



## Instrumental and Integrative Motivation in University Students

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### Abstract

This research examines instrumental and integrative motivation in learning English as a foreign language, considering its fundamental importance in successful language acquisition. The objective was to identify these types of motivation in A2-level students at a language center in an Ecuadorian public university. A quantitative approach with non-experimental design and descriptive method was employed, using a validated questionnaire applied to a sample of 229 students. Results revealed a high overall motivation level (mean=4.040), with integrative motivation (mean=4.210) predominating over instrumental motivation (mean=3.870). The most influential factors were the desire to travel abroad and job prospects for instrumental motivation, while access to cultural content and interaction with native speakers stood out in integrative motivation. It is concluded that students value English not only as a practical tool but as a means of cultural connection, suggesting a transformation in the traditional perspective of foreign language learning in the Ecuadorian university context.

**Keywords:** student motivation; language learning; language teaching; english as a foreign language; higher education.

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## Motivación Instrumental e integrativa en Estudiantes Universitarios

### Resumen

Esta investigación examina la motivación instrumental e integrativa en el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera, considerando su importancia fundamental en la adquisición exitosa del idioma. El objetivo fue identificar estos tipos de motivación en estudiantes de nivel A2 de un centro de idiomas en una universidad pública ecuatoriana. Se empleó un enfoque cuantitativo con diseño no experimental y método descriptivo, utilizando un cuestionario validado aplicado a una muestra de 229 estudiantes. Los resultados revelaron un alto nivel general de motivación (media=4.040), con predominio de la motivación integrativa (media=4.210) sobre la instrumental (media=3.870). Los factores más influyentes fueron el deseo de viajar al extranjero y las perspectivas laborales en la motivación instrumental, mientras que en la integrativa destacaron el acceso a contenidos culturales y la interacción con hablantes nativos. Se concluye que los estudiantes valoran el inglés no solo como herramienta práctica sino como medio de conexión cultural, sugiriendo una transformación en la perspectiva tradicional del aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras en el contexto universitario ecuatoriano.

**Palabras clave:** motivación del estudiante; aprendizaje de lenguas; enseñanza de idiomas; inglés como lengua extranjera; educación superior.

**Código de clasificación internacional:** 5701.11 - Enseñanza de lenguas.

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## 1. Introduction

Motivation is a fundamental factor in the successful acquisition and use of the English language, as it is a global language that plays an important role in communication between people from different countries. For this reason, the concept of motivation with respect to learning a foreign language is complex and includes emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components (Gardner, 2010a). There are two most important types of motivation: 1). instrumental and integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation is one that has a learning purpose, such as learning English to enter university, find a good job, etc. 2). In contrast, integrative motivation is one that implies the desire to get involved with a foreign community and be part of it (Gass and Selinker, 2001).

Some researchers found that the level of both types of motivation was high in university students (Al-Ta`ani, 2018a); (Khoirul, Hardiyanto and Sumarno, 2023a); (Nurbaiti, Yusuf, Muslem and Inayah, 2023a); (Oyshajon, 2020a). However, the level of instrumental motivation demonstrated was higher than the level of integrative motivation due to the specific purposes that students had for learning English as a foreign language.

On the contrary, Spelman and Thompson (2002a); Abdul, Abdullah, Thulasi, Zainal, Muhammad and Mohamed (2020a); Rahadianto, Huda and Hadaad (2022a); Rahman, Nuruzzaman and Chanda (2016a); determined that the motivation that predominates in students at this level was integrative motivation because they were interested in getting involved and developing with English language culture. In contrast, Chapman and Takahiro (2019a); and Syafrizal (2020a); specified that there was a high level of both instrumental and integrative motivation in the same population.

Motivation is very important in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) because it provides the drive to start learning a language, as it is directly related to the learner and can influence their attitudes and performance towards the target language. Integrative motivation implies that the learner wants to



communicate and integrate into the target language community, while in instrumental motivation the individual focuses on pragmatic outcomes of learning the target language (Lasagabaster, Doiz and Sierra, 2014).

