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## Relationship between Motivation and English Language Proficiency

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### Abstract

Competent learners generally desire to be laboriously proficiently using the foreign language. Nevertheless, the diversity of these learners' motivations, attitudes, and learning backgrounds, are identified as the main influential factors in their English language learning process and academic achievements. To ensure success in learning the English language, the present study examines the motivation for English language learning (integrative or instrumental) of 19 undergraduate students at the College of Education, Qatar University. Data was gathered using a mixed-method approach with a questionnaire and follow-up interviews. A modified motivational survey questionnaire was prepared, adapting the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) concepts. Data analysis was undertaken through mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation coefficient (R). The findings of this study indicated that students are more promotion focus motivated to learn the English language. This reveals that intrinsic motivation holds a significant relationship with language proficiency.

**Keywords:** Motivation, English Language Proficiency, EFL learners, Learners' diversity

### 1. Introduction

Today's globalized world makes language learning a very important element within the educational process. Moreover, increased globalization has made the English language the 'lingua Franca' and has greatly influenced language policies. According to research conducted by Jiang et al. (2023), many countries have implemented the English language mandatory at the primary level, which is considered important for acquiring basic educational skills. One aspect of language research that is influenced most by such changes is the second language of (L2) motivation. Motivation in educational settings is the main incentive that shoves a learner to exert effort toward learning a new language (Jiang & Zhang, 2019). According to Rasool & Winke (2019), the result of the English language is a global language; learners are more motivated to learn the language. As a result, it is suggested that research related to L2 motivation requires embracing a two-level approach – one to learn the English language and the other to learn other languages (Erickson et al., 2022; Ji et al., 2022). It is also argued that as the global status of the English language has emerged, the need to reconceptualize the socio-educational model presented by Wang & Li (2019) for researching L2 motivation, particularly with integrative motive. Gardner's socio-educational model, motivation for learning additional languages is considered as the major force, which involves three different elements – making an effort, expression of desire as well as enthusiasm. Initially, individuals make efforts to learn the English language. This means that there is a consistent and persistent attempt to learn the language. Secondly, the motivated person wants to attain the goal of learning English. This person will express his/her desire to be successful and will make every effort to achieve this success. Thirdly, the motivated person will start enjoying tasks related to language learning (Alamer & Al Khateeb, 2023, Alloh et al., 2021). Within Gardner's model, the elements are major clues for distinguishing more motivated persons from less motivated individuals. Factors that motivate an individual are diverse, and the debate over the most influential factor has not yet reached a consensus. Commonly discussed factors include comparisons between integrative and instrumental as well as between extrinsic and intrinsic factors; however, areas that integrate diverse motivational factors are still under-researched. This research focuses on investigating whether motivation influences English language learning and determining the relationship between prevention focus motivation, promotion focus motivation, and English language proficiency.

### Research Questions

The research aims to determine the affiliation between motivation and English language proficiency, and in this light, the research questions generated include:

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1. Is there a significant relationship between prevention-focus motivation and English language proficiency?
2. Is there a significant relationship between promotion focus motivation and English language proficiency?

## 2. Literature Review

The socio-educational model presented by Gardner overpowered L2 motivational research for many decades (Prompakdee, 2021). Gardner model suggests two orientations, integrative orientation, which represents the interests of the learner within the integration into the target language community, and instrumental orientation, which represents the interest of the learner in practical benefits of learning L2, like obtaining a perfect job (Abdelhalim & Alqubayshi, 2020; Singh et al., 2021, Chaaban et al., 2021).

Abdullah et al. (2022) and Zhao et al. (2022) present a viewpoint that the positive attitude of learners towards learners impacts their success in learning L2. In the previous decade, a reconceptualization of the L2 motivation model has occurred significantly (Marwan, 2022; Peker, 2020). Since then, several new directions for research have been presented (Dörnyei, 2019). L2 motivation is a constantly growing paradigm explained in Dörnyei's Process Model of Student Motivation (Dörnyei & Henry, 2022; Dörnyei, 2019). The L2 self is developed when learners tend to visualize the positive aspects of language learning outcomes, when learners are motivated for L2 because of external forces, and when they start visualizing negative aspects of learning outcomes like losing a job (Zheng et al., 2018).

