

# Análisis de motivación de los estudiantes de inglés como segunda lengua en el contexto mexicano

*Analysis of the motivation of English as a second language in higher education students in Mexican context*

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## ABSTRACT

This research looks motivation of students of English as a second language in the Autonomous University of Mexico State, UAEM Texcoco, in the framework of the Doctorate Science in Higher Agricultural Education that is taught at Chapingo Autonomous University, Mexico. This analysis is the foundation of the research and is based on the characteristics of students and adapted to the context of a Mexican University. It takes advantage of techniques such as AMTB (Attitude Motivation Test Battery) of R.C. Gardner, to identify main factors that affect learning of a second language.

Results show that students are motivated by activities such as listening to music and conversations, but more so by getting a good job when they graduate. Furthermore, they feel discouraged because they lack adequate study techniques and are affected by negative past experiences.

**KEYWORDS** language, learning, motivation, university students.

## RESUMEN

La presente investigación forma parte del trabajo de tesis doctoral "Factores que afectan la motivación para el aprendizaje de los alumnos en las clases de inglés a nivel superior", en el marco del Doctorado en Ciencias en Educación Agrícola Superior que se imparte en la Universidad Autónoma Chapingo, México. Tiene como objetivo realizar un diagnóstico inicial de la motivación de los estudiantes de inglés como segunda lengua en la Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, UAEM Texcoco. Dicho diagnóstico será el punto de partida que permita con base en las características de los alumnos diseñar un cuestionario adaptado al contexto de una universidad mexicana, haciendo uso de las variables del cuestionario AMTB (Test de Actitud y Motivación), de R C Gardner, que se adecuen al contexto de los estudiantes de la UAEM identificar los principales factores que afectan el aprendizaje de L2 de los estudiantes.

Los resultados muestran que los alumnos manifiestan sentirse motivados por actividades como escuchar conversaciones o música en inglés y principalmente por acceder a un buen empleo al terminar sus estudios, en contraste manifiestan sentirse desmotivados por no contar con técnicas de estudio adecuadas, así como malas experiencias en cursos anteriores.

**PALABRAS CLAVE** lengua, aprendizaje, motivación, estudiantes universitarios.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In order to examine the motivational factors related to English-learning students of the UAEM Texcoco, these students study the Bachelor of Administrative Computing, Law and Tourism, and take the subject of English as a compulsory subject included in their academic programs. This directly influences the way in which students perceive the study of a second language (L2); The objective is to get an initial analysis of the motivation of these students.

Bachelor students in general have little or no interest in learning an L2. They show very little or no motivation for their acquisition, in this case English language, even when most of them are aware that mastering a second language is a tool that can help them open doors to employment and social opportunities.

There's a need in the institutions to offer their students the possibility of learning a LE due to the processes of internationalization of education, this process forces us to reflect on the difficulties that "it can present both for students, teachers, educational institutions and the competitiveness of student's countries" (Ramírez et al., 2018, p.13)

The aim of this study is to elaborate on a descriptive analysis in order to determine the motivational characteristics of the students of the Bachelor of Administrative Computing, Law and Tourism of the UAEM Texcoco.

According to Navarro (2008), motivation is essential in any type of learning. In the case of these students, maintaining motivation is the primary task. The concept of motivation has been widely discussed by various authors, but for the purposes of this research, we will analyze the Socio-Educational Model of R.C. Gardner. This model asserts that students can possess two types of motivation: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation.

Learners with an integrative motivation want to learn the language because they want to get to know the people who speak that language, wanting to acquire an L2 for reasons such as interest in culture, or to become part of a group. Learners with an instrumental motivation want to learn the language for utilitarian reasons such as getting or improving job opportunities. (Yau, 2013)

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Global education implies changes in national policies and institutions, including in the attitude people may have towards it, which is why Institutions of Higher Education (HEI) play an important role in the articulation of educational policies to improve the teaching of English. Although the level of English proficiency tends to increase with the educational level of the person, the universities have not been able to better prepare graduates in this type of competences (IMCO, 2013).

Learning English as a Foreign Language (LE) should give students the necessary tools for the knowledge and development of the four basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) through activities in which they are integrated skills in a real way, which in the future will provide opportunities for communication within and outside the country (SEP, 2010).

Thus, the study of how learning LE affects motivation has become a subject of analysis, to make the process of teaching and learning English successfully. LE learning is affected within the teaching process by

the initiatives of organizations such as the Council of Europe and some other international organizations, such as UNESCO and the United Nations (UN), to changes in public policy and the need to excel in the labor and social aspect, as a student and professional.

