



## Factors Affecting the Motivation Level of Undergraduate ESL Learners at University of Sargodha, Pakistan

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### ARTICLE INFORMATION

Original Research Paper

Received Dec. 2018

Accepted Feb. 2019

#### Keywords:

Undergraduate students,  
gender,  
ESL learning,  
instrumental and integrative  
motivation

### ABSTRACT

The present research identifies the factors that influence the motivation level of undergraduate learners towards learning ESL in University of Sargodha context. This research adopted a survey method to collect quantitative data. The data were collected from randomly selected sample of 300 undergraduate male and female students. Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery was employed to get a modified questionnaire of 41 items, to collect information about learner's motivation. Means and standard deviations of data were computed by analyzing the data by The SPSS program. Furthermore, T-test was calculated to determine the motivational factors and gender differences in ESL learning. The findings presented the overall high degree of interest in learning English as a Second Language. A positive attitude and good level of instrumental and integrative motivation was found in students of both genders and relatively higher instrumental motivation in male students towards learning English. Finally, some pedagogical implications were presented to improve students' proficiency in ESL learning.

### 1. Introduction

The English language is considered a lingua franca all over the world. It has become the shared mode of communication among around the globe. Different societies and nations use English as the commonest tool for communication at different levels. The English language is widely used by different countries and international organizations as their official language. Crystal (2003) mentioned that the number of non-native English speakers has astonishingly surpassed the native speakers. There are three time more non-native English speakers as compared to the native speakers. The advancements in field of information technology such as internet, has drawn the individuals closer and the world has become a global village and this phenomenon has helped the English language to obtain its current status (Barnett and Lee, 2003 as cited in Nawaz, Amin, Tatla, 2015).

English is being learnt and taught at a large scale around the world (Richards and Rogers, 2001). The

current status of English language has become a stimulus to motivate the people for learning this language. Apart from many other requirements, for instance, proper learning environment with qualified teachers, investment of time and effort and up-to-date syllabus in a second language learning, learners require a strong motivational force for better output.

Motivation is the most powerful factor for achieving any form of success, especially in learning a language. Motivation has a paramount significance, in academic achievement of the students. Low degree of motivation may cause low proficiency in second language learning. It is a key factor which influences the degree of success in ESL learning. McDonough (2007) opined that motivation is the thing which pushes persons to do something and moves them to acquire or to impart English. A valuable foundation was laid given by Gardner's description of motivation. Gardner and Lambert (1972) asserted that the learner's attitude and motivation towards learning the language is a key to determine his motivation in general. Gardner (2010) has divided this factor into two categories, namely the instrumental and integrative orientations. These two categories are further illustrated in the literature review section.

Hence motivation is an important part in a second language learning in the broader paradigm of language learning. This research comes under paradigm of that part.

### **1.1. Significance of the Research**

The study explores the significant factors which influence the undergraduate students' motivation in ESL learning in Pakistani university context. Since the English language is regarded as a key to success and it has a dominant influence in all government and private offices and institutions such as military, administration, business, education, banking, mass communication and media (Mansoor, 1993), therefore a person cannot get into any professional area of social and economic power without learning English language.

Despite knowing its importance and learning English language for 13 to 14 years at different levels of their education, many students fail in learning and speaking English skillfully in Pakistan (Warsi, 2004). This might be because of less efficient strategies that are adopted to teach the students, without keeping in view the students' level of motivation or attitude towards learning the language. The present study might be helpful for the administration, instructors and syllabus designers where it is conducted, to improve the motivation of their ESL learners.