### 2.1 Attitude towards Learning English

Several researches have been done on different attitudes in learning a second language. Overall findings of these researches indicate those positive attitudes are closely related to successful learning of the English language (De Smet et al., 2023; Chen, 2023; Wedyan et al., 2022). There exists an ambiguity as to whether the motivation of a learner produces a successful procedure of learning a language, whether a successful procedure of learning the language increases motivation level, or whether both the two factors are influenced by each other (Li et al., 2022; Bachtiar, 2022; Medvedev & Maximova, 2022). English language learning motivation is considered a complex phenomenon, which is explained through two factors: the communicative needs of a learner and the attitude toward English language learning (Khalaf & Omara, 2022; Tarmizi et al., 2022). When learners develop favorable attitudes towards learning English, they will be able to learn quicker and more effectively (Armanda & Yosintha, 2022). According to Baxtiyarovna (2023), language learning is for cultural enrichment, personal growth, and effective motivation with language learning to achieve more practical and immediate goals. It is proved from research that these forms of motivation have a connection with the success of English language learning (Alamer & Alrabai, 2023; Gurcan et al., 2023).

An individual's identity also has a close connection with their attitude towards language learning. With this, it is followed that when an individual speaks any new language, he will adopt certain identity pointers of the other ethnic group (Zhang, 2023; Keating et al., 2023). Depending upon the learner's attitude, English language learning can either cause resentment or a source of enrichment (Getie, 2020). According to Imsa-Ard (2020), motivational levels will be lower if the sole reason to learn the language involves external pressures, and the attitude toward learning the English language can also be negative. Communal dynamics or power relationships among languages is another factor that impacts learners' attitude (Noels et al., 2020). This infers that individuals within a minority group learning English from a popular group will also develop dissimilar attitudes from that of majority group members who are learning any sectional language (Arrosagaray et al., 2022). According to Bakoko et al. (2023), learners are warmer towards a language. They are willing to be a part of the culture of people speaking the English language and have a more positive attitude toward learning. It is also noted that such learners tend to learn the language more effectively, as compared to learning English, only to be a way to attain objectives (Octaviani & Sari, 2023). Furthermore, an integrative attitude towards learning is more influential than that of instrumental motivation (Jiang et al., 2023). However, whichever type of motivation learners' have, those whose motivation is high must have positive attitudes toward language learning compared to those who are not motivated (Torrado Cespón & Díaz Lage, 2022).

## **2.2 Parental Encouragement/Family Influence**

Several types of research have been done relating parental encouragement or family influence to learners' English language achievements. These researches indicate that family and parental encouragement directly impact English language proficiency (Shen & Del Tufo, 2022; Fisher et al., 2022; Loth et al., 2022). Parental involvement has an overwhelmingly positive impact and is a key factor in the learning achievement of English language learners (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2022). Li & Qiu (2018) strongly agree with this fact after reviewing 100 English language learners' by analyzing their socioeconomic status and the structure of their families and lifestyle. In the same context, parental encouragement plays a significant role in shaping learners' achievements in the English language and other aspects of their academic and personal development (Zhou et al., 2023).

Moreover, when parents encourage their children to learn English, it fosters a sense of motivation and interest in the subject (Kong & Wang, 2021). Positive reinforcement and praise for their efforts lead learners to take a more proactive approach to their studies and seek opportunities for language improvement (Pradini et al., 2023). According to Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey (2018), supportive and encouraging parents boost learners' confidence in their English language abilities. Believing in their skills and potential, learners are more likely to participate actively in class, engage in discussions, and take on challenges that promote language development. Furthermore, parental encouragement help establish effective study habits and routines. Parents who show interest in their children's English language learning are more likely to help manage their time, set realistic goals, and create a conducive environment for studying (Clores & España, 2023).

