

Attitudes and motivation of Greek secondary pupils toward learning English

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Abstract

This paper investigates attitudes and motivation for learning English as a foreign language in Greek upper secondary schools (*Lykeia*) based on Gardner's well-established L2 motivational theory. The major research question is whether attitudes, orientations, ideological attributes of the target language communities, motivation and achievement are related. The study sets out as its working hypothesis that attitudes and motivation are relevant to EFL learning and are major contributors to achievement. The findings indicate that to a large extent the socio-educational model is relevant to the present context of research, although the contribution of attitudes towards the target language communities and the ideologies they represent to motivation does not seem to be as important as was initially hypothesised.

Keywords: attitudes, motivation, second language acquisition, instrumental orientation, integrative orientation

1. Introduction

The study reported in this paper was an attempt to contribute to the long tradition of motivational research, established by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert in the late 50s, by examining the influence of attitudes and motivation on the acquisition of English as an L2 by Greek secondary school pupils. For over 35 years SLA research has consistently shown that motivation is one of the primary determinants of success in L2 learning (Dörnyei 1994a, 1994b, 2001a, 2001b, Dörnyei, Csizér and Németh 2006, Gardner 1985, Gardner and Lambert 1972, Gardner and Tremblay 1994a, 1994b, *inter alia*).

2. Theoretical Background

In their early studies of bilingualism Gardner and Lambert (1972) observed that in some cases individuals who identified closely with the target language community showed superior mastery of the target language. These initial observations formed the main tenet of Gardner's socio-psychological theory, which claims that the successful language learner must be willing to incorporate behavioural elements of the target language community. The model, originally proposed by Gardner and Smythe (1975), and subsequently reformulated by Gardner (1985) and Tremblay and Gardner (1995) consists of four distinct components: The social milieu

within which L2 learning takes place, attitudes toward the learning situation, motivation, and situational anxiety. A key component of Gardner's motivational theory was the distinction between integrative and instrumental orientation toward learning an L2. Integrative orientation refers to a desire to learn, understand, interact and even integrate with members of the target language community (hereafter TLC). An instrumental orientation, on the other hand, reflects practical concerns: Professional and social advancement or desire to study in the country where the target language is spoken. SLA research has traditionally placed a higher premium on integrative orientation because, as has been suggested, L2 learners are more motivated and seek more opportunities to interact with members of the TLC and thereby are more likely to achieve proficiency in the L2.

Although the applicability of the model in FL learning contexts has been questioned, (Dörnyei 1990, 1994a, 1994b), it is perhaps the only model that has received substantial empirical support and in this respect, "it has been superior to many of the influential motivational approaches in mainstream psychology which have often been speculative in nature" Dörnyei 2001a: 62).

3. The research study

3.1 Hypothesis

On the basis of these preliminary considerations the following working hypotheses were set forth: (a) student achievement is determined by students' attitudes, motivational orientation, the learning situation, parental encouragement and the degree of ideological proximity to the two most important TLCs i.e. the United States and Britain); and (b) student' attitudes toward English, the learning situation and the two TLCs contribute to motivation.

3.2 Participants

The participants in the survey were 314 upper secondary school pupils drawn from three state (N=170) and three private (N=144) secondary schools. Female and male participants comprised 54% and 45% of the sample, respectively and they ranged in age from 16 to 18 years. All three upper secondary school grades were roughly equally represented. 105 participants (33.8%) were in Grade A, 114 (36.7%) were in Grade B, and 92 (29, 6%) were in Grade C.

3.3 Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of 60 items and was organised around six sections: (1) respondent's profile; (2) attitudes scales; (3) orientation index; (4) parental encouragement; (5) motivational index; (6) ideological index. Sections 2, 3, 4 and 5 were adapted from Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). The items making up section 6 were adapted from Flaitz (1988). Attitudes were measured on 5-point rating scales.

