

# The Role of Motivation in Learning English as a Foreign Language

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## **Abstract:**

*This study investigates the role of motivation in foreign language learning. It sheds light on the meaning of motivation from different views, and the significance of motivation in foreign language learning as one of the most important factors in learning a foreign and second language. It also focuses on how the two types of motivation, namely integrative and instrumental motivation, affect the process of language learning for Libyan students, and how these two types play an essential role in achieving the desired goals. The study is carried out to determine if the fourth year undergraduate students studying English as a foreign language are more*

*integratively or instrumentally motivated towards English language learning. Findings of the study showed that the students participating this study are motivated both integratively and instrumentally with a little higher instrumental motivation.*

**Key words:** *Motivation, Integrative motivation, Instrumental motivation, English language learning.*

### **Introduction:**

There are several factors that influence second language learning and acquisition. Motivation is considered as one of these factors that can play a significant role in the success of second or foreign language learning. It has been proposed and recommended that there are three main factors, which concern and influence the second language acquisition; these three factors are age, personality, and motivation and among these factors motivation is the most important one in second language acquisition (Cook, 2000).

### **Definition of Motivation:**

Motivation is one of the key factors that influence the rate of success of learning a second or foreign language. Many researchers have defined motivation from different points of views. Melendy (2008), for example, says that motivation refers to a process that starts with a need and leads to a behavior that moves an individual towards achieving goals. Similarly, Oxford and Shearin (1994) claim that motivation is a desire to achieve a goal. Johnson (1979) who agrees with Oxford and Shearin (ibid), defines motivation as the "tendency to expend effort to achieve goals" (p. 283,

cited in Schmidt, et al, 1996). According to Gass and Selinker (2008), motivation is one of the factors that lead to achievements.

"Motivation is one of the main determinants of second/ foreign language learning achievement" (Donyei, 1994, p. 273). He also asserts that motivation is an attempt and desire to learn language and positive attitudes toward learning it. While 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" (p.10); identifies motivation as the single most influential factor in learning a new language. According to Ellis (1994), motivation is "the effort which learners put into learning a second language as a result of their need or desire to learn it" (p. 715).

### **Types of Motivation:**

The two major motivation types that the study sheds light on are integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. They are useful and effective factors for second language learning (Cook, 2000). Integrative motivation applies to cases when language is learned as a desire to integrate into the target language community, and instrumental motivation refers to cases when language is learned with the intention of achieving a certain external reasons like getting a job (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). Kimura, et al, (2001) define instrumental motivation as "a desire to learn a language for a specific purpose, such as employment" (p. 49). And they define integrative motivation as "the desire to integrate oneself with the target culture" (p. 48). Yang (2012) refers to instrumental motivation as learning language for pragmatic gains (like getting jobs, climbing up the social hierarchy and fulfilling a requirement in order to graduate), and

practical purposes. He exemplified pragmatic gains with getting jobs, climbing up the social hierarchy and fulfilling a requirement in order to graduate. And Falk (1978, cited in Yang, 2012) indicates to integrative motivation as the situation whereas a person likes to speak English like natives and wants to be discriminated as one of members of the target language.

In their influential work in Canada (Gardner and Lambert, 1972, Gardner, 1985), they distinct between integrative and instrumental motivation. They assert that the former occurs when the learner wishes to identify with the culture of the second language group, and the later occurs when the learner wishes to learn the language for practical reasons.

Gardner (2006) refers to instrumental motivation as the practical value of using one foreign language, and refers to integrative motivation as the willingness of learners to integrate themselves into the target language community. Donyei (1994) claims that integrative motivation results from a combination of different desires such as making friends with the people who speak the language.

It can be deduced that learners learn a language for different purposes, these purposes may be instrumental such as getting a job, or career promotion; and they may be integrative purposes such as making friends with people who speak the target language or learning about their culture.