According to Orson et al. (2020), learning a language be challenging, and learners face moments of frustration or self-doubt. When parents provide emotional support, offer encouragement during difficult times, and celebrate their successes, learners are better equipped to persevere and overcome obstacles (Holdsworth et al., 2018). In addition, encouraging parents to expose their children to a rich linguistic environment, including reading books together, watching English language shows, or engaging in conversations (Xu et al., 2023). This exposure significantly enhances a learner's language acquisition and comprehension skills. According to Ryan & Deci (2020), parental encouragement lead to increased practice and usage of English in various contexts. As learners communicate more frequently in English, their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills improve. Learners who receive consistent support and encouragement from their parents often perform better academically (Benito-Gomez et al., 2022). Improve English language skills positively impact performance in other subjects that require language proficiency, such as literature, social studies, and science (Sadia et al., 2021). According to Kartel et al. (2022), parental encouragement instills a love for language learning beyond formal education. A positive attitude toward English leads to a lifelong pursuit of language proficiency, which is increasingly valuable in today's interconnected world (Asratie et al., 2022).

## **2.3 Fear of Assimilation**

According to a study conducted by Saito et al. (2022), perceived consequences of English learning (e.g., assimilation) are related to English language proficiency. Economic, cultural, social, and political implications of the English language mean that the language is used as the most commonly used language and is the major mode of communication. Many people consider it a symbol of success (David et al., 2023). According to Sueb et al. (2023), there develops a fear of assimilation among learners in terms of culture and language within the English culture and language. Several important and relevant concepts have been researched in literature, like L2 Learning experience, Ideal L2 Self, attitude toward learning English, and instrumentality, which are not discussed in this report.

## **2.4 Ethnocentrism**

A great deal of debate is presently related to the complex role of culture within English language learning. One agreed-upon fact is that culture is not inseparably relative to the English language but is also crucial in learning the language (Liando & Tatipang, 2022). As per Namaziandost et al. (2018), the capacity to learn and communicate in English greatly depends upon the extent to which the learner is non-ethnocentrism.

To be successful, learners should develop a sense of awareness and sensitivity towards the traditions and values of those whose language is being learned (Zhai & Wibowo, 2022).

### **2.5 Interest in the English Language**

Researchers widely accept that interest is an important motivational factor that can influence the learning process (Berestova et al., 2022, Romanowski & Qadhi, 2022). When a learner is given any task or topic and is required to work on it, interest can be developed only when they have a personal interest in the language and are proficient in English as they are confident with it (Darasawang & Reinders, 2021). Many studies also associate self-efficacy with interest (Bai et al., 2022; Gan et al., 2022; Graham, 2022); however, very limited studies have researched the relationship between self-efficacy and interest in learning the English language.

### **2.6 English Anxiety**

The anxiety of a foreign language – English in this case – is a type of situation-specific anxiety that strongly influences the achievement of English language proficiency (Ran et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022; Altun, 2022). Situational anxiety varies from one environmental condition to another, perception about the threat level in a certain situation as well as fluctuations within the tension level of the individual. Individuals fear negative evaluations, which can be provoked by the nature of the language-learning process (Haapanen, 2022). Additionally, self-expression and self-concept further contend the language learning process, which can create anxiety. An individual's extended doubt related to their self-esteem and ability to use the language is a major concern in English language learning.

### **2.7 Integrativeness**

Learners who tend to be integratively motivated are more adaptable to the English language because they are interested in understanding those who speak the language (Getie, 2020). Moreover, such learners are also interested in understanding the culture associated with this language (Uchidiuno et al., 2018). Many studies indicate that learners who are more integratively motivated tend to be more successful in learning the language as compared to those who are instrumentally motivated (Sun et al., 2022; Chemir & Kitila, 2022; Hong & Ganapathy, 2017; Alizadeh, 2016). This is because integratively motivated learners are more motivated, which helps them pass through the learning processes successfully.

