

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING SUCCESS AND MOTIVATION

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The aim of this study was to understand the importance of the types of motivation students need to learn a foreign language successfully. Teaching and learning a foreign language are dependent upon positive motivation. A questionnaire and an achievement test were prepared and administered to a group of 44 students. Results were analyzed and evaluations and comparisons between success and motivation levels were then used to make suggestions for planning activities relating to teaching and learning languages.

Keywords: motivation, learning, teaching, second language.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) argued that second language learners' feelings about a foreign language and its cultural values and living styles (attitudes) and their individual reasons for learning the language (motivation) are related to overall learning success and achievement with learning that foreign language. They found that the pragmatic purpose for learning a second language was derived from a personal desire to know the native speakers of the target language. Second language learners are interested in learning about native speakers of that language and understanding the main purpose of the ways of life in the target language. This is called *instrumental motivation* (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Gardner (1985), Gardner and Lambert (1972), and Schumann (1978) pointed out that integrative, instrumental, and work avoidance motivation help second language learners to learn the target language more easily. It is understood that, as with learning any subject, second language learners must pay attention and learn

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actively in order to integrate knowledge (Engin, 2006). The motivation of the learners determines how ready and eager they are to get more information and to increase their ability to understand, write, and speak the second language.

There are a number of variables and factors that influence students' learning achievement in school, both directly and indirectly. It is important to have enough information about the students in order to be prepared for teaching them. For that reason, this study was developed to examine the relationship between second language learning success and motivation types.

The aim of this research was to examine the relationships among integrative, instrumental, and work avoidance motivations and students' successes in second language learning.

In this study *motivation* is defined as *the feelings of the learner toward the particular target language, its culture and the individual pragmatic reasons for learning a foreign language* (Horwitz, 1990).

Integrative Motivation begins with a personal effort and continues on with a desire to know the target language's native speakers. The aim of the students' studies and activities is learning something new (Horwitz, 1987, 2001).

Instrumental Motivation is associated with a pragmatic purpose for language learning whereby students study harder to receive high marks in school (Hamilton, 2001; Locastro, 2001).

Work Avoidance Motivation is the avoidance of studying hard.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The study was carried out at Atatürk University, Kazim Karabekir Education Faculty, English Language Teacher Training Department, with students in two English preparatory classes. A total of 44 students were randomly selected as the sample. Each class contained 22 students, 18 females and four males. The students were aiming to develop their English language skills. All participants understood that this study was aimed at increasing their success in the second-language learning process. The students were encouraged to answer the achievement test and questionnaire honestly and to the best of their ability.

Students were generally considered to be of equal ability because they had all passed the same university entrance examinations in order to become students at this university. The target language teaching program was aimed at teaching all of the language learning abilities in detail.

INSTRUMENT

The aim of this research was to define the ratio of motivation types in the sample group, that is, integrative, instrumental, and work avoidance, by means

of the 21 questions (each with four alternatives) in the prepared motivation questionnaire. The questionnaire was a Motivation Scale prepared for this study, based on Costello (1967) and Entwisle (1972), which has been used in previous research and was adapted for this study. An achievement test was also administered to all the participating students in order to examine the relationships between the students' success and motivation levels.

The results of the questionnaire were sorted according to the three motivation types. Questions 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, and 15 were about integrative motivation, questions 5, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, and 19 were about instrumental motivation, and questions 2, 6, 8, 11, 14, 20, and 21 were about the work avoidance motivation. Results were evaluated in terms of percentage rates and analysis of variance (ANOVA) according to gender, age, and which of the two classes the participants belonged to.

RESULTS

The results of this study confirm the importance of the integrative, instrumental, and work avoidance motivations in second language learning. Data collected were as follows:

Both the males and females had enough integrative motivation to learn new behaviors in regard to the target second language.

The ages of the students ranged from 17 to 21. It was found that those aged 17 and 21 were slightly keener to learn a foreign language than those aged 18 to 20. On the other hand, it may be said that all were quite eager to learn the chosen target language. That eagerness is also a variable in integrative motivation. This difference arises from the different integrative motivation levels and periods. Namely, at the age of seventeen the students were so keen to learn that this enabled them to attain higher marks.

Both classes A and B had the same level of willingness and eagerness with regard to integrative motivation because they had the same – or similar – environmental experiences, cultural beliefs, and values.

According to our investigation, the instrumental motivation levels of the male and female students were the same. All of the students from both classes had the same goal of attaining higher marks and being successful in learning the target second language.

Students from both classes shared the belief that instrumental motivation is very important for their success in learning, especially in learning a foreign language.

Males and females shared very similar ideas about work avoidance motivation. According to the data collected, work avoidance motivation among all participating students can be understood, in that the students at these ages are undecided about

this kind of motivation, especially at the age of 20. Age was not found to have a significant impact as related to gender.

According to the results of our study, both classes were hesitant about work avoidance motivation, but this was more pronounced with group B. The results are similar to those of other integrative and instrumental motivation studies. Group B were found to participate more than group A, although the difference was not significant.

Both sexes gained relatively high marks of eight or more points on the achievement test. Females gained slightly higher scores overall, although this result may have been influenced by the larger number of female participants as compared to males.

