

# Exploring the roles of integrative and instrumental motivation on English language acquisition among Iranian medical and dentistry students

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**Abstract:** Motivation is an important aspect of language acquisition. This study was devised to determine the motivational orientations of medical and dentistry students at Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences (RUMS) in English language acquisition. In this cross- descriptive study, 200 students of the dentistry and medical schools were chosen by census sampling method in 2009. The data gathering method was the integrative and instrumental motivation scale of Gardner, which was adapted to a 5 point likert's scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4) and strongly agree (5). The questions of 1-12 indicated the integrative and 13-25 indicated the instrumentality motivation. Two open ended question were included to measure language self efficacy of the students to rate their own English proficiency level and elicit qualitative information to see whether there has been any change in the level of their motivation. The data were analyzed, using SPSS14, t test and Chi square: The results indicated that the students were highly motivated to learn English and there was no statistically significant differences on instrumental versus integrative motivational orientations of these students ( $p=0.07$ ). This study indicated high motivation for learning English among the medical and dentistry students at RUMS. Considering the importance of learning English for the students, language teachers and program developers should assist the students and plan better and comprehensive programs for teaching English at the university level which would include involving the students in the actual use of the English language.

**Keywords:** Integrative Motivation, Instrumental Motivation, Second Language, English, Medical Students

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Learning English in Iran

Learning English language is a complex process for the Iranian students and involves many factors. In Iran English is a compulsory subject in all the schools and all the students must pass English as foreign language before they can graduate from high school and university. Currently because of job scarcity, educational advancement and similar reasons more and more college students from all walks of life are also realizing the importance of learning this language and have become more interested in learning the language proficiently (Chalak and Kassaian 2010). Also, as an important part of the university entrance examinations, learning English helps the aspiring university students gain acceptance into good universities and study high valued

majors. Therefore, instructors are forced to educate students in a manner which will prove most useful to them, which is based on grammar translation method. Iranian students are therefore very restricted in using the language in real life context, and study English mostly for achievements in these examinations. Basically it seems that the driving force and motivating factors behind learning English are undertaking such university exams and not integrating into the target language community. Moreover, due to many social and political factors including lack of English speaking nationals, inaccessibility of internet and satellite TV to all the language learners, lack of face to face contact with native English speakers and grammar based teachings methods at high schools, it seems that the long process of teaching English in Iran has not shown much success in helping young people learn English proficiently (Rahimi, Riazi, Saif 2008).

Since English language is the medium of instruction in

many medical courses, and medical students who are proficient in English have a higher and better opportunity to be admitted to an academically prestigious university for continuing specialized and professional fields of study, medical and dentistry students seem to be and are expected to be more proficient in English. This study was devised to study the motivational orientation of the Iranian EFL medical and dentistry students in learning English. The question addressed through this study was: what are the motivational orientations of the medical and dentistry students at RUMS?

### **1.2. Socio Educational Factors**

Many researchers dealing with the area of second/foreign language have explored the role of various socio-educational factors which might affect language learning, this is because over the past few years, research in second language education has largely focused on learner centered approaches rather than teacher centered education in order to lead the learners towards an autonomous and independent language learning (O'Malley and Chamot, 1995). In this regard, research has shown that many variables including proficiency level, active cognitive process, motivation, and gender play a great role in helping the learners become independent of teachers and learn a foreign language proficiently (Rahimi, Riazi, Saif 2008; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989; Sadighi and Zarafshan, 2006; Littlewood, 1996). Gardner (1982) has introduced a number of factors which are interrelated when learning a second language. This model correlates four features of second language acquisition, which include the social and cultural milieu, individual learner differences, the setting or context in which learning takes place and linguistic outcomes. Gardener's model also introduces the four individual differences which are to be the most influential in second language acquisition, which include intelligence, language aptitude, motivation and situational anxiety. In this model motivation is a key factor which is composed of three elements of effort, desire and affect.

Motivation is divided into two basic types: integrative and instrumental (Gardner 1982). Integrative motivation is characterized by the learner's positive attitude towards the target language group and the desire to ingrate into the target language community. Gardner (1985), found that integrative and attitudes toward the learning situation have directly affected motivation. Instrumental motivation is characterized by the desire to obtain something practical or concrete from the second language and is more utilitarian such as meeting the requirements for school or university graduation (Norris-Holt 2005).