### **1.2. Rationale of the Study**

Most of the related research is mostly from the developed Western and Arab. No significant study is found to be conducted in Pakistan to inspect the issues under investigation especially in terms of gender. The research has found a significant work of Nawaz, Amin and Tatla (2015), that explores the factors affecting the student's motivation level in ESL learning but their study does not explore this issue in terms of gender. The University of Sargodha is gaining higher status in academic field and is taking effective measures to ensure quality education. Therefore, the present study would be of significant help to understand the above mentioned important issues with respect to University of Sargodha undergraduate students in the Pakistani university context.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

Keeping in view the above significance of motivation, this research aims at to explore:

1. What factors (instrumental, Integrative or Personal) serve as primary source of motivation in undergraduate English language learners?

## 2. What are the extents to which motivational factors play a different role in terms of gender?

Following section consists of some related literature about the motivational orientations of ESL learners.

### 2. Literature Review

Motivation is an internal force that encourages an individual to attain certain goals. It is an excellent driving force that urges people to perform certain tasks (Dornyei,2001). There are certain needs that create an urge in human beings to learn something. In the present modern era, globalization has become a motivation for many people to learn the English language. Barnett and Lee (2003) have asserted that the world has become a global village. Learning English is the key motivator to get success at local and global level. Learning English language has become a fundamental requirement for the people to fulfil their political, economic and cultural needs.

According to the study of Parson, Hinson and Brown (2001), an important element in any learning process is motivation. Learning and motivation are inter-related to attain any learning goal. Learning help us get fresh knowledge and the force which encourages us to go through this learning process is motivation.

There are three key elements of motivation in learning a language according to Gardner's (1982) socio-educational model. The very first is desire which is followed by effort that finally leads to an effect. Desire refers to how much learner wishes to achieve proficiency in the language. Effort indicates the learner's time spent in the study of language and effect is the emotional reaction of the learner regarding the study of language. We can say that if a learner is highly desirous towards learning a second language, has emotional attachment with that language and if he/she spend more and more time to reach their goal, he/she may learn that language more effectively than those who consider the second language learning a dull and rough work and learn it without any interest. Many students learn a second language just because it is only a part of their curriculum.

Motivation in learning something can be divided into types. Harmer (1991) categorized motivation in two different types by employing the word 'goal'. These are as follows:

1. **Short-term Goals.** Short term goals are set by the learners to achieve in near future, for instance to pass their examination or to achieve high score.
2. **Long-term Goals.** In long term goals, the learners intend to achieve something higher in the long run. For example, learning a second language, English in this case, for communicating to the native English speakers.

On the basis these two types of goals, the learners of a second language can be categorized into two types of motivation: -

**1. Instrumental Motivation.** Instrumentally motivated second language learners desire to use that language for purely instrumental gains and practical needs. They learn a second language to get an opportunity for better job, salary or to get into college (to pass tests and examination). Gardner and Lambert (1992) note that instrumental motivation is a source to fulfil social and economic needs by learning a second language.

**2. Integrative Motivation.** Integrative motivation leads learners to learn a second language to get more and more knowledge of the community speaking that language, about their ethnic, cultural and language traditions (Gardner,2010). Motivation is the fundamental component in second language learning. To Brown (2000), motivation of both types, instrumental as well as integrative are significant to second language learning.

Cooper and Fisher (1977), revealed another kind of motivation, that was termed as 'developmental'

motivation. Developmental motivation denotes self-development including activities, for instance, English book reading or watching movies etc. (Cooper and Fisher, 1977, p.243).

Both males and females have different abilities that help them to learn a language more easier and faster. Motivational factors have different influence on learners of the second language in terms of gender. It is commonly noted that females show higher level of motivation and lower anxiety towards learning a second language.

Solak (2014) in his study concluded that female ESL learners were having a higher level of motivation as compared to the male learners. He further noticed that females showed positive attitude towards learning ESL and they had lower level of anxiety than males. Furthermore, females were integratively and instrumentally more strongly motivated to learn English. On the other hand, no gender difference was found regarding parental encouragement towards learning English language. Sung and Padilla (1998) conducted a study in schools and their results confirmed significantly higher level of motivation in females than males in learning English as a second language. Contrary to these, Abu-Rabia (1997) revealed that in Canadian context, both male and female students displayed strong motivation towards learning second language.

