

## **The Effect of Motivation on Learning Strategies' Use in Concern with Foreign Language Learning Achievement**

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### **Abstract**

Being qualified in English as a foreign language is a necessary quality for most individuals. Therefore, investigating the possible factors that can actually be may provide information to be applied in language learning and teaching process. Taking the desired outcome of "achievement" into account, the relationship between motivation, learning strategies and achievement as well as the frequency at using these two concepts; motivation and learning strategies are the main determiners in the study. Moreover, the connection between the two variables and also effect of motivational factors on the use of the learning strategies are the concerns of the present study. The data were collected from 520 students through a Motivated Strategies for Language Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) and reliability of the MSLQ was determined as 0.90. The analysis of the data realized with the help of SPSS 15.0 revealed that students highly resorted to motivational and learning strategies. Furthermore, there was a significant, positive relationship between motivation and academic success, learning strategies and academic success, also motivation and the use of learning strategies. Additionally, it was found out that motivational factors affected the choice of learning strategies positively.

**Keywords:** Motivation, Learning Strategies, Language Learning, Achievement in ELT.

## 1. Introduction

What is of great effect in this target improvement, not a common term in classroom research is “receptivity. When the required conditions meet, the most receptive students are thought to be most motivated ones. Thus, it is an issue that is described by many researchers with various definitions. Harmer (1983) defines this highly important term as “some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something”. On the basis of some studies, motivation is considered to energize, fresh and direct behaviors of the students as an outcome, it has many great improvements. (Wigfield, Eccles, Roeser & Schiefele, 2009). Denoted by Brown (1980) “motivation is an inner drive or stimulus which can like self-esteem, be global, situational or task-oriented.” And, there are claimed to be six needs that build motivation; the need for exploration, the need for manipulation, the need for activity, the need for stimulation, the need for knowledge and the need for ego enhancement. Lastly, the learner feels to be accepted by the others and the success is obvious (Brown, 1980).

With its emotional benefit, motivation covers the reasons why the students want to learn, shows how their wish of learning is strong, gives knowledge on what kind of tasks to perform and what requires to do those tasks (McDonough, 2007). As Tahaine & Daana (2013) emphasizes “Motivation and Attitudes, being related primarily to actual classroom learning situations, are very decisive and essential contributing factors in the second/foreign language learning process (henceforth L2).” The intensity of the motivation is important. However, there are also the parts of it and these are at the same level of necessity in determining the learning output. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are the basics and well explained by Sansone & Harackiewicz (2000) “as when individuals are intrinsically motivated, they do activities for their own sake and out of interest in the activity. When extrinsically motivated, individuals do activities for instrumental or other reasons, such as receiving a reward.” (Cited in Wigfield et al., 2009). Namely, the only reason for intrinsically motivated students to perform the activity is to realize their hobbies or wishes rather than gain any other outcome as extrinsically motivated students for whom the motivating factors are external, or outside rewards such as money or grades. Both types are thought to be effective on language achievement though there are some disagreements on which one is more influential.

Recently, it is certain that many researchers agree on that motivation has a great role on achievement. And, it also requires not much effort to conclude that there are many theories developed on the subject. Related with intrinsic motivation, Self-Determination Theory is an important one described by Wigfield et al. (2009) “self-determined behavior is behavior that originates from the self and that results from the individual utilizing his or her volition.” In Self Determination Theory, four levels are applied referring to extrinsic motivation into intrinsic motivation process. One of them is external regulation in which external origin such as teacher starts the activity. Second step is interjected regulation which leads students do what teacher wants according to the rules. In identified regulation process, students perform the activities because they pay importance to what it will result in. Then, at the end, integrated regulation comes front that is similar to intrinsic motivation which is at the same time thought to be the core part of the theory itself (Lioulienė and Metiūnienė, 2006) .