Several studies have been carried out to investigate the effect of integrative and instrumental motivation in learning English as a second or foreign language, and whether learners or students are integratively or instrumentally motivated. For example, a study was conducted by Sase, Abdelaal and Amhimmid (2015) to identify whether Libyan high school

students in Malaysia are instrumentally or integratively motivated to learn English. The study revealed that the students are more integratively motivated than instrumentally. Another study was done by Wong (2011), it investigated the effects of both instrumental and integrative motivation on third-year Chinese undergraduates in learning English as a second language, and wanted to find the type of motivation which played a more important role in their second language learning process. He found that instrumental motivation was more important among those students in learning a second language, as compared to integrative motivation. Vaezi's (2008) study, which was done to examine Iranian's undergraduate students' integrative and instrumental motivation toward learning English as a foreign language, also shows that Iranian students had very high motivation and positive attitudes towards learning English and they were more instrumentally motivated.

The results of the study which was done by Lyons (1983) showed that many students are motivated instrumentally rather than integratively, and that they study English in order to get some measurable extrinsic value of learning outcomes. Ahmadi (2011) investigates the effect of integrative and instrumental motivation on Iranian English foreign language learner's language learning. He considers gender as a moderator variable. He finds that female students had stronger integrative motivation, but male students had a stronger instrumental motivation.

A learner can be motivated both integratively and instrumentally, but the rate of motivation may be different, whereas one is higher than the another and vice versa.. For example, Zangher (2012), In his study, which has been done on forty students studying at the college of Art, Bani Walid University in Libya, he finds that those Libyan students had a high

instrumental and high integrative motivation to study English, but their integrative motivation appeared to be a little higher than their instrumental motivation.

### **Motivation and Foreign Language Learning:**

Motivation is essential for learning, and it is one of the factors that influence learners' learning. Motivation is one of the important underpinnings of the process of learning; therefore, the psychology of motivation is very important in education (Melendy, 2008). Zanghar (2012) says that "motivation is often a good indicator of students' progress in learning a second language".

Many studies show that more highly motivated students learn more quickly than students who are motivated. Gardner (2006) states that "students with higher levels of motivation will do better than students with lower levels" (p.241). In addition, the study of Ushida (2005) reveals that there is a significant correlation between the students' motivation and their learning outcomes.

Motivation is considered significant in its role in language learning success. "It is easy in second language to claim that a learner will be successful with the proper motivation"(Brown, 2000, p. 160). In their study, Oroujlou and Vahedi (2011) claim that motivation and attitude have great roles in raising proficiency and efficiency of the students in language learning. According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), motivation refers to a combination of the learner's attitude, desires, and willingness to expand effort on order to learn the second language. Dornyei (1998) believes that motivation is one of the keys that influence the rate of success of language

learning. It plays a crucial role in foreign language learning and achievement.

According to Cook (2000) students who are not motivated both integratively and instrumentally will find it difficult to learn and gain knowledge of a second language and learning process would be difficult for them, and he believes that both instrumental and integrative motivation are useful and effective factors for second language learning.

In learning a foreign language, Holem (1992) believes that students can be motivated by the people who speak the language or the context in which the language is spoken.

Teachers play a vital role on motivating students to the learning of a foreign language, and their basic role can make students motivated. As well as their encouragement plays an important role for achieving success of learning because they can play as motivators, and supporters in a language classroom. Some studies point to this role of teachers in the learner's motivation. These studies express the important role of teachers for helping students in the process of foreign and second language learning. For example, a study was done by Pahlavanpoorfird and Soori (2014) reveals that teachers have effects on the students' motivation.

When the students are highly motivated, they try their bests to take part in class activities and feel more motivated. Lucas (1990), for example, finds that if teachers can make students active participants in learning, students will be motivated to learn.

As another example, the results of the qualitative and quantitative analyses of Bernaus's (1995) research proves that motivation affects students' foreign language acquisition, and shows that the foreign language teacher's personality and the teacher's way of teaching affect students'

motivation. Mahadi & Jafari (2012) suggest that language teachers and lecturers should pay attention to the personality of their students, and should be aware of motivation, its importance and its types to have practical, useful and effective classroom and a positive outcome in their teaching context.

## **Research Methodology:**

### **Participants:**

The participants of this study were 100 fourth undergraduate students. All of them study English as a second language at Al-Zawia University.