On one hand, instrumental motivation is motivation with an instrumental purpose to acquire the language, such as getting a better job, earning more money, entering a better university or graduate school, etc. (Oxford, 1996).

Instrumental motivation has the objective of acquiring or preserving a language that is primarily self-oriented; this motivation is individualistic and is related to the need to achieve success. Personal development or basic security, self-improvement, and survival will be the pragmatic needs of an individual (Filchenko and Anikina, 2017a).

In contrast, integrative motivation refers to social or interpersonal reasons for learning and acquiring a foreign language or activity in a minority language. Integrative motives specialize in reflecting the desire to identify with individuals from a particular language community (Baker and Prys, 1998).

According to Dörnyei (1990): instrumental motivation could be more important than integrative motivation for foreign language students. He considers that foreign language students rarely have enough experience with the target language community, so they don't have clearly articulated attitudes towards that community and, therefore, these students are not committed to integration with that group.

Therefore, if there is no instrumental and integrative motivation, students have no practical goals or emotional and cultural connection with the target language (Gardner, 2010b).

Therefore, the research questions for this study were the following: What is the level of integrative motivation of A2 level students in the language center to learn English as a foreign language at a public university in Ecuador?; What is the level of instrumental motivation of A2 level students in the language center to learn English as a foreign language at a public university in Ecuador?.



The objective of this research was to identify the integrative and instrumental motivation to learn English as a foreign language of A2 level students in a language center at a public university in Ecuador.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Research Approach and Method

The research followed a quantitative approach in line with the non-experimental design and descriptive method. According to Dörnyei (2007): Quantitative research is a systematic process based on obtaining and analyzing numerical information. This methodological approach is characterized by collecting measurable and quantifiable data through various instruments, which are subsequently processed using specific statistical techniques to obtain objective and generalizable results.

Its main strength lies in the ability to transform observations and responses into precise numerical values, thus allowing the establishment of significant patterns, trends, and correlations between the studied variables.

This study was non-experimental because it identified the level of motivation of the population without control or manipulation of the variable, but only observation (Creswell, 2012). On the other hand, this research was descriptive because it described motivation in a complete and objective manner (Fox and Bayat, 2007).

### 2.2. Research Context

This research was carried out at a public university in Ecuador. The population consisted of 538 students, both male and female, from under 18 to over 23 years old, at A2 level in the language center. The probabilistic sampling method was applied with a simple random sampling strategy. The number of samples was obtained based on the formula of Yamane (1967):  $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$



where:  $n$  = Number of Samples,  $N$  = Total Population,  $e$  = Error Rate.

Therefore, the population was  $N = 538$  assuming the error rate was  $e = 5\%$ . Then, the number of samples that should be used in this research was as follows:  $\frac{538}{1 + 538 (0.05)^2} = 229.424307$ . From the previous calculations, it was possible to obtain the sample size with a margin of error of 5%, the result being 229 without rounding.

### 2.3. Instrument

A questionnaire was used as a research instrument in this study. Specifically, the motivational questionnaire that was designed and validated by Al-Ta`ani (2018b). The Spanish translation of the questionnaire was validated by three teachers to ensure appropriate use of language in the instrument. The instrument was complemented with 2 scales: instrumental motivation, which has 10 items, and integrative motivation, which also has 10 items. At the end, demographic questions were also added to complete the research data.

### 2.4. Data Analysis Process

The data collected by the questionnaire were analyzed using Jeffrey's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP) software. This is a free and open-source program for statistical analysis supported by the University of Amsterdam (Loerts, Lowie and Seton, 2020).

On one hand, participant data related to general information were calculated and displayed in percentages. On the other hand, to interpret the participants' level of motivation, a five-point Likert scale proposed by Al-Ta`ani (2018c): was used where items were ranked from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1) (table 1).