The Council of Europe establishes the fundamental goals, to support students to develop the knowledge, strategies, and skills for language learning, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning (CEFR), people that are in charge of educational institutions must base their work on the needs, motivations, characteristics, and resources of students (Council of Europe, 2002, p. 11).

Motivation influences, whether positively or negatively, the performance of students, directly influences their self-esteem. In the case of UAEM students, they face English classes as part of the curriculum, which directly influences the way they perceive the study of an LE.

Among other things, the motivation that teacher provides to students can help improve learning processes, involves interaction and collaboration, the development of self-regulation, encourages students to be aware and to develop their own cognitive and motivational processes (Woolfolk, 2010). The term motivation has its origin in the Latin word *motus* which means movement, and to explain motivation when is referred to a person, this hypothetical construct is used to elucidate agitation of the spirit, to explain the beginning, direction, intensity and persistence of the directed behavior towards an objective (Good, & Brophy, 1990, cited by Çalışkan, 2014).

In this way, motivation is the motor that drives all behavior, and allows changes to take place both at school and in life in general. In other words, it is a combination of intellectual, physiological and psychological processes.

Likewise, it is usually defined by psychologists as the set of processes that involve awakening, directing and maintaining behavior. It indicates, for example, why a subject works on some tasks and not on others in which he should work, and why he persists in those tasks instead of doing other activities (Madrid, 1999, cited by Zaman, 2015).

However, motivation as a generic term (Koontz, & Weirich, 1999) can be applied to a wide range of impulses, desires, needs, and similar forces. For the present investigation, a definition that can give a current approach to the term motivation, is the one proposed by Dale (2012) where, it is defined as the process by which the activities directed to goals are encouraged and maintained.

While De La Fuente and Justice (2004) argue that motivation is a variable of importance, since there is no learning model that does not incorporate a theory of motivation, it is implicit or explicit. Among the main theories about motivation that have emerged so far are the following:

Theory of impulses. (behavioral approach) according to Díaz Barriga, (2010) explains motivation in terms of learned behavior, impulse, and reinforcement. It affirms that individuals can be motivated basically by punishments and rewards or incentives.

Intrinsic motivation or “self-purposefulness,” is considered the most desired motivation, intrinsically motivated students normally take part in activities related to the LE learning because they think the activities are enjoyable, in the opposite side the students extrinsically motivated participate in the activities because they think will obtain some benefit or recognition, “the risk of these perspective that students must enjoy studying would add some extra pressure on them, encouraging their extrinsic motivation, driving them to try to find motivation from outside themselves” (Takahashi, 2018, p.170)

In addition, students who study English in an ex-lingual teaching situation (as a foreign language) need to interact in real communication contexts and, consequently, have a motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) to learn. Because language emerges from the multiple interactions that occur from the relationships between people, in which emotion and acceptance of the other as legitimate is essential.

Theories of social learning, whose representative (Bandura, 1969), give some value to the learning mechanisms posed by behavioral approaches, their contributions had added value to the study of information processing involved in learning, which is done through cognitive-type procedures, this theory is a social cognitive model of expectation-value of motivation.

Humanistic theories, in the 1940s, emerged as a reaction to behavioral perspectives, and maintain the belief that behavior is determined by our thinking, and not just by stimulus and response. For supporters of humanistic psychology, such as Carl Rogers, Richard Atkinson, these theories emphasize the intrinsic sources of motivation as the needs for self-realization (Woolfolk, 2010).

Cognitive approaches to motivation Díaz Barriga (2010) explain motivation in terms of an active search for meaning and satisfaction. A unique aspect of this approach is that it considers people as beings capable of seeking information for themselves, since they are curious in nature, and in this way, they can solve the problems they face.

Research focused on the area of motivation has dedicate efforts to find ways to increase student's language learning success, considering the multiple elements that may influence the learning process, the affective factors, influence the mentality, sociability and the academical life of students. (Guillén et al., 2012)

Theories of motivation that have arisen around the learning of an L2 are those of Gardner (2001), Gardner and Lambert (1972), and Oxford (1999). It should be noted that some of the research was carried out in Spain, Chile, Colombia, Canada, and Mexico. In particular, Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert (1972), in their book "Attitudes and motivation in learning a second language", conducted numerous studies in Montreal, Louisiana, Maine, Connecticut and the Philippines, whereby they have favored the field of linguistics applied when conducting research on foreign languages, analyzing the role of attitudes towards language, and even against foreign speakers. They found a considerable correlation between integrative motivation and competition.

