. If ELT instructors are made aware of motivational and attitudinal features of EFL learners at the beginning of an academic year, it could potentially be easier for them to replace their students' negative feelings with positive ones or to maintain positive attitudes throughout the academic year. Moreover, ELT instructions would have a chance to design courses according to the needs and interests of their students from the very beginning. Even though motivation has proven to be the deciding factor in L2 acquisition of students, language teachers often do not have enough knowledge about their specific motivations for learning L2 and thus do not consider their motivation while designing courses (Altiner, 2018).

Thus, the present study aims to define the motivational and attitudinal features of EFL learners from the outset of the preparatory program. In line with this aim, three research questions were formulated:

1. What are Turkish EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English language at the outset of the preparatory program?
2. What are learners' integrative and instrumental motivation at the outset of the preparatory program?
3. What are learners' attitudes towards English speaking people or groups?

### **Method**

Research was conducted via exploratory mixed methods design. First, the quantitative data of the study were obtained via a questionnaire in Turkish, including 19 five-point Likert scale items taken from Pulat (2010) who adapted Gardner's (1985) motivation and attitude test battery to an identical EFL context in the preparatory program in Zonguldak Karaelmas University. The questionnaire is highly reliable since its Cronbach-alpha coefficient value was 0.879 (Pulat, 2010). It is composed of three factors. Items one to seven are related to EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English; items eight to 14 include statements about learners' integrative and instrumental motivation; and the last five items aim to gather data about learners' attitudes towards English-speaking people or groups.

During the second week of the 2019-2020 academic year, the aforementioned questionnaire was distributed to 182 EFL learners who were beginner, elementary and pre-intermediate-level students receiving face-to-face compulsory EFL education at the School of Foreign Languages in Eskişehir Osmangazi University. The students were majoring in

international relations, architecture, electrical-electronical engineering, computer engineering, and mechanical engineering.

After analyzing the quantitative data, nine students whose mean scores were the highest and the lowest were selected by a process of purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990). Before gathering the quantitative data, an interview form including four open-ended questions in Turkish about what they do to improve their English, their opinions on the importance of learning English, how they interact with English-speaking people and their lifestyle was prepared. The preliminary form was sent to an expert with a master's degree in English Language Translation (ELT) and Ph.D. degree in curriculum and instruction. The expert suggested some revisions related to the wording of the questions. Afterwards, the revised questions were addressed to the interviewees in semi-structured interviews. Their responses were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were first read through, analyzed, and re-analyzed inductively (Creswell, 2014) by the researchers independent of each other. When emerging themes and subthemes were compared, it was understood that identical themes were found. For this reason, the inter-rater reliability number was not calculated.

## **Results**

### **Quantitative Results**

Analysis of quantitative data are tabulated in Table 1 in order to show motivational and attitudinal behaviors of Turkish EFL learners. The questionnaire items are translated into English although the questionnaire delivered was in Turkish.



**Table 1***Motivational and Attitudinal Behaviors of Turkish EFL Learners*

<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
<b>Item 1</b> I really enjoy learning English.	3.89	0.85
<b>Item 2</b> I love learning English.	4.09	0.80
<b>Item 3</b> It is a perfect feeling to learn English.	3.97	0.89
<b>Item 4</b> I would rather spend my time on subjects other than English.	3.35	0.85
<b>Item 5</b> I hate English.	1.68	0.84
<b>Item 6</b> When I leave school, I will give up the study of English entirely because I am not interested in it.	1.58	0.78
<b>Item 7</b> I plan to learn as much English as possible.	4.40	0.78
<b>Item 8</b> It is important to speak English because it will be necessary for my finding a good job.	4.77	0.57
<b>Item 9</b> It is important to study English because it provides an opportunity to communicate with more and different people.	4.60	0.65
<b>Item 10</b> It is important to speak English because I will be able to interact with English speaking people more easily.	4.57	0.70
<b>Item 11</b> It is important to study English because it will help me understand and internalize English life style.	3.23	1.18
<b>Item 12</b> It is important to study English because I will need English in my future professional life.	4.72	0.55
<b>Item 13</b> It is important for me to learn English because it will help me communicate with English speaking people.	4.55	0.65
<b>Item 14</b> It is important to study English because it will make me a more knowledgeable person.	4.08	0.92
<b>Item 15</b> I feel an affinity with native speakers of English because they speak English.	2.72	0.98
<b>Item 16</b> The more native speakers of English I meet, the more I love them.	2.97	0.96
<b>Item 17</b> Native speakers of English have many reasons to be proud because English is the global language of science.	2.70	1.25
<b>Item 18</b> I want to meet native speakers of English.	3.94	0.97
<b>Item 19</b> It is important to study English because I think people will show me more affection and respect if I speak English.	2.88	1.10
<b>Mean score for the entire questionnaire</b>	3.62	0.47

Mean scores of all items from one to four and item seven display an above average figure about EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English. In other words, learners' general attitudes towards learning English seem positive, and they are likely to continue studying English in the future (as shown in item seven). Similarly, items five and six, which express a negative attitude toward EFL learning, have lower mean scores (1.58 and 1.68 respectively) compared to other items expressing a positive attitude, which confirms the students' positive attitudes.