**Table 1.** Five-point Likert scale to interpret motivational level.

Scale	Mean Range	Motivational Level	Score Range
5	Strongly agree	Highest	4.50-5.00
4	Agree	High	3.50-4.49
3	Moderate	Moderate	2.50-3.49
2	Disagree	Low	1.50-2.49
1	Strongly disagree	Lowest	1.00-1.49

**Source:** Al-Ta'ani (2018).

The scoring range for each scale was used to indicate the participants' motivational level; the higher mean score means that participants were highly motivated, while the lower mean score implies that they had low motivation.

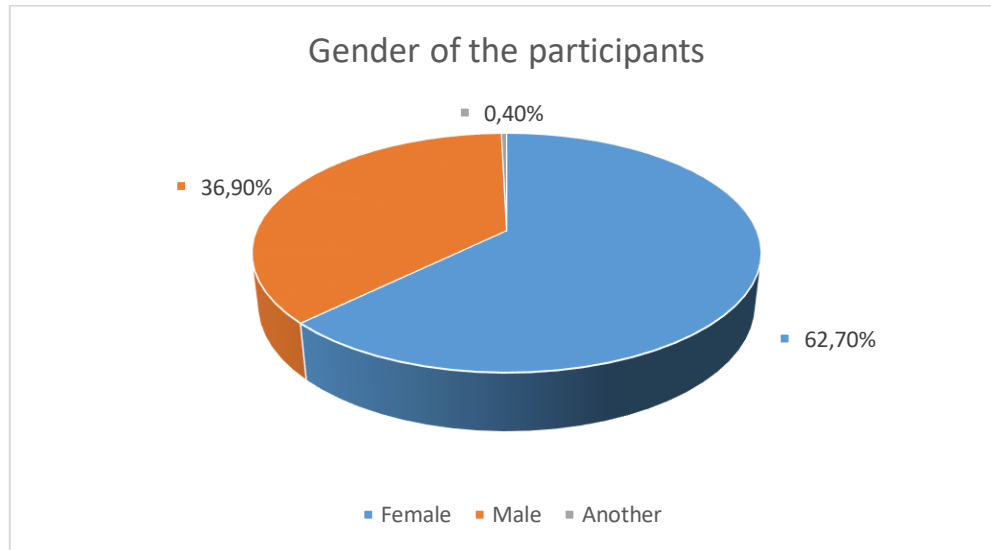
## 2.5. Ethical Considerations

For the development of the research, some ethical aspects were considered, including the preparation of an authorization letter from the rector in charge of the language center. Additionally, the availability and participation of students in the survey was completely voluntary and free. The anonymity and confidentiality of participants were preserved by not revealing their names and identity in data collection, analysis, and reporting of study findings.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Demographic Information

Graph 1 shows the gender distribution of the 229 participants in the study conducted at the language center of a public university in Ecuador. The data is presented in graph 1 with the following percentages: 62,70% (145 students) corresponds to female gender, representing the majority of the sample, 36,90% (83 students) corresponds to male gender, 0,40% (1 student) selected the "other" option.

**Graph 1.** Gender of participants.

**Source:** The Authors (2024).

This distribution shows a clear predominance of female students in the studied sample, being almost double that of male students, while the representation of other genders is minimal.

### 3.2. Motivation Level

The results of this study showed that the general level of motivation to learn English as a foreign language among university students at the public university in Ecuador is high. Motivation is very important for acquiring a foreign language because this involves affective, cognitive, and behavioral elements that directly influence individuals' study by making their learning of the target language meaningful (Gardner, 2010c).

The data analysis revealed that students show a high level of general motivation to learn English, with an average score of 4.040. When examining the two types of motivation separately, it was found that integrative motivation reached a mean score of 4.210, surpassing instrumental motivation which



obtained a mean score of 3.870 (table 2).