### **2.8 Cultural Interest**

The problem of attitude toward the language and its associated culture is very important, especially for English language learners (Liu et al., 2023). According to Getie (2020), how learners respond to the English language is strongly influenced by the culture associated with it, which also impacts their attitude toward the language. According to Banaruee et al. (2023) suggested that learning the English language involves learning its associated culture.

Despite these emotional statements related to the relationship between the English language and its culture, there are also objections to the introduction of the target culture to learners mainly because of learners' attitudinal and behavioral outcome. According to Ilter and Al-Jarf (2023), positive effects also be imposed upon introducing culture to English language learners. They can improve social attitudes and a positive viewpoint towards the language community.

On the other side, Chahrazad & Kamel (2022) thinks that introducing culture in language classes also triggers negative responses. An example of a Muslim learner can be quoted her related to pet culture. Muslim learners will find it difficult to identify the American pet concept as it is against their cultural norms.

### **2.9 Attitudes Toward L2 Community**

Learners' attitude toward the L2 community is also very influential as to how they will acquire English learning language skills (Zhao et al., 2022; Harmanto et al., 2023; Rosiak, 2023; Netta, 2023). A positive attitude greatly influences the learners' ability to learn the language. In English literature, attitudes for the L2 community are further spoken with reference o learners' opinions related to the L2 varieties of the language (Artamonova, 2023). This is a very broad construct; similarities within the hypothesis are present

in literature, which indicates that a positive attitude towards the community and its speech variation positively impact how learners acquire language skills (Abdou-Rassidou, 2023).

### 3. Research Design and Methods

#### 3.1 Methodology

##### 3.1.1 Participants

The research was conducted on 19 female undergraduate English students at the College of Education, Qatar University, who were enrolled in English as Second Language (ESL) program. The random sample ranged from 18 to 22 years old, with a mean age of 20. Participants’ exposure to native and non-native English instructors, their abroad experiences, and their self-assessment of English levels are diverse.

##### 3.1.2 Instruments

A qualitative survey was implied and included a questionnaire that comprised multiple-choice questions. The designed questionnaire for this research was adopted and modified by the present researchers to discover the association between motivation and English language proficiency levels. The first five questions aim to measure learners' attitude toward learning the English language. As all the participants came from different socioeconomic and academic backgrounds with different English language proficiency levels, the questionnaire was administered in their mother tongue. The major focus of the study was to determine whether prevention focus motivation or promotion-focus motivation has a substantial relationship with the English language.

##### 3.1.3 Procedure

The language learning motivation-analyzing questionnaire was overseen in the second week of the Fall Semester of 2023. In the completion procedure, one researcher was present to administer or help the respondents with items they could not understand if required. When the semester ended, the scores of learners’ were attained from their mentors, and then data were analyzed statistically. The results of factor statements within the questionnaire were analyzed individually, after which the percentage and ratio of every item were calculated to determine which item has more influence over English language learning motivation.

The questionnaire was developed by considering reliability and validity issues. The questionnaire included adequate and similar representations within questions. Every item was listed within its respective factor, and all irrelevant items were removed from the questionnaire to increase questionnaire validity. All statements were made so that they can be understood clearly. In addition to this, the questionnaires were applied to 5 learners twice at different times to assure reliability. Learners’ responses were almost the same in the second questionnaire test. The study also assumes that all participants responded to the questionnaire candidly and honestly. Finally, all participants were assured of being autonomous contributors to this study.

#### 3.2 Data Analysis

Statistical data analysis will help provide a general picture of whether there is a relationship between prevention focus and promotion focus motivation and English language proficiency in every aspect. In the following table, a glance at the statistical analysis is made of the respondents.