### **Data Collection Procedure:**

The data of this study was collected through a questionnaire which was based on Likert scale that is based on 4-point scales, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" and they were coded as (strongly disagree=1, disagree=2, agree=3, and strongly agree=4). The questionnaire included twenty items. The first ten items were based on integrative motivation and the other ten items were based on instrumental motivation. The items of the questionnaire were adopted from (Takage, 2003, Carreria, 2004, & Kimura et al, 2001, cited in Carreira, 2005). The participants were asked to choose only one option from four, and they were informed that their responding would be used for research purposes only.

### **Data Analysis Procedure:**

The data in this study was quantitative. The quantitative data of the questionnaire was analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and paired-samples T- test) were carried out for all items involved in this study to report, describe, and summarize the important general characteristics of the sets of the obtained data. The paired samples T-test was used to find out the differences between integrative and instrumental motivation of students. In this study, the mean scores of motivation were calculated to indicate the degree to which students perceive: a mean score of 1-1.75 indicated low level, 1.76-2.50 indicates a moderate level, 2.51-3.25 indicates a high level, whereas a mean score of 3.26-4 indicates a very high level. Also, the mean scores were computed using independent samples t-tests to find out whether students had more mean scores in integrative motivation than instrumental motivation or versa.

### **Research Results:**

The purpose of this section is to provide the analysis of the data collected for the study designed to determine if the students are more integratively or instrumentally motivated.

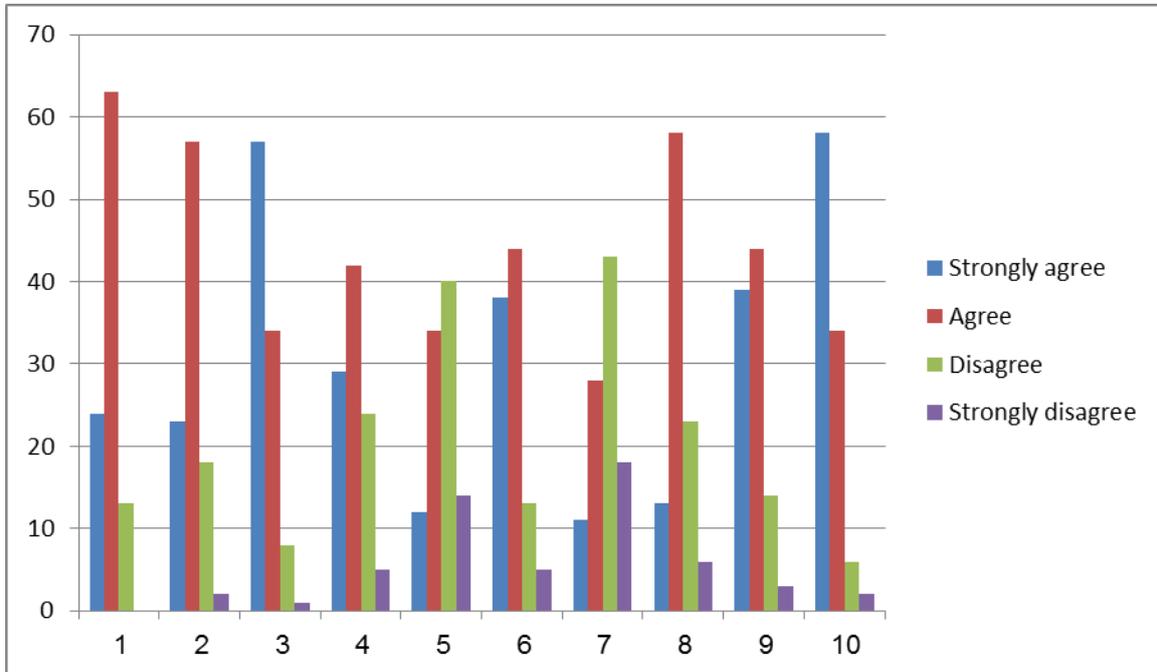
## Integrative Motivation

Table (1): Descriptive statistics of integrative motivation (n=100)