Most of the above-mentioned studies analyses male and female students' perceptions of ESL learning and their level to which male and female students are motivated.

Christo Moskovsy and Fakieh Alrabi (2009) concluded through a research study on motivational factors in ESL/EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning that learning EFL is dependent on instrumental motivation where as in ESL learning, integrative motivation is more important.

Benson (1991) held a survey in Japan over 300 freshmen to study their motivation to ESL learning. The findings demonstrated that " integrative and personal reasons for learning English were preferred over instrumental ones" (Benson, 1991, p.34).

Lifrieri (2005) conducted a ground-breaking study by collecting data on the motivation and socio-economic background of ESL students. He noted that "more economically disadvantaged ESL learners showed more positive attitude and high motivation towards learning English.

Nawaz et al., (2015) conducted a mixed method research. The quantitative data revealed that there are many factors such as integrativeness, instrumentality, international posture etc., that affect the male student's motivation towards ESL learning. The data also revealed many other factors including the significance of English language for the professionals and Pakistani public at national and global level.

All above-mentioned concepts reconfirm the importance of motivation towards ESL learning and the past studies discussed in above section would possibly be helpful in identifying learners' motivation and attitude in the present study. Most of the above studies focus on to investigate the types of motivation towards which mostly students are motivated. There are many other relevant concepts such as English anxiety, parental encouragement, that are not discussed here.

The next section is based on methodology that was used in collecting and analyzing required data.

### **3. Methodology**

The presented study aimed to investigate mainly the undergraduate students' motivational orientations of ESL learners and their level of ESL learning anxiety by using one research tool namely, questionnaire.

**1. Participants.** The data were gathered from 300 undergraduate students at University of Sargodha. A total

284 students responded to fill the questionnaire of which there were 102 males and 182 females among them. A large number of female students was selected to meet the given research objective of investigating motivational factors among ESL students in term of gender. These undergraduate students are taught English language as an obligatory subject in their first two academic years at university.

**2. Research Instrument.** A 5-point Likert scale instrument adapted from Attitude/Motivation Test Battery ‘AMT’ by Gardner (1960) which ranged from ‘Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree’ from 5 to 1 points respectively. All 41 questions divided into five sections in the questionnaire were taken from Gardner Test Battery to gather information of participant’s motivation.

1. Interest and attitude towards learning English
2. Integrative orientation
3. Instrumental orientation
4. English class anxiety
5. Parental Encouragement

The demographic information includes the information about students’ gender and age.

**3. Data collection.** The data was collected by distributing 300 questionnaires among males and female during the class durations. Clear instructions were given to students to fill the questionnaire. A number of 284 students responded positively to fill out the questionnaire and submitted upon completion.

#### 4. Data Analysis

After obtaining data from the questionnaire, SPSS program was employed for analysis. After that, the results were analyzed in terms of study objectives. Means and standard deviations of data were also computed. Furthermore, T-test was calculated to determine the motivational factors and gender differences in ESL learning. The students who got mean range between 3.68-5.00 ,2.34-3.67, 1.00-2.33 were considered highly, moderately and lowly motivated respectively. The same mean range also show high, moderate or low level of anxiety and parental encouragement.

#### 5. Results

This unit is more divided into three sub-parts. The first part explores the results on motivation for learning English, the second and third sections show impact of motivational factors in terms of students’ gender and age. Each sub-part utilizes data collected from questionnaire to present the results.

**Motivation.** This section provides overall study’s results and Table:1 highlight all the 41 question items, their resulting mean scores and Standard Deviation (S.D) which serve as a foundation for the further explanation of the results.