## **2. Review of Literature**

Motivation plays a major role in learning and represents one of the most appealing and complex variables used to explain individual differences in language learning (Norris-Holt, 2001; Manfred, 2004). Researchers have

defined motivation in different terms. It has also been identified as the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language (Crooke sans Schmidt, 1991). Gardner (1985) defines motivation: "...as the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language". Brown (1994) states that: "motivation is commonly thought of as an inner drive, impulse, emotion, or desire that moves one to a particular action". In the behaviorist school of thought motivation has been termed "the anticipation of reward" (Brown, 2000). Oxford and Shearin(1994) state that it is of utmost importance to understand students' motivation which directly affects the utilization of language learning strategies. It has also been reported that highly motivated students use more strategies in learning the second language and therefore obtain better results in the long run (Oxford, 1996).

Second Language researchers believe that identifying the motivating factors of the learners is very important in how they use these language strategies (Tamada, 1997). Dornyei (2006, p. xi) believes that motivation to learn a foreign language is not just an individualistic affair but is related to various social attitudes which exist in the learner's community regarding the target language group. According to Gardner's theory of motivation (1985, 2006) there are two types of motivation: instrumental and integrative. Instrumental motivation refers to the learner's desire to learn a language for utilitarian purposes such as employment or travel whereas integrative motivation refers to the desire to learn a language to integrate successfully into the target language community.

Gardner (2005) believes that in the educational settings instrumental motivation is more desired, while Falk (1978) states that most successful language students are the ones who like the people that speak the language, admire the culture and have a desire to become familiar with or even integrate into the society in which the language is used. Finegan (1999: 568) goes one step further and claims that integratively motivated students achieve: "a wide range of registers and native like pronunciation.

While both integrative and instrumental motivations are very important in the successful learning of a second language, it has been argued that it is integrative motivation which sustains long term success when learning a second language (Norris-Holt, 2005). She further stresses that integrative motivation: "is continually linked to successful second language acquisition, and the students who support an integrative approach to language study are usually more highly motivated and overall more successful in language learning." But, it is important to consider the fact that in countries such as Iran opportunities to use the target language in daily basis is very restricted and essentially there are no opportunities or potential for the L2 learners to integrate into target language community. In these societies it seems that students would select instrumental reasons more frequently than integrative reasons. Dornyei (1990) in apposition to these views, has claimed that instrumental

motivation and the learner's need for achievements and higher aspirations are more important than the integrative motivation.

Studies done on the Iranian EFL students have yielded different results. Vaezi (2008) found that her study subjects were instrumentally motivated, while Sadighi and Maghsudi (2000) obtained a significant difference between the English proficiency scores of their integrative motivated students versus their instrumentally motivated ones. Moiiinvaziri (2012) who studied the motivational orientation of the undergraduate students found that her subjects had both instrumental and integrative motivations. Chalak and Kassaian (2010) and Roohani (2001) also found their subjects to be more instrumentally motivated. Brown (cited in Noris-Holt, 2005) states that learners' rarely select one form of motivation when learning a second language, but a combination of them. This fact could be more true for the nationals of countries such as Iran where integration into target language community is restricted. In a study of Arab EFL students it was also found that the subjects had higher instrumentality than integrative motivations, but the Yemeni students had high levels of instrumental and integrative motivations (Al- Tamimi and Shuib; 2009). All of these studies confirm the importance of identifying learners' motivation towards learning English language.

It is no doubt that motivation is an important factor in L2 achievement. Considering the issues discussed above, the present study was designed to explore the integrative and instrumental orientations of Iranian EFL medical students.

### 3. Materials and Methods

In this cross sectional study 200 medical and dentistry students who had finished their basic science courses and had passed the required general English credits were entered into the study. Later on 28 students who had given incorrect information or had not filled out the questioners completely were dropped from the study. At the end, the motivational orientation of 172 students, which included 61 (35.5%) dentistry and 111 (64.5%) medical students were evaluated. Out of this 44.8% (77) were males and 55.2% (95) were female students. Before the study a consent form was obtained from the ethics committee at Rafsanjan university of medical sciences and all the participants were given the necessary instruction and also permission to not answer any questions which they felt uncomfortable with. All the participants were native speakers of Persian and ranged between 18 and 25 years old. Since they had been admitted to the university from all over the country from affluent locations to less affluent and underprivileged cities they constituted a representative sample of Iranian EFL learners. Demographic information regarding the participants' gender, history of language study and their major was also collected. The integrative and instrumental motivation scale of the

original 7- point likert's scale format of Gardner's Attitude/motivation Test Battery (AMTB) and Clement et al.'s were adopted to a 5- point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree and they were given the scores of: strongly disagree=1, disagree =2, neutral=3, agree =4 and strongly agree =5 respectively. For example if a student strongly agreed with an item he got the score of 5 for that item and if he strongly disagreed he got the score of 1.