**Table 2.** General mean score and average mean scores for instrumental and integrative motivation types.

Types of Mean Score	Mean	Motivational Level
Average mean score for instrumental motivation	3.870	High
Average mean score for integrative motivation	4.210	High
General mean score	4.040	High

**Source:** The Authors (2024).

Although both scores fall within the “high motivational level” range according to the established scale, the difference in favor of integrative motivation is notable, suggesting that students are more motivated by factors related to cultural and social integration than by purely pragmatic or academic reasons such as meeting university requirements (Chapman and Takahiro, 2019b); (Syafrizal, 2019b).

### 3.3. Instrumental Motivation

To answer the first research question about the level of instrumental motivation of A2 level students in the language center to learn English as a foreign language, the results showed that this motivation had a mean of 3.870, which corresponds to “high degree of instrumental motivation” (table 2).

When analyzing the instrumental motivation items in detail, it was identified that the highest score corresponds to statement 6 (“Learning English is very important for traveling abroad”) with a mean of 4.568, reaching a very high motivational level.

In contrast, the lowest score was recorded in statement 10 (“Being proficient in English makes other people respect me”) with a mean of 3.169, placing at a moderate motivational level. It is important to highlight that two statements obtained outstanding scores close to 4.5: statement 4 (“Learning English is important because it will be useful for getting a good job”) with 4.517

and the aforementioned statement 6, both reaching a very high motivational level (table 3).

**Table 3.** Mean scores of instrumental motivation items and their motivational level.

N. °	Instrumental Motivation	Mean	Motivational Level
1	I primarily focus on using English for class assignments and exams.	3.970	High
2	I limit myself to quoting textbooks and don't really communicate for myself when speaking or writing in class.	3.343	Moderate
3	I am only interested in reading English textbooks for my university study, but not other English texts, for example, newspapers or magazines.	3.242	Moderate
4	Learning English is important because it will be useful for getting a good job.	4.517	Highest
5	I am more interested in continuing my higher education than learning the English language itself.	3.500	High
6	Learning English is very important for traveling abroad.	4.568	Highest
7	Learning English is very important to become a more educated person.	3.669	High
8	Learning English is very important to become a person with knowledge and skills.	4.246	High
9	Being proficient in English can lead to more success and achievements in life.	4.475	High
10	Being proficient in English makes other people respect me.	3.169	Moderate

**Source:** The Authors (2024).

The study of instrumental motivation revealed a high motivational level among university students, particularly standing out in statements 4 and 6. These items reflect the utilitarian reasons most valued by students for learning English, which include: a). The prospect of obtaining better job opportunities; b). The possibility of traveling abroad; c). Professional and academic development; d). The desire to become a more educated and competent person; and e). The ability to communicate effectively in an international context.

The results suggest that students perceive English proficiency as a fundamental tool for their professional and personal development, beyond mere compliance with academic requirements. This trend indicates a clear



understanding of the practical importance of English in a globalized world (table 3).

This coincides with Al-Ta`ani (2018d); and Oyshajon (2020b); where participants also had a high level of motivation in the same items. Previous studies on foreign languages in the local context also revealed that instrumental motivation was significant (Khoirul, Hardiyanto and Sumarno, 2023b); (Nurbaiti, Yusuf, Muslem and Inayah, 2023b). Furthermore, students with instrumental motivation want to learn the English language for a practical reason such as focusing on developing their learning capacity to get a good job or professional opportunities, as well as entering a good university (Filchenko and Anikina, 2017b).

### 3.4. Integrative Motivation

To answer the second research question about the level of integrative motivation of A2 level students in the language center to learn English as a foreign language, the results showed that this motivation had a mean of 4.210, which corresponds to “high degree of integrative motivation” (table 2).

The detailed analysis of items related to integrative motivation revealed notable results. The highest score was recorded in statement 11 (“Studying English allows me to understand books, stories, movies, etc. in English”) with a mean of 4.475, demonstrating a high motivational level. On the other hand, the lowest score corresponds to statement 19 (“Studying English allows me to be an open-minded and sociable person”) with a mean of 3.869. It is important to highlight that, even being the lowest score in this category, this value also falls within the range of high motivational level, indicating a strong general presence of integrative motivation in all evaluated aspects (table 4).