Table 1

*The results on learner’s motivation for ESL learning*

	#.Statements	Mean	S.D
Interest and positive or negative Attitude Towards Learning English	1 .If I were visiting an English country, I would like to be able to speak the language of the people.	4.2254	.89675
	2. Even though Pakistan is relatively far from countries speaking English language, it is important for Pakistanis to learn English language.	4.1514	.95571

	3. I wish I could speak English language perfectly	4.1831	1.00963
	4. I want to read the literature of a English language in the original language rather than a translation	3.5739	1.03890
	5. I often wish I could read newspapers and magazines in English language	3.7676	1.10358
	6. If I planned to stay in another country, I would make a great effort to learn the language even though I could get along in Urdu	3.8275	1.04416
	7. I would study English language in school even if it were not required	3.4542	1.14096
	8. I enjoy meeting and listening to people who speak English language.	3.7782	1.09128
	9. Studying English language is an enjoyable experience	3.7641	1.08832
	10. Learning English is really great.	4.1197	.87754
	11. I really enjoy learning English	3.9331	.93938
	12. English is an important part of the school program	4.0634	1.01030
	13. I plan to learn as much English as possible.	3.9648	1.02210
	14. I love learning English	3.6268	1.16248
	15. I hate English.	2.4930	3.15388
	16. I would rather spend my time on subjects other than English.	2.7887	1.17290
	17. Learning English is a waste of time.	2.1268	1.06575
	18. I think that learning English is dull.	2.1092	1.08249
	19. When I leave University, I shall give up the study of English entirely because I am not interested in it.	2.3486	1.19553
Integrative Orientation	20. Studying English can be important to me because it will allow me to be more at ease with fellows who speak English.	4.0669	.96168
	21. Studying English can be important for me because it will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people.	3.9824	.82990
	22. Studying English important for me because it will enable me to better understand and appreciate English art and literature.	4.0634	.87538
	23. Studying English can be important for me because I will be able to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups.	3.9930	1.02269
Instrumental Orientation	24. Studying English can be important for me only because I'll need it for my future career.	4.0035	1.01751
	25. Studying English can be important for me because it will make me a more knowledgeable person.	3.9085	.93540
	26. Studying English can be important to me because I think it will someday be useful in getting a good job.	4.0845	.84480
	27. Studying English can be important for me because other people will respect me more if I have knowledge of English language.	3.5880	1.14774
English Class Anxiety	28. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in our English class.	3.2465	1.20474
	29. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in our English class.	3.2430	1.12824
	30. I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.	3.2500	1.11090
	31. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class.	3.1937	1.13777
	32. I am afraid the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	2.9824	1.32242
Parental Encouragement	33. My parents try to help me with my English.	3.6056	1.12760
	34. My parents feel that I should continue studying English all through school.	3.7641	.92319
	35. My parents think I should devote more time to my English studies.	3.4049	1.06076
	36. My parents really encourage me to study English.	3.6479	1.06135
	37. My parents show considerable interest in anything to do with my English courses.	3.5634	1.08615
	38. My parents encourage me to practice my English as much as	3.7817	1.10326

	possible.		
	39. My parents have stressed the importance English will have for me when I leave university.	3.6127	3.19086
	40. My parents feel that I should really try to learn English.	3.6937	1.06394
	41. My parents urge me to seek help from my teacher if I am having problems with my English.	3.6655	1.13912

Table 1 demonstrates no statistically significant differences were found in all factors of motivation in students. The above table presents the overall high degree of interest and positive attitude of students towards learning English through first 14 statements. Statement number 1 (If I were...) has the highest mean (4.2254). The next five statements (15-19) presents the moderate level of negative attitude of students towards learning English. Statements number 17 (Learning English is...) and 18 (I think...) has the lowest mean (2.1268 and 2.1092 respectively).

Statements (20-23) reveals that students possessed higher level of integrative motivation including Statement number 20 with higher mean score 4.0669. In next section demonstrates high degree instrumental motivation and statement number 26 shows highest mean score (4.0845) in this section. Statements (28-32) present high level of anxiety of ESL learners, only statement number 32 has slightly low mean score (2.9824).