4. Results

The statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS 10. Both descriptive and inferential statistical tests were performed. Specifically, extensive use was made of mean scores, frequency tables, crosstabulations, chi square, Pearson's product moment correlations, independent-samples and one way ANOVA. Factor Analysis and linear regression were also employed in the final stages of the analysis. Space limitations do not allow for a full and detailed presentation of the findings of the survey. Therefore, I will limit myself to a brief presentation of the results I obtained on the main attitude scales, the orientation, motivational and ideological indices as well as the multivariate analysis test.

4.1 Attitudes

Attitudes, due to their being a multi-directional construct, were operationalised in various scales which could conveniently be grouped under two distinct categories. The first category refers to attitudes toward learning English in general, as well as attitudes formed by broader societal expectations and prevailing stereotypes about foreign language learning in general, learning English, the TLC. The second category refers to attitudes toward the learning situation (the EFL lesson, the EFL teacher, classroom activities). Following Manolopoulou's (2001) typology, the first set of attitudes is designated as *incoming attitudes* because learners bring them with them to the classroom. The second set of attitudes is *ongoing attitudes* because they are formed as a result of the learner's study at school.

4.1.1 Attitudes toward the English lesson

Pupils were presented with two identical lists of 20 adjectives, and were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt that each one described their lesson at school and the foreign language institute¹.

¹ Foreign language institutes (popularly called *frontistiria*) are private schools that provide exclusive non-statutory instruction in foreign languages and prepare students for international FL qualifications.

The maximum possible score would be 100. The mean score on the school evaluation index was 59.24, reflecting a slightly positive attitude in the respondents' evaluation of the quality of their English lesson at school. By contrast, the respondents evaluated considerably more positively their English lesson in the foreign language institute (mean = 71.13).

Table 1. Attitude to the English lesson: Mean scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
School English lesson	304	20	100	59.24	15.47
FL institute English lesson	206	20	100	71.13	17.93

A between-groups examination of attitudes toward the lesson at school and the foreign language institute revealed significant differences according to school type (Table 2). State school pupils registered neutral attitudes toward their school EFL lesson whereas private school pupils show a clearly positive attitude. Regarding state and private pupils' attitudes to the English lesson at the foreign language institute, the mean scores for the two subgroups reflect a higher degree of positive evaluation by state school pupils than private school ones. This may partly be explained by the fact that pupils attending private schools are on the whole satisfied with the quality of their English instruction.

Table 2. State and private school pupils' attitudes to the EFL lesson: Independent-samples *t* test

	type of school	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
EFL lesson at school	state	164	53.90	13.42	1.04
	private	140	65.50	15.41	1.30
EFL lesson at FL institute	state	159	74.11	13.99	1.10
	private	47	61.04	25.02	3.64

$p \leq 0.001$

Significant differences were found in the mean scores of male and female pupils on the two scales. The mean scores for male pupils on the attitudes to the school lesson and the foreign language institute lesson were lower compared to those of the female pupils. Finally, the three grade groups differed significantly in their attitudes to the English lesson at school with Grade A pupils registering the most favourable attitudes and Grade C pupils the least favourable ones.

4.1.2 Attitudes toward the English teacher

Pupils rated their English teacher at school and foreign language institute against two identical scales comprising 25 adjectives expressing a range of personal and instructional qualities.

The maximum obtainable score was 125. The mean scores on the two teacher scales were 80.4 and 92.3 for their teacher at school and their foreign language institute teacher respectively. Both scores indicate a positive evaluation of both types of teacher, although pupils gave their foreign language institute teacher substantially higher ratings on each item.

Table 3. Attitudes to the EFL teacher at school and FL institute: Mean scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
school English teacher	303	25	125	80.48	23.44
FL institute English teacher	196	25	125	92.31	22.79

Finally, it was found that girls were more favourably disposed to both types of teacher than boys. Differences across grades were also revealed with C graders registering, once again the least favourable attitudes.

An examination of the respondents' evaluation of the two teacher types according to school type leads to observations similar to the ones made about the EFL lesson. In particular, private school pupils rated their school teachers higher (mean = 84.89) than did state school pupils (mean = 76.75). Conversely, state school pupils gave higher ratings to their foreign language institute teachers (mean = 95.63) than to their state school teachers (78.47). The differences were significant at $p \leq 0.001$.