To measure the students' own perceptions of their English proficiency level an item regarding this view was included in the survey. Also, an open ended question about their motivational level since entering the university was also added to get qualitative information and check whether according to their own perceptions there have been any changes in their motivational level.

To ensure that the participants completely understood the content of the questionnaire, it was translated into Persian and reviewed by PhD instructors of English before hand. The purpose of the study was explained to the students and while they completed the questioner one of the researchers was present to answer any questions regarding the different items to the students. To determine the normal distribution Kolmogorove-Smirnove test was used. The data were analyzed using SPSS 14 and independent T test.  $P < 0.05$  was considered significant.

### 4. Results

Two hundred students had participated. Later on 28 students who had given incorrect information or had not filled out the questioners completely were dropped from the study. At the end, the motivational orientation of 172 students which equaled to a response rate of 86% was analyzed. The comparison of the mean scores of items 1, 2, 8, and 9 regarding the integrative motivation showed high motivation, while the mean scores on items 3, 5, 6, 7, 10 was medially high. The question number 11 and 12 (the British are kind and friendly, and the Americans are kind and cheerful) with the means of 3.06 and 3.16 received the lowest scores respectively. Independent T-test showed no significance difference regarding gender and field of study among the students in choosing these items ( $p < 0.05$ ). The overall mean scores of the integrative motivation items (items 1-12, see table 1) which were 3.83 showed that the participants had high motivation (Table 1).

A close examination of the frequency distribution and mean scores of the instrumental items indicated that the students gave the lowest scores to the items 13 and 4 with the mean scores of 3.10 and 3.40 respectively. The rest of the items had obtained higher scores, with the overall mean score of 4.21. Considering the high scores in this part, it can be concluded that most of the university students have high instrumental motivation and are aspiring for higher paying jobs and educational situations (Table 2).

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of the 12 Items on Integrative Motivation (n=172)

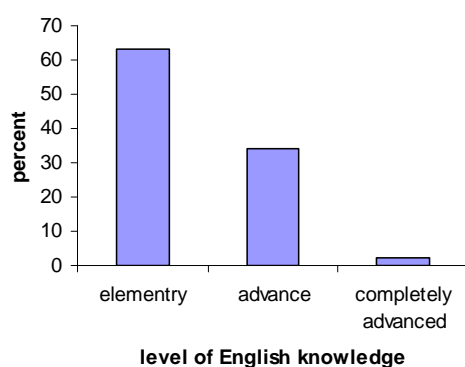
| I study English ...   | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5   | M    | SD    |
|---|----|----|----|----|-----|------|-------|
| Q1: to be more at ease with other people who speak English                | 3  | 3  | 7  | 50 | 109 | 4.51 | .806  |
| Q2: to meet and converse with more and varied people                      | 1  | 5  | 16 | 64 | 86  | 4.33 | .810  |
| Q3: to better understand and appreciate English art and literature        | 4  | 7  | 52 | 62 | 47  | 3.82 | .959  |
| Q4: to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups | 4  | 7  | 37 | 70 | 54  | 3.95 | .951  |
| Q5: to know the life of the English-speaking nations                      | 4  | 13 | 39 | 66 | 50  | 3.84 | 1.005 |
| Q6: to understand English pop music                                       | 7  | 21 | 43 | 62 | 39  | 3.68 | 1.232 |
| Q7: The more I get to know native English speakers, the more I like them  | 5  | 27 | 64 | 52 | 24  | 3.44 | 1.171 |
| Q8: to know various cultures and peoples                                  | 2  | 3  | 5  | 36 | 126 | 4.67 | .795  |
| Q9: to keep in touch with foreign friends and acquaintances.              | 4  | 11 | 28 | 48 | 81  | 4.11 | 1.045 |
| Q10: to know more about native English speakers                           | 3  | 18 | 60 | 58 | 33  | 3.62 | 1.056 |
| Q11: The British are kind and friendly                                    | 7  | 29 | 97 | 24 | 15  | 3.06 | .906  |
| Q12: The Americans are kind and cheerful                                  | 11 | 19 | 91 | 33 | 18  | 3.16 | .978  |
| Overall mean score  |    |    |    |    |     | 3.83 |       |