However, this led us to Reflect, most of the researches in the LE field are trying to answer the the fundamental question of Why do people behave as they do? Consider the motivation responsible for Why people decide to do something? How long will they keep up the activity and how intensely will they look for it? Dörnyei (2009).

Boza and Toscano (2012), carried out an evaluation of the factors associated with motivated learning in university students, with a randomly sampled, stratified proportional study of 938 students of the University of Huelva. The study evaluated goals, attitudes, and motives, as well as conditions, strategies and involvement in the study to determine which features differentiate the most motivated students from the least motivated.

Yau, (2013) from the perspective of the main concepts of the instrumental integrative model of Gardner, conducted research with students based on the motivational model of Dörnyei, and the notion of English as an international language. They analyzed the motivation to study English with 267 students from the University of New Taipei City in Taiwan, with night and daytime schedules. They found that most participants study English for instrumental and integrative reasons to travel, as well as for internal reasons to learn

English as L2, but not because of external pressures. No significant differences were found between the night and daytime students.

In fact the big number of investigations about motivation in the learning of a LE, allow us to see that in some curricula the learning of a LE is as relevant as the learning of some other subject like math, but beyond that “the learning of a LE is connected with the attitudes, self, and identity of the student dealing with the language” (Ushioda, & Dörnyei, 2017, p.451)

About the measures that increase intrinsic motivation, some authors propose to support students with measures inside and outside the university, “favoring their academic concerns, adapted itineraries, support between students through mentoring, electives, extracurricular practices, and other activities outside the environment. of the University” (Llanes et al., 2020, p. 64)

Among the research done in Mexico about motivation to learn an L2, Ordorica (2001), analyzes the motivation of university students of the Autonomous University of Baja California, Mexico towards the study of the English as a foreign language. In his study, he analyzes the degree to which a student’s motivation to study English determines aspects such as personality, learning, existential competence, intercultural awareness, and the environment in which he or she finds himself.

### 3. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The design is rooted in research that can be classified as non-experimental quantitative, based on a descriptive analysis, through the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the content. Because “it is intended to point out a phenomenon, analyzing its structure and the existing associations between the characteristics that define the students of the three educational programs at the undergraduate level” (Kabir, 2016, p.116)

The primary information will be collected through a questionnaire that includes two open questions, both of which were categorized according to a frequency criterion, with the intention of classify them. The collection of spontaneous information allows the enrichment of the final report (by including the answers that are considered significant), particularly its usefulness to explain and understand the response associated with a phenomenon; It also provides information about the opinion of a group of people.

The information obtained was analyzed through content analysis, which is the set of techniques for analyzing communications to obtain indicators (quantitative or not) by systematic and objective procedures of the description of the content of the messages, allowing the inference of knowledge (Bardin, 1996).

The instrument contains the following questions: “What motivates you to learn English?” and “What discourages you from learning English?”

The population consisted of 225 students from the UAEM Texcoco. The students were surveyed in the period from January 2016 to January 2017. 47% of the students belong to the Law Degree program, 29% to the Administrative Computer Degree program and 24% to the Tourism Degree program.

The statistical technique for the analysis of textual data and the post-coding of the responses were categorized from the most frequent, obtaining categories in which the data were analyzed (Hernández, 1994). Thus, the content analysis is a technique that describes objectively, systematically, and qualitatively the content manifested in communication.

## 4. RESULTS

From the first question posed to the students (Figure 1), the following themes were obtained: the students said they felt motivated to be able to speak, read and write, to master the language and factors associated with the class such as difficulty of the tasks, relationship with classmates and teacher, or the use of materials.

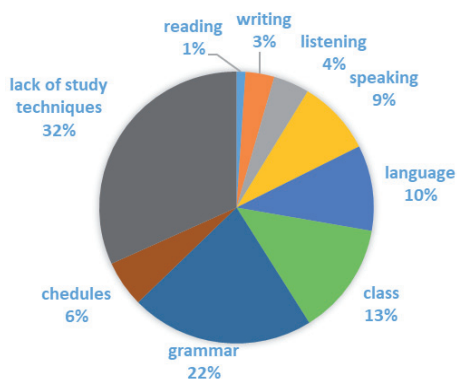
The results were presented as follows:

- 3% of students said they felt motivated to learn to read in English.
- Only 2% of students feel motivated to learn to write in English.
- 4% of students are motivated by listening to conversations or music in English.
- 24% of students would like to be able to speak in English to communicate with other speakers.
- 17% of students feel attracted to the language in general.
- 12% of students feel motivated by aspects related to the class.
- 38% of students consider English to be of vital importance in accessing a better job when they finish their studies.