4.1.3 Attitudes toward the EFL classroom activities

Pupils were asked to rate a list of EFL classroom activities according to how useful and appealing they found them. The results indicate that overall there is a match between the activities respondents perceive as useful, and those they prefer. The results of a Pearson correlation test that was computed between the two types of ratings (useful-preferable) show a high correlation between the two items ($r = 0.85$ at $p \leq 0.01$) indicating that activities perceived as useful tend also to be preferred. The biggest mismatch concerns grammar, which was found useful by 68% of the pupils, but only 20% of them expressed strong preference for it. The percentage distributions indicate that most mismatches concern items describing

traditional activities. Pupils tend to find them more useful than preferable. This situation has been termed the ‘methodological paradox’, i.e. the reluctance of students to abandon traditional activities in spite of their preference for activities with a communicative orientation (Yorio 1986).

4.1.4 Attitudes toward learning English

Attitudes toward learning English are measured by six items with possible scores ranging from a minimum of 6 points to a maximum of 30 points (Table 4). The mean score for the whole sample is 19.46, suggesting a moderately positive attitude.

Table 4. Mean scores of pupils’ attitudes on three scales:

Attitudes toward learning English
Attitudes toward the British
Attitudes toward the Americans

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
attitudes to learning English	293	6	30	19.46	4.87
attitudes to the British	267	16	80	44.85	13.20
attitudes to the Americans	265	16	80	45.63	14.22

A series of t-tests and a one-way ANOVA revealed significant inter-group differences. More specifically, female pupils registered more positive attitudes compared to male pupils (20.50 and 18.14 respectively). Similarly, private school pupils scored higher on the attitude scale than state school pupils (20.70 and 18.14 respectively). Finally, Grade A pupils registered the highest score (17.95). The differences were significant at $p \leq 0.001$.

4.1.5 Attitudes toward the British and American people

The assumption underlying this scale is that attitudes toward the second language community may have an impact on second language learning and more specifically on achievement.

The maximum positive score would be 80 on either scale (Table 4). A mean score of 44.85 for the British and 45.63 for the Americans indicate that pupils’ attitudes to either language community are relatively neutral.

Although the difference in the mean score between the two TLCs is slight, there are some interesting differences regarding individual traits which can probably be attributed to wider societal stereotypes about the two TLCs. Thus, the British emerged as being more honest, smart, kind, sincere, dependable, polite, and hardworking. On the other hand, the Americans

were perceived as being more interesting, unprejudiced, handsome, friendly, happy, successful, permissive, ambitious and popular. It seems that the British received more favourable ratings on traits roughly measuring character integrity, whereas the Americans were more positively evaluated in outward personality traits.

4.2 Orientation index

The orientation index comprised items eliciting the reasons for studying English. The purpose of the index was to tap the dimensions of instrumentality and integrativeness in the pupils' responses. In order to assess the relationship among the items comprising the orientation index, the responses were subjected to factor analysis. The analysis yielded only four principle factors. The rotated factor matrix is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Factor analysis of orientations

Varimax Rotated Factor Matrix				
Orientations				
Variables	I	II	III	IV
English is the language of progress	.643	.03148	.386	-.225
Studying English will make me a more knowledgeable person	.643	-.240	.329	-.419
Fluency in English is a sign of good education	.588	.06447	.237	-.296
I like English	.533	-.237	.503	-.301
Study in an English-speaking country	.384	-.117	.306	-.110
It is part of the school curriculum	-.170	.530	-.242	.136
My parents want me to	.0308	.505	-.100	.01324
I want to understand the lyrics of pop/rock music	.179	.365	.188	-.325
Will help me better understand English-speaking people	.349	-.111	.747	-.341
Will help me meet varied people	.326	-.137	.610	-.168
Be better informed about the attitudes of other countries toward Greece	.381	-.106	.589	-.302
I want to get an EFL qualification	.323	.04225	.294	-.801
Useful in getting a good job	.320	-.136	.312	-.447