N.	Items: I am learning English ...	1	2	3	4	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
01	in order to understand foreign thoughts, and cultures.	00	13	63	24	3.11	0.60	High
02	because it is necessary for the introduction of scientific technology.	02	18	57	23	3.01	0.70	High
03	because I want my English to become proficient.	01	08	34	57	3.47	0.69	Very high
04	because I want to go to various foreign countries.	05	24	42	29	2.95	0.86	High
05	because I want to make a lot of foreign friends.	14	40	34	12	2.44	0.88	Moderate
06	in order to talk to foreigners when traveling abroad.	05	13	44	38	3.15	0.83	High
07	because I want to live abroad.	18	43	28	11	2.32	0.90	Moderate
08	in order to know about foreign countries.	06	23	58	13	2.78	0.75	Moderate
09	because I enjoy the English class.	03	14	44	39	3.19	0.79	High
10	in order to be able to communicate with native speakers.	02	06	34	58	3.48	0.70	Very high
	<b>Total</b>					<b>3.00</b>		<b>High</b>

Table (1) indicated that the overall mean score of students' integrative motivation toward learning English was at a high level (mean=3.00). When considering all items, it was found that the highest

mean score fell in the items no. 10(learning English in order to be able to communicate with native English speakers, mean=3.48) and no. 03(learning English in order to be proficient, mean=3.47) which were at a very high level. The lowest which was no. 07(learning English in order to live abroad, mean=2.32) was at a moderate level.



**Figure(1): Distribution of means of integrative motivation**

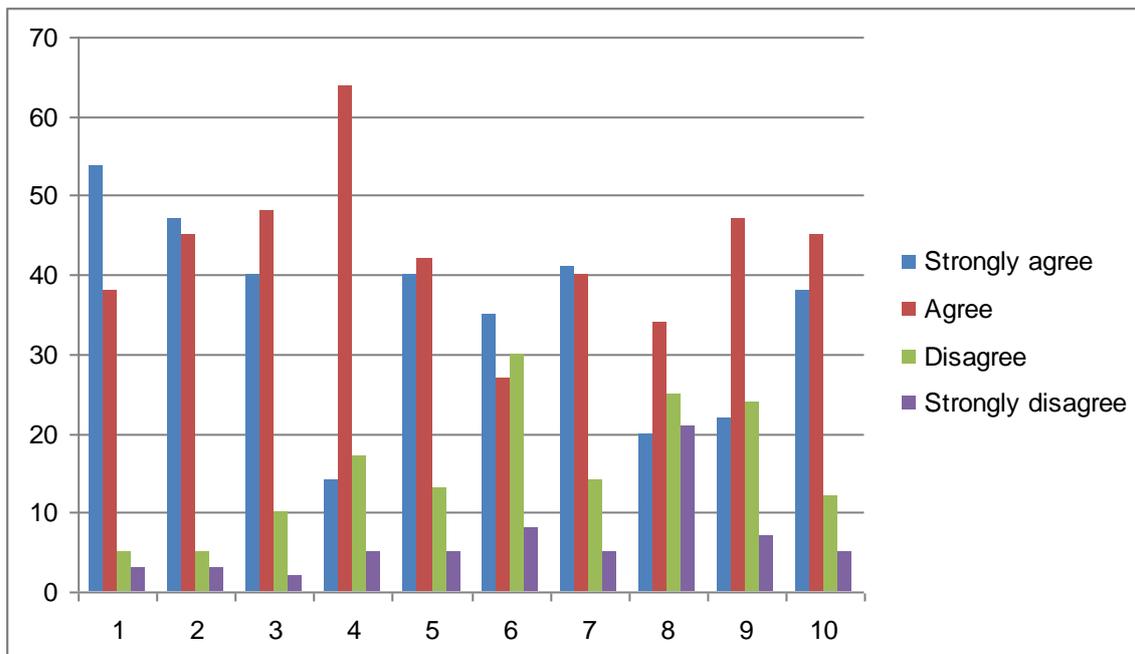
Figure (1) showed how Libyan students participating in this study have high integrative motivation.