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics of the 13 Items on Instrumental Motivation (n=172)

| I study English because...   | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5   | M    | SD    |
|--|----|----|----|----|-----|------|-------|
| Q1: I'll need it for my future career.   | 2  | 2  | 5  | 47 | 115 | 4.61 | .791  |
| Q2: it will make me a more knowledgeable person.                                       | 3  | 2  | 5  | 67 | 95  | 4.45 | .767  |
| Q3: it will someday be useful in getting a good job.                                   | 3  | 6  | 17 | 74 | 72  | 4.20 | .883  |
| Q4: other people will respect me more if I know English.                               | 8  | 23 | 63 | 54 | 24  | 3.40 | 1.117 |
| Q5: I will be able to search for information and materials in English on the Internet. | 0  | 4  | 8  | 43 | 117 | 4.69 | .874  |
| Q6: I will learn more about what's happening in the world.                             | 2  | 3  | 9  | 58 | 100 | 4.49 | .841  |
| Q7: language learning often gives me a feeling of success.                             | 2  | 6  | 15 | 67 | 82  | 4.28 | .855  |
| Q8: language learning often makes me happy.  | 1  | 9  | 32 | 65 | 65  | 4.14 | 1.045 |
| Q9: an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English.                        | 2  | 6  | 7  | 59 | 98  | 4.46 | .888  |
| Q10: I can understand English-speaking films, videos, TV or radio.                     | 2  | 4  | 15 | 58 | 93  | 4.48 | 1.011 |
| Q11: I can read English books.   | 2  | 3  | 5  | 64 | 98  | 4.51 | .813  |
| Q12: to know new people from different parts of the world.                             | 2  | 6  | 45 | 67 | 52  | 3.94 | .899  |
| Q13: without it one cannot be successful in any field.                                 | 13 | 47 | 47 | 40 | 25  | 3.10 | 1.178 |
| Overall mean score   |    |    |    |    |     | 4.21 |       |

The comparison of the overall mean scores between the two types of motivations instrumental (4.21) and integrative (3.83) indicated no significant statistical differences.

The open ended question of how do you perceive your English language proficiency level and whether or not there have been any changes in the level of your motivation since high school time, yielded the scores which are shown at Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Assessment of students from their English knowledge (n= 172)

Fifty four point one percent of the respondents (93) indicated they their motivational level had increased since

entering the university, whereas 12.2% (21) reported to have had higher motivation in the past and during high school. 33.7% (58) of the students indicated that there has been no change regarding their level of motivation pre and post entering the university. As Vaezi (2008) states their level of motivation might be related to their perceived linguistic proficiency.

## 5. Discussion

Learning English in today's world, not only for the university students but also for most people, seems to be an undeniable necessity. Of course being proficient in English language is of great importance in the academic and professional lives of the medical students. The results of this study have indicated that the medical and dentistry students of RUMS are highly motivated in learning the English language. The response to the items regarding instrumental motivation indicated that they see English as a major step for future academic aspirations. This result correlates with other recent studies including Roohani (2001), Vaezi (2008), and Chalak and Kassaian (2010). Falk (1978) has claimed that language learners would be more successful if they like the people and the cultures of the target language, and have a desire to become familiar with or even integrate into society in which

the language is used. Despite this fact the participants in this study responded negatively to the items 11 and 12 "The British are kind and friendly" and "The Americans are kind and cheerful", which was in correlation with Vaezi's study. This could be due to the fact that Iranian students have little or no contact with the nationals of these countries and mostly hear about them on the news items which are not always very favorable. These students were obviously very motivated to learn the English but at the same time had their own national pride and valued their own culture.

In our study instrumental motivation was a much stronger driving force for learning English, but is this type of motivation enough for successful language learning? According to the second language researchers (e.g. Crookes and Schmidt, 1991) in order to sustain long term success when learning a second language integrative motivation plays a more decisive role. But as the teaching of English in Iran is still directed toward preparing students for the university entrance examinations, the underlying motivation to study the language is therefore instrumental. Also, as Nikoopour et al (2011) have mentioned language teaching in Iran has gone through many fluctuations. While many instructions in Iran require a good knowledge of English, there have not been any considerable improvements in teaching English language ability to the students.

One limitation of this study was the fact that EFL learning motivation is a long term experience and involves many factors. Also, as Kim (2010) points out L2 learning takes place throughout a learner's academic and non academic life, therefore the longitudinal aspects of L2 motivation should be considered.

## 6. Conclusion

The results of the present study indicated that the Medical and dentistry students at RUMS are both instrumentally and integratively motivated in learning English, but the level of instrumental motivation is higher among these students. Their responses to the questionnaire indicated that they actually believed that English is very important and they need to learn it perfectly. It seems that for them being proficient in English is a major leap toward better careers and higher academic aspirations. Therefore it is important for the teachers and curriculum developers to consider motivation as a significant factor. One way of motivating the students is developing programs which maintain student interests and have obtainable goals. Also, having better knowledge of the motivational and socio-educational factors would improve the quality of teaching and learning English in the Iranian educational system.

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