The results show that to a certain extent, instrumental and integrative orientation overlap. Factor analysis showed that the integrative item ‘I like English’ received a high loading on Factor I (instrumental orientation). Similarly, the instrumental item ‘Be better informed about the attitudes of other countries toward Greece’ loaded highly on Factor III (integrative orientation). This partial overlap of the two types of orientation lends further support to the notion that the two orientation types share a conceptual affinity (Dodick 1996, Dörnyei 2002, Ely 1986, Richard-Armato 1988). Factor II comprises the two items making up the coercive index. This factor, which has not been operationalised in Gardner’s AMTB, corresponds to Ely’s (1986) *requirement motivation* (motivation stemming from the compulsory nature of the FL instruction at school) but also includes a dimension of submission to the parental will, hence the label ‘coercive’. Factor IV (career orientation) received high loadings from two items that are part of the instrumental scale (“I want to get an EFL qualification”, “useful in getting a good job”) that are more specifically career-oriented, hence the label of the factor.

A comparison of the mean scores (Table 6) of the two composite indexes of instrumental and integrative orientation indicates that pupils show a significantly higher degree of instrumental orientation. With respect to the two items operationalising coercive orientation, the mean score is indicative of a relatively low level of coercive reasons for learning English. The results

Table 6. Orientation index: Mean scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
instrumental orientation	303	6	35	24.30	5.78
integrative orientation	300	4	20	14.35	3.35
coercive orientation	298	2	10	4.88	2.11

suggest that Greek learners tend to have high levels of both types of orientation, although they seem to be more strongly instrumentally oriented. This can be explained by the fact that Greece is a FLL context, where systematic contact with the language takes place almost exclusively within the classroom and contact with members of the TLCs is very limited and casual, and thus it “could not logically involve attitudes toward the L2 community” (Clement, Dörnyei and Noels 1994).

4.3 Motivational intensity

Motivational intensity with regard to English language learning is measured by 9 items ranging from a minimum of 9 points to a maximum possible score of 26 points. The mean score for the whole sample (Table 7) indicates a moderate degree of motivational intensity.

Table 7. Motivational intensity and desire indices: Mean scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
motivational intensity	301	9	26	16.95	3.75
motivational desire	300	6	20	14.73	3.41

In terms of the variation in the responses registered by the two sexes, once again it was found that the mean for female pupils was slightly higher (mean = 17.65) than male pupils (mean = 16.08). The difference was significant at $p \leq 0.001$. Mean scores between state and private school pupils also differed significantly (means = 16.36 and 17.65 respectively at $p \leq 0.001$). Once again, Grade C pupils registered the lowest motivational intensity mean score.

4.3.1 Motivational desire

Motivational desire is measured by six items ranging from a minimum of 6 points to a maximum of 20 points. The mean score (Table 7) for the whole sample indicates less than moderate levels of motivational desire.

Again boys showed lower motivational desire levels (13.85) than girls (15.43). The difference was significant at $p \leq 0.001$. Similar results yielded the comparison of mean scores between state and private school pupils. Finally, no differences were found among the three grade groups.

4.4 Ideological index

The ideological index seeks to measure the degree of ideological proximity of pupils to the American and the British cultures. A maximum score of 30 on the American index and 25 on the British index would suggest a very high degree of ideological identification with the groups respectively. As shown in Table 8, responses were relatively neutral on the ideological index as a whole.

Table 8. Mean scores on the ideological index

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
composite ideological index	292	11	55	26.82	7.01
American ideological index	290	6	30	13.24	4.74
British ideological index	288	5	25	13.86	3.62

Further analysis of the responses to the items comprising the index indicates an alignment with the stereotypically negative attributes Greek society assigns to the two TLCs. Interestingly, the equivocal stance with respect to the influence of British culture on Greece and the perception of American cultural influence as a threat to Greek society are indicative of the degree of cultural leverage exerted by both countries on Greece.