Among items eight to 14, which include statements about learners' integrative and instrumental motivation, items eight and 12 stand out with their higher mean scores. These two items show how learners' see English as a significant instrument for advancing their careers. Despite being slightly lower than the scores of items eight and 12, the mean scores of items nine, 10, 13 and 14 display learners' desire for integrating with English speaking people. In an increasingly globalized world where people from a myriad of backgrounds can come together, English is often the default language used for communication. As a result, learners feel the need to integrate with these networks. The mean score of item 11, on the other hand, is lower than the mean scores of the other items in this group, which reveals learners' hesitation to approach an English life style.

The last five items aim at gathering data about learners' attitudes towards English-speaking people or groups. The mean scores in this group are considerably lower than the previous ones, with the exception of the mean of item 18. Although learners would like to meet and interact with native speakers, they do not appear to feel much affection and affinity towards them. Likewise, they do not view speaking English as a source of pride.

Overall, the quantitative results reveal learners' positive attitudes to learning English with the goal of getting better job opportunities and interacting with English speaking people.

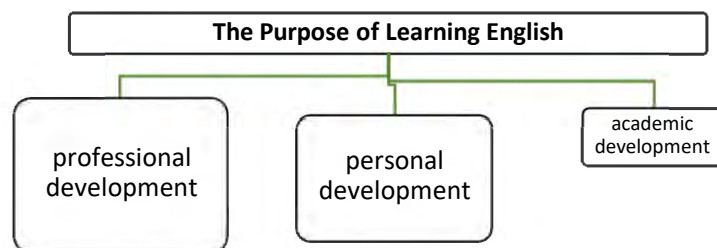
However, their attitudes towards learning about English speaking people’s lifestyles and getting closer to them are less positive. These results clearly show that learners’ instrumental motivation for learning English overshadows their integrative motivation.

### Qualitative Results

When interview data were analyzed, there were minor differences between students whose mean scores were low and students whose mean scores were high in the questionnaire. In fact, all the interviewees put professional development as the first and the foremost purpose of learning English. Second, six students mentioned personal development as their second purpose and one student touched on academic development. This result is in accordance with the quantitative data analysis results which revealed that learners’ instrumental motivation outweighs their integrative motivation, as demonstrated in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Learners’ Purposes of Learning English*



In terms of interacting with English speaking people, six learners articulated positive views. They used words and phrases like “cool”, “good”, “improving”, “privileged” and “important for being able to learn about different cultures” and “being able to socialize with new people” to describe how they felt about communicating with English speakers. In addition, two students put special emphasis on “understanding accented speech” which made them feel

“happy” and “privileged”. Nevertheless, interacting with English speaking people was not the main concern of three students.

With regard to learning about English speaking people’s cultures and lifestyles, five learners stated their positive opinions about acquiring intercultural knowledge, being a citizen of the world, tolerating differences and communicating with people of developed countries. In contrast, four students did not feel motivated to learn about English speaking cultures, and one of them expressed his reservation over the possibility of encountering disagreeable things in the target culture.

The interviewees also talked about what they did to improve their English outside of school. All of them mentioned audio-visual aids such as “watching subtitled movies, TV shows, and videos on Youtube”, “listening to songs” and “using mobile applications”. Only one specified which mobile applications they used. They also did not explain which TV shows they watched, and what they did during or after watching /listening to such content with the goal of learning English.

Three participants stated that they read in English. Two of them said that they did extensive reading and one of them read vocational content about computer engineering. This finding might be thought-provoking for two reasons: First, students tend to prefer using audio-visual resources to reading. Second, all the participants of the questionnaire and the interview agreed on the importance of learning English for their professional careers, but only one interviewee noted that he read something career-related in English.

As for self-study outside of school, two students stated that they used supplementary materials and one student expressed that he studied vocabulary. Another student reported that he

translated English stories into Turkish. Two students also said that they took private courses in English.

Last, the questionnaire revealed that the interviewees lacked regular interactions with English-speaking people. One student experienced interacting with English-speaking people during a short school trip abroad and another one reported interacting with English-speaking tourists while working at a guesthouse in the summer. In addition, one student mentioned that although she and her friends speak the same mother tongue (Turkish), they joked with friends in English. In the era of worldwide social networking and numerous channels of global communication, this finding may indicate that learners continue to be recipients of language instead of being producers of it. In essence, they prefer being exposed to oral content, like speech and music, to being involved in two-sided genuine interactions with English speaking people.