Secondly, Expectancy-Value Theory combines two precious terms that provide success. Value is pinpointed by Wigfield et al. (2009) as “how important, interesting, or useful a given task or activity is to the individual”. When connected to expectancies, that is the desired outcome or beliefs about the future, they are predicted to affect performance, task choice and consistence on the task.. Taking Keller's comprehensive and relevant system into concern, Crookes and Schmidt put forward four factors to describe classroom motivation in language learning: interest, relevance, expectancy, and satisfaction (Dornyei, 1994).

Thirdly, Goal-Directed Theory settles “goal” in the centre of the theory. In terms of achievement, Pintrich (2000) expresses that “goals or purposes like mastery or superiority are not just simple target goals or more general goals, but represent a general orientation to the task that includes a number of related beliefs about purposes, competence, success, ability,

effort, errors, and standards.” In association with these views, R. C. Gardner suggests that second language motivation is of three important elements; defined as “affect” referring to the attitudes toward the target language, “want” wish or desire to learn the language and lastly “effort” in the process that stems from motivational intensity.

The attitudes mentioned may well be shaped by the task. It is an important aspect of language learning and value given to the task by the learners directly affect success. Thus, tasks have to possess some features. Skehan lists certain elements as (1998, cited in Brown, 2007) “task is an activity in which meaning is primary, there is some communication problem to solve, there is some sort of relationship to comparable real world activities, task completion has some priority and the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome.” Another issue that can affect attitudes is about learning beliefs besides a number of factors, learning can be attributed to control of the beliefs and attitudes towards learning. According to Alderman (2004) “Self-regulated learners have a belief that effort will lead to increased success (forethought); a strong sense of self-efficacy (forethought); tools for setting effective goals and monitoring progress (performance); and adaptive attributional beliefs, accepting responsibility for their learning (evaluation).” And, the process described is in fact just the achievement itself. The success atmosphere is well powered with the suitable strategies. Focused also by Tahaineh & Daana (2013) “There is a general consensus among these researchers that the most effective way to get insight into the learning process is to study the learners’ motivation and attitude towards learning English language.” This issue has been explored by many scientists and is thought to be a great effective factor.

Relatedly, these language learning strategies are various in number and defined in different forms. In foreign language learning concept, it is clarified by Scarcella & Oxford (1992, p.63) as “specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task used by students to enhance their own learning” (cited in Oxford, 2003).

Accordingly, it would be right to express that language learning strategies have different features and all aim for communicative competence. And, realizing this competence requires using meaningful language in real communication issues. Such natural interactions are all achieved by implementing learning strategies. Namely, learning strategies affect communicative competence positively improving at the same time learners’ self direction and problem solving characteristics which is helpful for learners as it is impossible to find the instructors around every time guiding is needed. These strategies are flexible and often consciously can be taught and learnt. They are not all the time observable and influenced by many factors (Oxford, 1990).

In the present research, some of the learning strategies will be investigated in terms of the intensity of their use by the participants, their relation with success and dependency of these strategies on motivation. The strategies mentioned are rehearsal that is defined by Rodriguez (2012) as “to practice the material being learned”. Although it is thought to be a kind of memorization, it serves good in some tasks. Secondly, organization, as its name recalls, is organizing the information learnt. Next, critical thinking is a cognitive strategy allowing the learners to see deep inside the points than simply accepting the simple seen. Resorting to critical thinking as a strategy will then lead to the possession of critical thinking ability and the learner will get benefit from his knowledge much more questioning the information and result in achievement. Time- study environmental management is another important strategy that requires control of time and study place at the first rows of learning process. Thus, managing these issues to focus on the study is to be one of the priorities and it will be great assistants in learning. Peer learning is the last strategy that will be explored in the study. It is a social strategy by which learning is asserted to be more effective if it is in social environment and more permanent if social context is provided. Burns & Richards (2009) concludes that “Learning takes place in a context and evolves through the interaction and participation of the participants in that context.” Therefore, peer learning realizes the required interaction through activities as pair work, asking questions etc.