4.5 Multivariate analysis

The final analysis attempted to determine the impact of the factors implicated in SLA - as they have been operationalised in this study – on achievement and motivation. Multivariate analysis allows the researcher to examine a number of independent variables in conjunction and measure their impact on the test variable. The method employed was multiple regression, as it is the most widely used statistical method in conducting multivariate analysis (Bryman and Cramer 2001).

Two separate tests were run. The first test sought to determine the impact of these factors on achievement, which in this study was measured by the school term report. The following regressors were added to the equation: *Gender, age, type of school, the English lesson at school, the English lesson at the foreign language institute, the school EFL teacher, the foreign language institute EFL teacher, usefulness of EFL activities, preference for EFL activities, instrumental orientation, integrative orientation, motivational desire, motivational intensity, attitudes to learning English, attitudes to learning foreign languages, the British, the Americans, American ideology, British ideology, parental support.*

From the total 20 variables that were regressed, only four were retained. The coefficient of determination (R^2) for the equation as a whole is .30 implying that 30% of the variance can be explained by the four variables in the equation. Table 9 shows the relative contribution of each variable to the predictive power of the regression.

Table 9. Coefficients. Test variable: Term report mark

Model	Standardised Coefficients	Sig.
	Beta	
(Constant)		
1. parental support	.288	.000
2. integrative orientation	.221	.004
3. motivational intensity	.203	.010
4. Age when started learning English	-.149	.040

The beta weights show that parental support provides the largest standardised coefficient, and integrative orientation the next largest, followed by motivational intensity. The variable age has the smallest impact which is negative, indicating that the lower the age at which the learner started learning English, the higher the mark on the school report.

The second test sought to determine the impact of the variables shown previously on motivation. Following Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Gardner (1985), motivation was regressed as a composite index of three distinct scales: Attitudes toward learning English, motivational desire, and motivational intensity. Out of the 18 variables that were entered into the equation, only six were retained. The R^2 is 0.56, suggesting that around 56% of the variance is explained by these six variables. An inspection of the standardised regression coefficients (Table 10 shows that attitudes to foreign language learning and the school lesson have the greatest impact on motivation the greatest impact on motivation, followed by the school EFL teacher, instrumental orientation, the foreign language institute teacher and usefulness of EFL activities .

Table 10. Coefficients. Test variable: Motivation

Model	Standardised Coefficients	Sig.
(Constant)		
1. attitudes to FL learning	.281	.001
2. school lesson	.278	.000
3. FL institute EFL teacher	.134	.027
4. school EFL teacher	.186	.011
5. instrumental orientation	.183	.021
6. usefulness of EFL activities	.126	.035

5. Conclusions and further research

The results of the regression analysis are in line with the main postulate of Gardner's socio-educational model that motivation is implicated in L2 achievement. Somewhat equivocal are the results regarding the impact of the social milieu (parental encouragement and the learning situation) on the tests variables. The learning situation does not seem to contribute to achievement, while parental encouragement makes no contribution to motivation. Moreover, it becomes evident from this study that that cultural beliefs as operationalised in the ideology index do not seem to be implicated in achievement and motivation. Dörnyei (1990: 65) observes in this respect that in FLL contexts, when the target language is an international language like English, it is not so much attitudes toward the TLC that are at play but "a more general disposition toward language learning and the values the target language conveys". Nevertheless, the presence of key factors (motivational intensity, aspects of the social milieu, integrative and instrumental orientation) in the regression analysis renders the socio-educational model to a large extent relevant to the present study.

This study has examined for the first time, to my knowledge, aspects of the socio-educational model in Greece. Despite the fact that the present research failed to show a substantial contribution of attitudes towards the TLC to the motivation construct, additional research is required to explore the salience of ideological and affective aspects of the TLC as facilitators (or debilitators for that matter) of L2 learning. Finally, future research should focus on an investigation of learners' needs and expectations and be incorporated into a comprehensive SLA model that will determine as accurately as possible the optimal conditions for language instruction and learning.

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