**Instrumental Motivation:****Table (2): Descriptive statistics of instrumental motivation (n=100)**

.	Items: I am learning English ...	1	2	3	4	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
01	because it is necessary nowadays.	03	05	38	54	3.43	0.73	Very high
02	because it is necessary to get good grades and qualification for my future studies.	03	05	45	47	3.36	0.72	Very high
03	because it is useful when traveling in many countries.	02	10	48	40	3.26	0.72	Very high
04	in order to make English easy in junior high school.	05	17	64	14	2.87	0.70	High
05	in order to be able to get a better job.	05	13	42	40	3.17	0.84	High
06	because my parents consider the English language as a very important language to learn.	08	30	27	35	2.89	0.98	High
07	because my future job requires the English skills.	05	14	40	41	3.17	0.85	High
08	because I want to work abroad in the future.	21	25	34	20	2.53	1.04	High
09	because I want to have financial benefits.	07	24	47	22	2.84	0.85	High
10	because I want to pass examinations	05	12	45	38	3.16	0.82	High
	<b>Total</b>					<b>3.06</b>		<b>High</b>

Table (2) showed that the overall mean score of students' instrumental motivation toward learning English was at a high level (mean=3.06). When considering all items, there were only three items which were at a very high level. These were items no. 1(learning English because it is necessary nowadays, mean=3.43), item no. 2(learning English in order to get good grades and qualification for future studies and job, mean=3.36), and item no. 3(learning English because it is useful when traveling in many countries, mean=3.26). On the contrary, the other seven items no. (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10) had mean scores of (2.87, 3.17, 2.89, 3.17, 2.53, 2.84, and 3.16). These items were at high level.

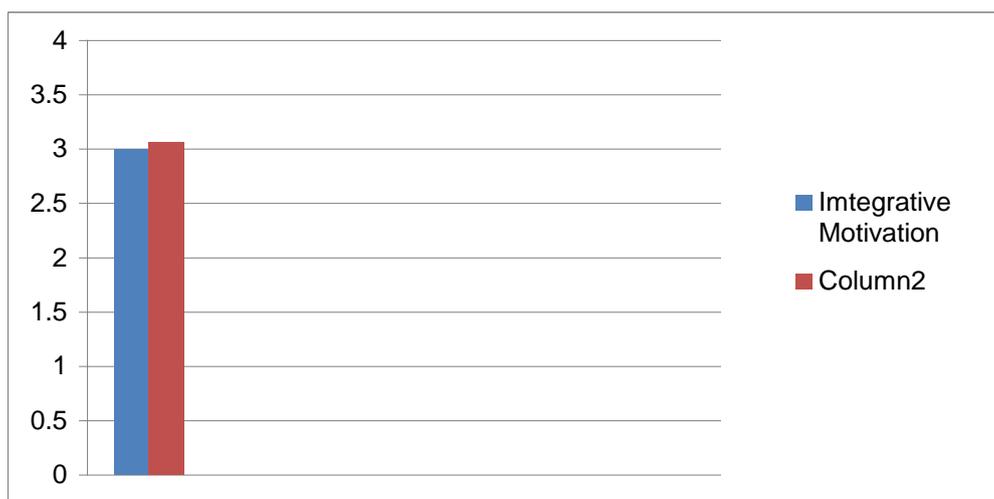
Figure (2) showed how Libyan students participating in this study have high instrumental motivation.



**Figure(2): Distribution of means of instrumental motivation**

Comparing the overall mean scores of items in integrative motivation ( $m=3.00$ ), to the instrumental motivation ( $m=3.06$ ), it can be concluded that these two scores are considered to be high, and the students are to a certain extent instrumentally motivated but they still have a higher level of integrative motivation toward learning English as a foreign language.

Figure (3) below illustrated that there is no big difference between the two scores; they appear to be close to each other.



**Figure(3): Distribution of means of integrative and instrumental motivation**

In order to find out whether there is a statistically significant difference between the two types of motivation (integrative and instrumental), and to check whether the students had higher integrative motivation than the instrumental one or versa, paired-sample T-test was run.

**Table (3): Paired-Samples statistics for the two types of motivation**

Sig. (2tailed)	Df	T	Paired Differences					Pair1 INT. INS.
			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Std. Error Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	
			Upper	Lower				
0.049*	99	-1.990	-0.0002	-0.1557	0.0392	0.3919	-0.0780	

\*S =Significant= P<0.05

Table (3) illustrated that the T value= -1.990, and P-Value = 0.049<0.05, since the P-value is smaller than 0.05, the difference between the two types of motivation is significant. This indicates that the Libyan students participating in this study are highly motivated both integratively and instrumentally toward learning English, with slightly stronger instrumental motivation. This means that the difference between the integrative and instrumental motivation was slight, but meaningful.