According to the data, all students were successful in learning a second language. This was especially true for those aged 17. According to the other tables, students aged 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21 received eight or more points on the achievement test. This may be accounted for by the fact that they have acquired new knowledge.

Both classes had very similar examination results. Therefore, it is likely that both classes had similar skill levels when learning a second language.

The distribution of the motivation ratios according to the options that we gave to the students is divided into three stages. In the first stage the students strongly agree with the answers to the six questions assessing integrative motivation, for example: “studying English is important for me because it will allow me to meet and converse with more varied people” was the most commonly selected option. In the second stage, students’ participation in “work avoidance motivation” was more dominant than their participation in “integrative” and “instrumental” motivations. The students particularly complained about the class being limited to a certain size. This is evident in question 6 where the students almost unanimously selected the option: “I do not want my faculty to limit attendance”. In the third stage, the majority of the students selected “undecided” of the four options provided, regarding some of the ideas including “work avoidance motivation” and “instrumental motivation”. This is due in part to the fact that these ideas are contrary to their points of view regarding their second language learning achievement. For example, the students were unsure about question 16, which stated: “In our department I try to do better than the other students”. This question shows the students’ “instrumental motivation” levels related to the second language learning achievement. In the fourth stage of the distribution, there was agreement among the students, but also some hesitation about the three kinds of motivation types. For example, question 17: “I am trying to do the best in my class because I want to be number one”. This idea appears

to be somewhat exaggerated, in relation to “instrumental motivation” levels. In the last stage of the distribution, the students strongly disagree with “work avoidance motivation”. This may be due to the students of the English Language Department being aware of the importance of learning their second language and being very accomplished. For example, question 21: “I am here because my family wants me to attend this school”. The students did not agree with this idea because they want to learn a foreign language for their own reasons, not because their family want them to. The students were aware of their goals, and formed their achievement criteria to meet these goals. As far as they were concerned, there was no benefit to be gained by learning the second language if they were only doing so because their parents were making them.

Examining the participation sequence, it is evident that the results of “integrative motivation” are more positive than the results of “instrumental motivation”. The students are generally undecided about “work avoidance motivation”.

Both groups were supportive of “integrative motivation” rather than “instrumental motivation”. They were generally opposed to the “work avoidance motivation”. This indicates that they do not have any motivation to avoid studying the target foreign language.

Some data indicate that agreement with “integrative motivation” and disagreement with “work avoidance motivation” are age dependent. However, the students were undecided about “instrumental motivation”.

“Integrative motivation” and the achievement of second language learning appear to be correlated. Thus it is assumed that the students create their own personal criteria for goals they set for learning the second language. These are achieved by putting in extra effort in their coursework.

There is a close relationship between the students’ success and “instrumental motivation”. However, “instrumental motivation” is not as effective as “integrative motivation” for second language learning success. This is thought to be because “instrumental motivation” derives from a pragmatic approach. “Integrative motivation” depends on personal willingness and desire to achieve something. Therefore, “integrative motivation” is likely to be more effective than “instrumental motivation” for students learning a foreign language.

The success of the students and “work avoidance motivation” are negatively correlated. They have opposing variables in that this attitude does not encourage an interest in succeeding. If students have a high level of “work avoidance motivation” they tend to avoid studying. This particularly affects their achievement with regard to learning a foreign language. It is thought that “work avoidance motivation” is a major factor influencing students in the avoidance of studying and trying to learn a foreign language well.

DISCUSSION

If the students are integratively and instrumentally motivated, it may be easier for teachers because the students will be aware of the importance of acquiring a foreign language. This awareness creates a desire to learn one or more foreign languages and as a result produces and develops integrative and instrumental motivation. The more integrative and instrumental motivation a person has, the less likely he or she is to experience work avoidance motivation. It is, therefore, very important for foreign language teachers to provide their students with enough integrative and instrumental motivation. This would be facilitated by understanding how the student is motivated. Teachers must utilize activities to develop students' integrative and instrumental motivation. If the teachers have good information about students' learning strategies and their motivation, they can assist the students in improving their learning techniques and second language learning skills. Consequently, teachers can develop both the students' learning techniques and language learning achievement by understanding the importance of motivation. It is also believed that the students' desire to succeed has an effect on their language learning success. Teachers can utilize learning tools focusing on positive motivation types and less on work avoidance motivation. The habits students bring with them when they begin studying are important because these motivations can greatly influence the students' ability to succeed. Focusing on positive motivations will be helpful to the students in acquiring new information and decrease the effects of negative motivations which can interfere with the students' second language acquisition. In addition, it is also evident that the more positive motivation types the students possess, the more they are able to benefit from their learning activities. If students are aware of the expectations of learning the second language and if they have adequate information about the importance of understanding, speaking, writing, and reading the chosen international foreign language, it will facilitate their achieving of success in all their endeavors. They need to be encouraged to understand that they must learn all the facets of the chosen foreign language or languages in order to advance in their careers.

As with previous investigations in this area, in the present study close relationships were found between success in learning a second language and the three motivation types that were explored in the study.

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