Table 1: Min, Median, and Standard Deviation of data gathered

Question No.	Min	Median	Standard Deviation
1.	1.8	1	1
2.	1.5	1	1.1
3.	1.0	1	0.5
4.	1.0	1	0.5
5.	1.2	1	0.6
6.	0*	0	0.4
7.	0	1	1.1
8.	1.4	1	1.2

9.	1.8	1	1.4
10.	1.9	1	1.4
11.	1.8	1	1.4
12.	1.7	1	1.5
13.	1.1	1	1.0
14.	3.0	4	1.5
15.	1.5	3	1.0
16.	3.2	2	1.0
17.	3.3	1	0.6
18.	3.5	3	0.6
19.	3.3	2	1.0

\*0 indicates negative responses, and 1 indicates positive answers

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Participants were required to indicate over a six-point scale the importance of every factor for their English language learning. The primary focus was on two types of motivational orientation – integrative and instrumental – and the attitude toward learning the language following the definition presented (Santos et al., 2023). The responses of learners’ were also analyzed in terms of inferential and descriptive statistics. In Table 1, the overall level of motivation for this research sample was presented. An average level of motivation was recorded at 2.51, and a 0.23 standard deviation was proved. From this SD sum, it is clear that this study sample was comparatively homogenous, and learners’ represented a very limited variation range within motivation level. Another important point is that the mean for motivation for language proficiency was slightly at the midpoint.

Table I Differences of average between promotion and prevention motivation relationship with English language proficiency

Variables	n	M	SD	t
Promotion Motivation	12	22.68	9.84	2.05*
Prevention Motivation	12	20.84	10.7	2.71**
Prevention and Promotion Motivation	12	21.77	10.04	.43
Attitude towards English language Learning	12	56.04	12.98	4.14**

\*\*  $\alpha = 0.01$  \*  $\alpha = 0.05$

Table 1 indicates the learners are more promotion motivated to learn the English language ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) than prevention motivation ( $\alpha= 0.01$ ). Learners' Attitudes toward learning the English language appeared to be more positive, and they were intrinsically motivated to learn and understand the language.

Learners’ overall motivation level

	Min	SDm
Overall Motivation	2.51	0.23

Mm=motivations mean

SDm= Standard Deviation of motivation scores

To calculate the extent of the relationship between motivation and English language proficiency, here Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was integrated into the two variables sets.

Table II Correlation Coefficient (R) between Promotion Motivation and Language Proficiency

	R
Correlation Coefficient	0.64

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, promotion motivation of learners have a substantial relationship with language proficiency at the point of  $p < .01$ . However, it is indicated by Ghafournia (2023) such types of results can be interpreted exactly when the assumptions underlying these factors are met accordingly. A list of proposed assumptions includes:

1. Assumption of Scales: Both the number sets should lie in a continuous scale.
2. Assumption of Independence: number of pairs within a set of data should be autonomous from the other.
3. Assumption of Normality: every distribution must be normalized.
4. Assumption of Linearity: when plotted over a scatter graph, number sets should be within a line.

A critical aspect of the collected data renders that learners are in an interval or continuous scale, and both the variables must be independent of the other, which means that scores of one set may not impact the generation of the scores of the other set. As a result, the first and second assumption is met successfully. In the third statement, there is a requirement of varying at least two standard deviations from the mean. This infers that Mean 2 should lie within the maximum and minimum scores. Examining the data more, it was observed that this hypothesis was also met successfully. Computations pertaining to this assumption are as follows:

Table III Computations for Normality Assumptions

Set of promotion motivation scores	minm	M m	2SDm	1.87	2.61	2 0.21
	Maxm	M m	2SDm	3.03	2.61	2 0.21
Set of language proficiency scores	min p	M p	2SDp	13	15.9	21.34
	Max	M p	2SDp	19	15.9	21.34

Mm= motivations mean

SDm= Standard Deviation of motivation scores minm= minimum score of motivation

Maxm= maximum score of motivation

Mp= proficiency means,

SDp= Standard Deviation of proficiency scores

minp= minimum score of proficiency scores

Maxp= maximum score of proficiency scores

The last hypothesis means that except the two data sets have a linear relationship, anyone is not in a position to claim its correlation. To have an overview of the present correlations between the two factors, a scatter plot is integrated, and its result is presented in Figure 1.