### **Discussion and Pedagogical Implications**

The present research aims at describing the motivational and attitudinal behaviors of Turkish EFL learners at the outset of English preparatory programs. The results conclude that Turkish learners' positive attitudes towards learning English were instrumentally motivated and impacted by their desire to improve their professional, personal, and academic development. None of the students expressed integrative motives to learn EFL. This result is consistent with a number of existing studies that showed that Turkish EFL learners want to learn English for instrumental rather than integrative reasons (Genç & Aydın, 2017; Göktepe, 2014; Şener & Erol, 2017). Similarly, in another study conducted in an Arabic EFL context, students' future career intentions determined their attitude and effort toward learning English (Malallah, 2000). Lastly, the results of a study conducted in a Chinese EFL setting revealed that although the students'

attitudes towards learning EFL were positive and although they had a high level of motivation to master English, they were more instrumentally than integratively motivated.

According to Dörnyei (1998), who put an emphasize on instrumental orientation as a significant factor in EFL context when EFL learners do not have much opportunity to interact with the target community, they hardly get integrated into the community; thus, instrumental motivation such as career plans or travel play a much more significant role than integrative motivation in the EFL context. This claim explains why the participating students' attitudes towards learning about English speaking people's lifestyles and getting closer to them are less positive although they want to learn English. The participating students focused on mathematics and science lessons during high school; they neither had an opportunity to have a genuine two-sided interaction with an English-speaking foreigner, nor did they have an intense English education before the preparatory program. Therefore, they did not have a chance to get closer to the target community or culture.

According to the socio-educational model (Gardner, 2001), students' attitudes toward the target community's lifestyle is significant in terms of student achievement. Furthermore, a positive relationship between attitude and student achievement has been proved by existing studies (İnal, Evin & Saracaloğlu, 2005; Liu, 2007; Malallah, 2000). Therefore, it would not be incorrect to assert that helping students adopt positive attitudes toward target community's lifestyle during the preparatory year is necessary for their ultimate success. Since the study was conducted at the very beginning of the academic year, the instructors at Eskişehir Osmangazi university had sufficient time to design lessons in which students could be exposed to foreign culture and lifestyle, which helped students adopt more positive attitudes toward target communities and cultures. In the future, traditions, literature, or lifestyle of the target community

could be integrated into English courses via audio-visual materials. Another way could be to increase language contact through exchange programs or international online meetings (Genç & Aydın, 2017).

Considering the fact that interviewees preferred self-study techniques that cause them to remain recipients rather than producers of the English language, providing them with opportunities to have a genuine two-sided interaction with an interlocutor (native or nonnative) in a classroom setting is significant for their achievement. According to Swain (2000), output pushes learners to process language with a greater mental effort than input does. When outputting, learners must monitor their interlanguage to create grammatical structures in order to convey their message. In this process, learners might be able to discover what they can or cannot do and which paths to follow to compensate missing or erroneous parts in the interlanguage. Thus, producing language is a prerequisite for language acquisition. It is significant to note that the self-study techniques used by preparatory class students lack oral output and interactions with English-speaking communities; this discovery should guide ELT instructors in designing lessons encouraging students to engage in language production rather than just reception.

Despite the important role of outputting (i.e. production) in language learning, some learners may be reluctant to speak in classroom settings, and this reluctance may cause them to lose interest in language learning. This problem is worse in EFL settings, where there is little or no exposure to foreign language outside the classroom and learners' practice is limited to the opportunities presented during lessons (Riasati, 2012). Existing studies show learners may not be willing to speak a foreign language in the classroom due to teacher-related, student-related or classroom-related reasons (Aliakbari, Kamangar & Khany, 2016; Peng, 2012; Riasati, 2012).

Hence, ELT instructors need to encourage their students to produce language and explain the role of outputting/producing in EFL learning.

### **Conclusion**

This study aimed to define the motivational and attitudinal features of EFL learners at the outset of the preparatory program from the Socio-Educational Model perspective. Research was conducted via exploratory mixed methods design, where quantitative data is initially collected and analyzed, then supported with qualitative data. Analyses of the quantitative data from 182 EFL students and quantitative data from nine students revealed that Turkish EFL students have positive attitudes towards learning English, but their attitudes towards the target community's lifestyle are slightly less positive.

Results obtained from the quantitative data support the ones obtained from the qualitative data. According to the qualitative data collection results, Turkish students want to learn EFL for instrumental reasons, namely, for their professional, personal and academic development. None of the students interviewed expressed integrative reasons for learning English. Therefore, ELT instructors are advised to design lessons that will expose students to the lifestyle of target community.

Last, Turkish EFL students prefer self-study activities that render them receivers of a language rather than producers. However, language production is key in terms of pushing learners to think deeply and produce the correct structures that communication requires. Therefore, ELT instructors should present activities encouraging students to speak or write during lessons.

Regarding suggestions for further research, the change in attitudes and motivation of the students throughout an academic year could be analyzed through latex analysis. Additionally, the



reasons behind students' avoiding self-study techniques that utilize productive skills could be researched. Finally, the relationship between motivation and attitude with outcomes in a specified research context could be investigated.

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