The next 9 items present high level of parental encouragement for ESL learners including statement number 38 with highest mean score (3.7817).

**Age.** Table#2 highlights the varied age of students from 18 to 23 years. The undergraduate students in University of Sargodha usually fall in this age limit.

Table 2  
*Age of Students*

	Age	Mean	S.D	T Test	Sig. Value
Interest and attitude towards learning English	18-20	3.4981	1.50127	.661	.508
	21-23	3.4701	1.29134		
Integrative orientation	18-20	4.0332	.93679	.367	.714
	21-23	4.0114	.89944		
Instrumental orientation	18-20	3.8648	1.00043	-1.563	.118
	21-23	3.9659	1.02614		
English class anxiety	18-20	3.1755	1.17942	-.360	.719
	21-23	3.2000	1.20212		
Parental encouragement	18-20	3.6667	1.05224	3.398	.001***
	21-23	3.5101	1.13106		

\*, \*\*, \*\*\*, are significant at 10%, 5%, 1% respectively.

No statistically significant differences are found in all five factors affecting the motivational level of ESL students regarding to their age except Parental Encouragement (p=0.01). The students of age ranging from 18 to 20 years get more encouragement from their parents to learn English as a second language.

**Gender.** After eliciting data by SPSS, the undergraduate students were analyzed according to gender. The results of two groups, males and females are presented in the Table:3

Table:3  
*Gender of Students*

	Gender	Mean	S.D	T Test	Sig. Value
Interest and attitude towards learning English	Male	3.4995	1.31794	.365	.715
	Female	3.4838	1.50340		
Integrative orientation	Male	3.9951	.95345	-.853	.394

	Female	4.0440	.90891		
Instrumental orientation	Male	3.9926	.98512	2.377	.018**
	Female	3.8420	1.01896		
English class anxiety	Male	3.2451	1.20930	1.422	.155
	Female	3.1484	1.17218		
Parental encouragement	Male	3.6002	1.12582	-.638	.523
	Female	3.6282	1.05284		

\*, \*\*, \*\*\*, are significant at 10%, 5%, 1% respectively.

As illustrated in above, no statistically significant differences were seen in all factors affecting the motivational level of ESL students in terms of gender in all the five factors ( $p < 0.05$ ) except Instrumental Orientation ( $p=0.018$ ). It means that the highly motivated undergraduate male students of University of Sargodha are instrumentally more motivated than female students.

## 6. Discussion

The current study intended to investigate the factors affecting the motivation level of ESL, especially with relation to gender in University of Sargodha context. As taken from Attitude/Motivation Test Battery ‘AMT’ by Gardner (1960), the questionnaire consists of five factors: Interest and attitude towards learning English, Integrative orientation, Instrumental orientation, English class anxiety and Parental Encouragement.

Table:1 presents overall high degree of interest and positive attitude of students towards learning English through first 14 statements. Statement number 1. has the highest mean (4.2254). The next five statements (15-19) presents the moderate level of negative attitude of students towards learning English. Statements number 17 and 18 has the lowest mean (2.1268 and 2.1092 respectively). Since Lifrieri (2005) has noted that ESL learners from humbler economic background showed more positive attitude towards the advantages of learning English, so the researcher can conclude that the undergraduate ESL learners in University of Sargodha do not belong to a very strong economic background, hence they show a highly positive attitude towards ESL learning.

The findings show that there is no significant difference in integrative and instrumental factors as it is found in the studies of Benson (1991) and Qashoa (2005). Statements (20-23) reveals that students possessed higher level of integrative motivation including Statement number 20 with higher mean score 4.0669. In next section demonstrates high degree instrumental motivation and statement number 26 shows highest mean score (4.0845) in this section. Statements (28-32) present high level of anxiety of ESL learners, only statement number 32 has slightly low mean score (2.9824). The next 9 items present high level of parental encouragement for ESL learners including statement number 38 with highest mean score (3.7817).