### **Discussion of Research Results:**

The current study found that Al-Zawia University students' motivation toward learning English as a foreign language was at high level with mean scores of 3.00 in integrative and 3.06 in instrumental motivations. And the results of the study showed that those students are close to equally motivated both integratively and instrumentally to learn English language.

The results presented in table (1) show that the participating students were at very high level, in items no.3 "I want my English to become proficient", and no.10 "to be able to communicate with native speakers".

These results imply that the students are interested with English, and with conversing with native speakers. But the integrative motivation decreases in some items, especially in items no.5 "I want to make a lot of foreign friends" and no. 7" I want to live abroad". This can be explained by the fact that making friendships with foreign people and living abroad is not from the students' priorities. Moreover, the need of integrative motivation, in items no. 1, 2, 4, 6, and 9, was at high level and it is evident for their considerable desire to learn English.

Participants, who selected instrumental items over integrative ones, often take into consideration the economic advantages of learning a foreign language. A good example in this respect is, in table (2), item no. 9 "I learn English to have financial benefits". The need to instrumental motivation, especially in items no. 5, 7, and 8 is evident for their work. They want to learn English to get better jobs and to work abroad. As well as, the parental motivation in learning English can have impacts on students and item no. 6 is the best example for this aspect. In addition, it is possible that the participants who select the instrumental items do that because they want to accomplish their own goals or they may feel under stress to pass exams, to get good grades, or to get better jobs. Items no. 2, 4, 5, 8, and 10 are examples to this interpretation. Among the ten items of instrumental motivation, the first three items were at very high level. This indicated that they were the most important reasons for students to learn English. Based on these results, it is discovered that learning English is very important and advantageous in students' life.

As a whole, the thought that students learn English because of instrumental motivation is somewhat subjective and incomplete without considering students' integrative motivation. However, it is unreasonable to

conclude that the students do not have interest in foreign cultures, people, and other aspects of the target language. As the questionnaire of the study reveals, a large number of students are interested in learning English, and they want to know about the target language, and this implies that the students have integrative motivation to learn English. There is no doubt that students are primarily motivated by instrumental motivation, but this may be because of certain social and educational background in Libya.

Another issue for discussion is that the very slight significant difference that was found as shown in table (3). This finding indicated that the students use English not just as a tool to pass their education but they use it in their everyday lives and they are trying to be ready to the competition in this world.

The finding was found to be in contrast with some studies. For instance, Sase, Abedelaal & Amhimmid (2015) revealed that the students are more integratively motivated than instrumentally. In addition, Wong (2011) found that instrumental motivation was more important among students, as compared to integrative motivation. Also Zangher (2012) showed that the students had a high instrumental and integrative motivation, but their integrative motivation appeared to be a little higher than their instrumental motivation.

Based on the findings, it is discovered that the students are motivated both integratively and instrumentally, but they are slightly more instrumentally motivated to learn English and this finding answers the research question.

## **Conclusion :**

Based on the findings of the study, I'd like to draw conclusions as follows:

- Lack of motivation may cause learners to be less successful in learning a foreign language. Therefore, having high motivation can have an impact on the success of language learning.
- Most students are aware of the significance of English in both their academic field and their life, and they have strong integrative and instrumental motivation in learning English.
- Most students use English as a tool not only to satisfy and actualize their internal desires, but also to achieve their profitable goals.
- Students' high motivation will enable them to learn English effectively, and they will be more successful than those who learn English without motivation.

So it is necessary to pay attention to this important factor in learning and also in teaching a language. Therefore, the researcher of the study suggests that motivation should be a crucial part in the process of learning and teaching; and she recommends instructors to increase their students' motivation by giving more support in their study, and she also recommends them to use the strategies, such as creating a friendly environment to make students feel more comfortable while participating in classroom activities, that can be effective to increase motivation toward learning.

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