Witnessing all these explanations, it is not hard to come to conclusion that strategy is something needed in the learning process. Saying that a strategy is good or bad is not possible. They all gain meaning according to the conditions they are used in. Nevertheless, there are some certain features that the strategies have to carry in order for them to be useful; the strategy is to be first related to the task, the student's preference of style and also other effective strategies (Oxford, 2003). According to some studies, as it is for motivation, learning strategies affect the ultimate success. Therefore, it is need to choose the right learning strategies and resort to them effectively. Learning strategies determine the behaviors of the learners and arrange the future studies. In accordance with this view, Zimmerman & Martinez - Pons, 1990, cited in Hewitt, 2008 present learning strategies as providing students with the ability to regulate their behavior, covert functioning and also physical environment. Moreover, the students' belief or faith on academic efficacy is claimed to affect the extremity of motivation and also the future success as there is a deep perception of academic ability.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This is a descriptive study and in this study a descriptive research design has been carried out simply to investigate the frequency at the use of motivational elements and certain learning strategies adopted by preparatory students at Gaziantep University Higher School of Foreign Languages and distant English learners at the same university also to unveil the relationship between motivation and academic success, learning strategies and academic success and also the dependency of motivation on learning strategies.

### 2.1 Participants

The data was collected in 2013 academic year and target population were the students at Higher School of Foreign Languages and students having online and video- based English lessons, distant education, at Gaziantep University. There were 520 respondents in total, 210 of the participants were female while 310 were male students. The respondents' departments are various such as faculty of education, faculty of medicine, engineering faculties as mechanical engineering, food engineering, textile engineering, electrical and electronic engineering etc.

### 2.1 Instruments

As a data collection instrument, a questionnaire, Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) was conducted. It is a 5 Likert Type questionnaire consisting of 42 items as presented in Table 1. The components mentioned constitute the bell bone of the questionnaire and the study itself.

**Table 1:** Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire Dimensions

PART I. MOTIVATIONAL SCALES		PART II. LEARNING STRATEGIES SCALES	
Scales	Number of Items	Scales	Number of Items
1. Intrinsic Motivation	4	1. Rehearsal	4
2. Extrinsic Motivation	4	2. Organization	4
3. Task Value	6	3. Critical Thinking	5
4. Control of Learning Beliefs	4	4. Time/Study Environmental Management	8
		5. Peer Learning	3
Total Number of Items	18	Total Number of Items	24

### 3. Results and Discussion

At first, all the necessary computations were done and the reliability of the questionnaire was calculated giving out the expected Cronbach's Alfa value (.90). Then, frequencies of the dimensions in both parts of motivation and learning strategies were calculated and expressed through the percentages and some values as mean, median, standard deviation and etc. As a result, general choices of the participants were discovered.

**Table 2:** Descriptive Statistics for Motivational Dimension of MSLQ

Motivational Dimensions	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Std. Dev.
Q1- Q18	3.84	4.04	18	90	1.03

As clear from the Table 2, average mean value that is the mostly preferred choice by the participants is 3.84. It means most of the students use motivational elements more than average level "sometimes". It is at good levels and most close to the number 4 representing "usually". The median of 4.04 that is the middle point among all respondents' is extremely high that is half of the students marked above this number.

It can be concluded that control of learning beliefs is much more for the learners. It means they can be effective well enough in their learning process and task value is less possessed by them in fact by a high level of 3.80-mean and 3.66-median. Both intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation of the students are high looking into the results. However, latter is much truer for the learners as expressed by their markings. That is to say, learners are interested in language for other reasons such as good marks or future career than inner willingness or self-desire to learn.

**Table 3:** Descriptive Statistics for Learning Strategies Dimension of MSLQ

Learning Strategies	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Std. Dev.
Q19-Q42	3.47	3.38	24	120	1.14

Considering the results, it is certain to infer that participants apply learning strategies frequently, as seen in the average mean value of 3.47. It can be concluded that learning strategies adoption is at average levels. Standard deviation value of 1.14 again symbolizes that students are not so heterogeneous but share more of less the same views.