**Table 4.** Mean scores of integrative motivation items and their motivational level.

N. °	Integrative Motivation	Mean	Motivational Level
11	Studying English allows me to understand books, stories, movies, etc. in English.	4.475	High
12	Studying English allows me to better understand and appreciate native speakers' lifestyles.	4.288	High
13	Studying English allows me to keep in contact with foreign acquaintances.	4.314	High
14	Studying English allows me to discuss interesting topics in English with people from different national backgrounds.	4.237	High
15	Studying English allows me to share my knowledge with others, for example, giving directions to a tourist.	4.407	High
16	Studying English allows me to freely participate in academic, social and professional activities among other cultural groups.	4.284	High
17	Studying English allows me to speak like native speakers: for example, in accent, tone, and use of English expressions.	4.089	High
18	Studying English allows me to appreciate art and literature in English.	4.013	High
19	Studying English allows me to be an open-minded and sociable person.	3.869	High
20	Studying English allows me to reach the highest level of proficiency.	4.127	High

**Source:** The Authors (2024).

Integrative motivation, which focuses on the emotional and cultural aspects of language learning, showed notably high levels among university students. Participants expressed a strong interest in reasons that go beyond the simple practical use of the language, demonstrating a proactive orientation towards learning English.

Their main motivations included: a). The desire to interact and share knowledge with native English speakers; b). Interest in developing more authentic and natural pronunciation; c). The aspiration to access and understand cultural content in its original form, such as books, movies, and other media; d). The yearning to connect with Anglophone culture and develop a deeper appreciation of it; and e). The pursuit of a more comprehensive



understanding of the language that transcends mere linguistic knowledge.

These results suggest that students see learning English not only as a communication tool but as a means to enrich themselves culturally and develop more meaningful connections with the English-speaking community. These findings are aligned with the results of Abdul, et al. (2020b); Rahadianto, Huda and Hadaad (2022b); and Rahman, Nuruzzaman and Chanda (2016b).

This is why learning another language likely involves not only the student's cognitive and linguistic abilities as an individual but also their social, cultural, emotional, moral, and historical sense of self as a subject (Spelman and Thompson, 2002b).

#### 4. Conclusions

The findings of this research reveal significant aspects about motivational dynamics in learning English as a foreign language in the Ecuadorian university context. The predominance of integrative over instrumental motivation constitutes a relevant discovery that contradicts the trend observed in similar Latin American contexts, where instrumental motivation has traditionally prevailed. This result suggests a transformation in the perspective of Ecuadorian university students, who now value learning English not only as a practical tool but as a means of cultural connection and personal development.

The coexistence of high levels of both integrative and instrumental motivation represents a solid foundation for the development of educational programs that enhance both dimensions. This motivational duality suggests that students have developed a mature understanding of the value of English, which transcends the traditional dichotomy between practical utility and cultural integration.

A novel aspect of these results is the identification of a positive correlation between integrative motivation and the desire to participate in global



cultural exchanges, which has direct implications for the design of English teaching programs in the university context. This finding suggests the need to incorporate cultural elements and international exchange opportunities into the language teaching curriculum.

The methodological limitations of the study, particularly the exclusion of A1 and B1 levels, as well as the concentration in a single language center, indicate the need to broaden the scope of future research. The cross-sectional nature of the study also restricts the understanding of how motivation evolves over time.

For future studies, the following lines of research are suggested: 1. Longitudinal analysis of the evolution of motivational patterns throughout the learning process; 2. Investigation of the interrelation between motivation and the development of specific linguistic competencies; 3. Comparative studies between different levels of linguistic competence and their relationship with types of motivation; 4. Incorporation of mixed methodologies that include direct observation and in-depth interviews to better understand the factors that influence motivation.

These inferences contribute to the field of teaching English as a foreign language by providing empirical evidence about the complexity of motivation in the Ecuadorian university context and its implications for educational practice.

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