The next section demonstrates that the students of age ranging from 18 to 20 years are more encouraged by their parents towards ESL learning. As this study does not mainly aims at investigating the issue in terms of age difference so we shift our discussion to gender differences. Table:3 shows no significant difference in all motivational factors except Instrumental Orientation. It means that the highly motivated undergraduate male students of University of Sargodha are instrumentally more motivated than female students. Overall results reveal that students of both genders are highly motivated towards learning English as second language that are similar to the findings of Abu-Rabia (1997). These findings are completely anti-parallel with the findings of Solak (2014) and Sung and Padilla (1998), who found females students positively motivated towards ESL learning as compared to male students.

The findings of this research are unique in its particular context of the students at University of Sargodha, it can be extended to other institutions and universities in Pakistan. A research conducted in other universities with

distinctively varied backgrounds possibly can result in notably diverse findings.

The researcher obtained the quantitative data from only 300 students from a large population of students at University of Sargodha within a short limit of time. The future investigators are recommended to take a greater number of sample and collect qualitative data through interviews to raise the degree of generalization so that their findings become more reliable.

The research was conducted to provide useful information for the University of Sargodha to improve their courses of English. The management of the institute can stimulate more motivating learning atmosphere by implementing relevant programs for ESL learners. The students with proper motivation will learn English as a second language more proficiently.

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### Appendix

#### Background Questionnaire

CLASS: \_\_\_\_\_

DEPARTEMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

GENDER: Male/Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Please do not be careless about sharing your true feelings.

Statement of Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Interest in English Language.					
1. If I were visiting an English country I would like to be able to speak the language of the people.					
2. Even though Pakistan is relatively far from countries speaking English language, it is important for Pakistanis to learn English language.					
3. I wish I could speak English language perfectly.					
4. I want to read the literature of a English language in the original language rather than a translation.					
5. I often wish I could read newspapers and magazines in English language.					
6. If I planned to stay in another country, I would make a great effort to learn the language even though I could get along in Urdu					
7. I would study English language in school even if it were not required.					
8. I enjoy meeting and listening to people who speak English language.					
9. Studying English language is an enjoyable					

experience.					
Attitudes toward Learning English. Positively Worded Items					
10. Learning English is really great.					
11. I really enjoy learning English					
12. English is an important part of the school program.					
13. I plan to learn as much English as possible.					
14. I love learning English.					
Negatively Worded Items					
15. I hate English.					
16. I would rather spend my time on subjects other than English.					
17. Learning English is a waste of time.					
18. I think that learning English is dull.					
19. When I leave University, I shall give up the study of English entirely because I am not interested in it.					
Integrative Orientation					
20. Studying English can be important to me because it will allow me to be more at ease with fellows who speak English.					
21. Studying English can be important for me because it will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people.					
22. Studying English important for me because it will enable me to better understand and appreciate English art and literature.					
23. Studying English can be important for me because I will be able to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups.					
Instrumental Orientation					
24. Studying English can be important for me only because I'll need it for my future career.					
25. Studying English can be important for me because it will make me a more knowledgeable person.					
26. Studying English can be important to me because I think it will someday be useful in getting a good job.					
27. Studying English can be important for me because other					

people will respect me more if I have knowledge of a English language.					
English Class Anxiety					
28. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in our English class.					
29. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in our English class.					
30. I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.					
31. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class.					
32. I am afraid the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.					
Parental Encouragement					
33. My parents try to help me with my English.					
34. My parents feel that I should continue studying English all through school.					
35. My parents think I should devote more time to my English studies.					
36. My parents really encourage me to study English.					
37. My parents show considerable interest in anything to do with my English courses.					
38. My parents encourage me to practice my English as much as possible.					
39. My parents have stressed the importance English will have for me when I leave university.					
40. My parents feel that I should really try to learn English.					
41. My parents urge me to seek help from my teacher if I am having problems with my English.					