Reflecting on the statistics for all the groups in learning strategies part, the most exploited strategy, according to the results, is critical thinking ( mean- 4.22, median- 3.4 ). That is students, generally think critically on what is presented to them in the lessons. And, least preferred learning strategy by the participants is peer learning ( mean- 2.64, median- 2.66). When compared with all other dimensions, these scores is really low reasoning to think that students do not approve learning with their friends and do not perceive their peers as effective in their language learning process. The fact can be because of the thought that learning can be self directed and group working is not good idea to manage a language.

Considering the results of this study, the learners extremely use those strategies and it is a requirement for their success according to many researchers. However, awareness of where to use the correct strategies in the correct amounts and to assess the already implemented strategies is crucial. In that context, Thanasoulas (2000) emphasizes that “in order to help learners to assume greater control over their own learning it is important to help them to become aware of their capabilities and identify the strategies that they already use or could potentially use” Then, learners can regulate their own learning by completing the missing qualities and determining the future learning process.

Then Pearson Correlation that works to calculate the relationship between two variables was applied in order to find the significant relationship between motivational scales and academic success, learning strategies and academic success as well as motivation and learning strategies.

**Table 4:** Correlation between Motivation and Academic Success

		<b>Academic Success</b>	<b>Motivational Dimension</b>
Academic Success	Pearson Correlation	1	.343(**)
	Sig. ( 2- tailed)		.000
	N	520	520
Motivational Dimension	Pearson Correlation	.343(**)	1
	Sig. ( 2- tailed)	.000	
	N	520	520

According to Table 4, the Pearson Correlation signifies that there is a good, positive relationship between motivation and achievement for the students at Higher School of Languages and distant English learners at Gaziantep University (  $r = .343$   $p > .01$ ). That is, their correlation is parallel to each other. Despite not being at perfect levels, the relationship is close to average levels. When motivation increases, also does the achievement at language learning to some extent.

**Table 5:** Correlation between Learning Strategies and Academic Success

		<b>Academic Success</b>	<b>Learning Strategies</b>
Academic Success	Pearson Correlation	1	.442(**)
	Sig. ( 2- tailed)		.000
	N	520	520
Learning Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.442(**)	1
	Sig. ( 2- tailed)	.000	
	N	520	520

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

For these two variables,  $r = .442$  proves the relationship to be at significant levels. The more the participants resort to language strategies under cover, the more they get out to be successful in English lessons. Namely, the relationship is in a positive way at a nearly middle extent. Finally, Linear Regression was resorted to find out the impacts of motivational elements on learning strategies.

**Table 6:** The Regression Analysis of Motivation and Learning Strategies

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.589(a)	.347	.346	11.22254

According to Table 6, R value shows the correlation between dependent variable of Learning Strategies and independent variable of motivation as in the correlation analysis between these two contents in table 6. .589  $p > .01$  reveals there is a significant and positive relationship between these contents. It is also discovered by this value that variance in dependent variable of “language strategies” can be explained by the independent variable “motivation” to a great extent. The percentage of this effect on dependent variable among others is depicted by R Square value of .347. In other words, motivation accounts for the 34 % variation in learning strategies among the other variables. Considering the percentage, it can be asserted that not so little but nearly half of the variance in the use of learning strategies can be estimated by the presence of motivational factors. Namely, motivational factors have good influence on the using frequency of learning strategies.

### 3. Conclusions

Considering the results, it was found that motivational strategies were applied at high levels by the learners of English. Namely, while students learn English they frequently adopt motivational strategies whether they are in the classroom environment or studying alone. Secondly, learning strategies are presented to be used at good levels and for the achievement needed, it is compulsory for the learners to use the strategies properly and consciously.

In brief, as in the other related studies motivational strategies were attained to be in significant relationship with language learning achievement. When the possession of motivation increased, also did the academic success in the study. Additionally, by the results the meaningful relationship between learning strategies and achievement level in English was discovered. Then, the dependency of motivational factors on learning strategies or the prediction of strategy use by the possession of motivation is observed through this study. That is motivational factors were proved to be effective contributory factors on the use of learning strategies and relationship between was supported by the output.

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