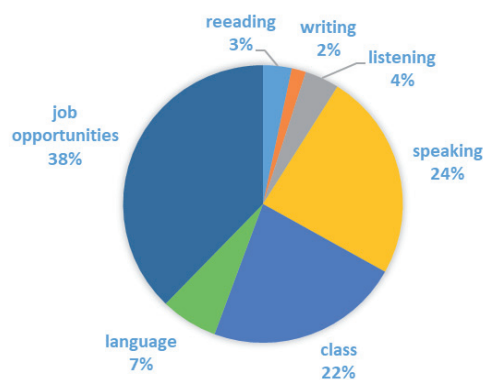
In reference to the second question (Figure 2), the students expressed feeling unmotivated by factors such as writing, understanding what they hear, speaking with adequate pronunciation and fluency, grammar different from that of their L1 (mother tongue), the schedule, factors associated with the class, and the lack of adequate study techniques. Specifically, the following was found:

- 1% of students consider their difficulty to understand reading among the factors that discourage them
- 3% of students feel unmotivated when facing tasks such as writing.
- 3% of the students are discouraged by not understanding what they hear in English.
- 8% of students feel unmotivated by factors associated with the language in general.
- 16% of the students are demotivated by the class in general, either by previous experiences or by facing the unknown.
- 23% of students agree that grammar other than Spanish is one of the main factors that de-motivate them.

**FIGURE 1.** Question: What motivates you to learn English?



**FIGURE 2.** Question: What discourages you to learn English?



Variable schedules, in the case of those respondents who take their subjects in the morning or in the afternoon, is a factor that affects 6% of the respondents.

It is observed that 32% of the students consider that they lack adequate study techniques that allow them to achieve the expected learning.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This research found that only 24% of students would like to be able to speak in English to communicate with other speakers, and 17% of students are attracted to the language in general.

These could be considered important aspects to evaluate to what degree these students have integrative motivation, possesses a positive attitude, and the intention of becoming a member of a group of speakers.

The integrative motivation is seen as the interest in the L2 group, the student shows an openness and identification with the target language community and its culture. It does not mean that they want to become a member of another culture, rather their disposition to be open to speak with the characteristics of another cultural -linguistic group. (Gulbinskiene, & Dubovicienè, 2015, p.139)

It is significant to note that 38% of the students surveyed consider that the English language is of vital importance, in order to be able to access a better job upon finishing their studies, what happens when the acquisition of a foreign language is due to some utilitarian aspect, such as getting a job or improving job opportunities.

These results are analyzed in the context of these students, an important thing to attach is the fact that motivation would vary from one context to other, in some context students are more integrative oriented and, in some others, they display an instrumental orientation. (Quan, 2014)

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

This research describes in broad strokes, the motivational characteristics towards English as L2 of the students of the Bachelor of Administrative Computing, Law and Tourism of the UAEM Texcoco. The analysis was done in order to identify firsthand what students consider their motivations and lack thereof when facing English courses, and thus be able to contextualize their reality.

And from there, to carry out a more in-depth study of these factors which will employ The Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) proposed by R.C. Gardner.

It is important to recognize that it is not enough to ask the student what motivates or demotivates them. In the Socio-Educational Model for the Acquisition of a Second Language Gardner (2010), he proposes that integrative motivation is multidimensional, since it involves affective, cognitive and behavioral components. The results found will allow analyzing the different factors that affect the motivation of students in their context.

Teachers must be aware, L2 students may have many particularities, they could be high motivated, low motivated, could be extrovert or introvert; according with each students characteristics they develop different language learning strategies, that influence their learning process; teachers' labor is to direct these strategies to increase or develop students skills.



Foreign language teachers should know theories and types of motivation and be able to identify the characteristics of their students depending on the motivating agents that influence their learning, in order to create a safe environment in the classroom where students feel stimulated and engaged this will be helpful in performing appropriate activities to their age, interests allowed them to experience success, and to facilitate their path to knowledge and mastery of an L2. (Cristofol, & Serrat, 2015, p.7)

At the same time, it empowers us to observe that students do not measure their learning in terms of the four language skills, giving priority to speaking writing, reading, or listening, together with the recognition of the lack of study techniques, which are needed to concrete their learning.

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