From Figure 1, it can be illustrated that the plots are present in a straight line which renders that the two sets of variables have almost a linear relationship. As a result, the findings strongly support the correlation assumption and indicate a positive relationship between promotion motivation and language proficiency amongst English language learners.

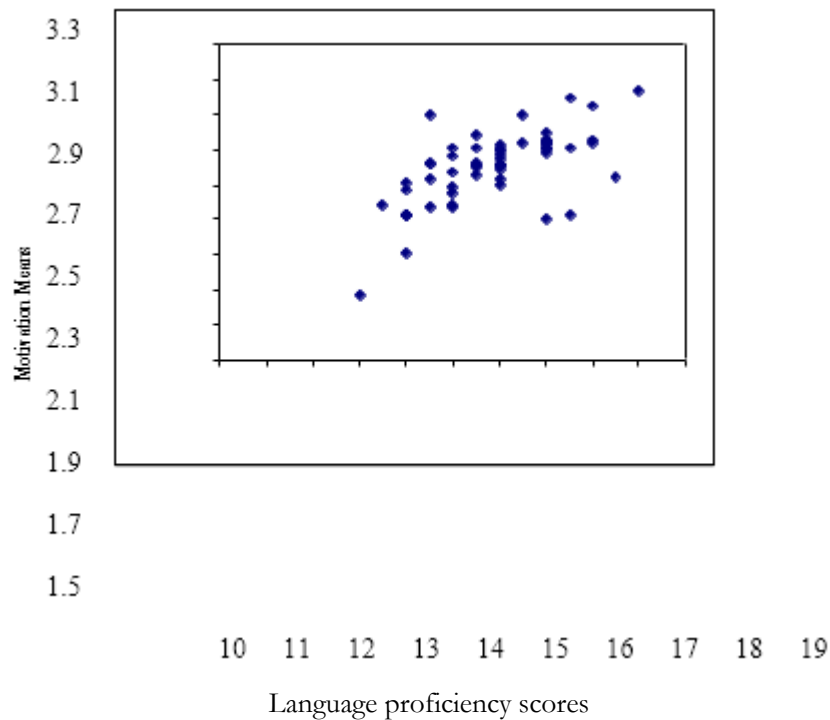


Figure 1: Scatter plot of scores

### 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The study results clearly indicate that learners are more inclined towards promotion motivation, and they tend to add something new within their experience when they study the language. Additionally, they believe it is important to have command over two languages. The results contradict the first research question, thereby rejecting it, and comply with the second research question that promotion focus motivation has a significant relationship with English language proficiency. This type of inclination towards bilingualism is similar to L2 learners having additive bilingualism characteristics (Alipour, 2023). This predisposition to bilingualism also refers to learners’ integration within the language (Lasagabaster, 2017). Shared beliefs will make them more interested in the subject, build up their personality, and expand their horizons by learning the English language. According to Garcia et al. (2023), the trend toward bilingualism attempts to reshape identity and echo language-associated culture.

The study's findings provided some specific and useful information about learners’ motivation and English language proficiency. Further studies on the topic contribute towards determining more elements that can infer the significant relationship between motivation and language learning.

Although the study has made every effort to reach its objective, however, some limitations were unavoidable. Firstly, the learners who were a part of the study were not a true sample of the population. Secondly, the study took place over a small size of learners of Ohio State University. The study should have involved more participants from several universities or different countries to generalize the survey results for larger groups. Lastly, suppose the study is to be replicated. In that case, it will provide more detailed information when applied to learners of the language and if more statements and items are provided to the participants.

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