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*Factors that influence Ecuadorian university students' motivation towards English learning:
An exploratory research study*

*Factores que influyen en la motivación de los estudiantes universitarios ecuatorianos hacia el
aprendizaje del inglés: un estudio exploratorio de investigación*

*Fatores que influenciam a motivação dos estudantes equatorianos em aprender inglês: um
estudo exploratório*

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Abstract

Although learning English as a foreign language has commonly been associated with special cognitive abilities or learners' aptitude, it has also been found that motivation plays a key role. Thus, this exploratory research study aimed to determine what factors motivate Ecuadorian university students to learn English, so a survey was administered to 422 students in different undergraduate programs from three public universities. The questions focused on learning about and determining the level of agreement the study participants had with statements related to integrative and instrumental motivation. Additionally, an open-ended question was formulated to find out the most important reasons behind their learning of English. The findings showed that a large number of study participants feel motivated to learn the language in order to achieve short-term goals such as traveling and being able to communicate in the target language, as well as long-term goals that include earning academic degrees and obtaining better job opportunities. It was concluded that the role of the teacher and an effective language teaching methodology are key components of students' motivation and attitudes towards successful foreign language learning.

Keywords: motivation; attitudes; university students; English.

Resumen

Aunque el aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera comúnmente se asocia con habilidades cognitivas especiales o la aptitud de los estudiantes, también se ha descubierto que la motivación juega un papel muy importante. Por tanto, esta investigación exploratoria tuvo como objetivo determinar qué factores motivan a los estudiantes ecuatorianos universitarios a aprender inglés y una encuesta fue administrada a 422 estudiantes de distintas carreras de grado de tres universidades públicas. Las preguntas se enfocaron en conocer y determinar el nivel de acuerdo que los participantes del estudio tuvieron con afirmaciones relacionadas a la motivación integrativa e instrumental. Adicionalmente, se formuló una pregunta abierta para hallar las razones más importantes acerca del aprendizaje de inglés. Los resultados mostraron que un número grande de participantes se sienten motivados a aprender el lenguaje para alcanzar objetivos a corto plazo, como viajar y poder comunicarse en el idioma meta, como también objetivos a largo plazo lo cual incluye obtener títulos académicos y mejores oportunidades laborales. Se concluyó que el rol

docente y una metodología de enseñanza efectiva son componentes fundamentales de la motivación y actitud estudiantil hacia un exitoso aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera.

Palabras claves: motivación; actitud; estudiante universitario; inglés

Resumo

Embora o aprendizado de inglês como língua estrangeira seja comumente associado a habilidades cognitivas especiais ou aptidão dos alunos, também se descobriu que a motivação desempenha um papel muito importante. Portanto, esta pesquisa exploratória teve como objetivo determinar quais fatores motivam os estudantes universitários equatorianos a aprender inglês e uma pesquisa foi aplicada a 422 estudantes de diferentes graduações de três universidades públicas. As questões focaram-se em conhecer e determinar o nível de concordância que os participantes do estudo tiveram com declarações relacionadas à motivação integrativa e instrumental. Além disso, foi feita uma pergunta em aberto para encontrar os motivos mais importantes sobre o aprendizado de inglês. Os resultados mostraram que um grande número de participantes é motivado a aprender o idioma para alcançar objetivos de curto prazo, como viajar e poder se comunicar no idioma de destino, além de objetivos de longo prazo, que incluem a obtenção de diplomas acadêmicos e melhores oportunidades de emprego. Concluiu-se que o papel do ensino e uma metodologia eficaz de ensino são componentes fundamentais da motivação e atitude do aluno em relação ao aprendizado bem-sucedido de uma língua estrangeira.

Palavras-chave: motivação; atitude estudante universitário; inglês

Introduction

Due to the relevant role English has in educational, economic, political and cultural contexts, many people worldwide have learned it and it is currently considered an international language (Crystal, 2003). The importance of English in the academic and professional life of individuals makes it especially attractive for university students, despite the fact that learning it is a challenging task. Along with the learner's background, level of intellectual development, age, and learning environment, motivation is one of the key components of learning. Thus, the learners'

motivation becomes an influential factor when learning a foreign language (Ellis, 2008). During the last decade, several research works concerning the factors that influence second language acquisition have been carried out, and predictably, the results demonstrated that motivation is a fundamental issue in foreign language learning in tertiary level students.

Similarly, Dörnyei (1998) has emphasized the impact of motivation and how it affects language learning. Gardner (1985) appears to support this relationship between motivation and learning. He argues that a second language (L2) learning is affected by a favorable behavior, an inner urge to attain an objective and attitude. Students with a high degree of motivation demonstrate a positive attitude towards language learning; therefore, better long-term outcomes.

Motivation can be divided in two main types: extrinsic and intrinsic. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), when a person does something in search of rewards, such as grades or praises that are not inherently linked to learning itself, that is, when learning or performing well becomes essential to acquire those benefits, motivation is deemed extrinsic. Whereas, intrinsic motivation is defined as the degree to which individuals exerts themselves to learn something new due to the willingness and feeling of pleasure by doing a particular activity, without expecting recognition or any external reward (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Those who are intrinsically motivated learn because of their own desire to learn.

As it was mentioned before, in the learning context, attitudes toward the target language or its culture are connected to motivation. This definition of motivation has been accepted since the introduction of the socio-educational model proposed by Gardner and Lambert (1972) and the start of differentiation between instrumental and integrative orientations. Instrumental motive relates to the willingness of the learner to learn a language for utilitarian purposes rather than social involvement with the target language group (Norris-Holt, 2001). These instrumental objectives could include social status or self-image, better careers opportunities, a scholarship for future studies, passing a necessary examination for meeting university requirements, among others (Saville, 2006). While integrative motivation includes attitude variables and goal-oriented behaviors, it also refers to the desire of the learners to acquire a language because of an interest in the country, culture or people of the language they want to learn. Therefore, it could be assumed

that when we speak about different reasons for learning a language, we deal with varied motivational orientations.

Accordingly, motivation can also have an impact on language learning achievement. The present study seeks to explore the factors that directly or indirectly influence the motivation of undergraduate learners on the language learning process. Over the past decade, various studies on the relationship there is between successful second language learning and learner motivation have been undertaken. However, not many have been carried out in developing countries. This research therefore, reacts to the scarcity of studies in this particular field at university level in Ecuador and may also contribute to developing critical awareness of the importance motivation has in the foreign language (FL) teaching-learning process.

This research attempted to shed light on the following research question: What factors affect learners' motivation to study English as a foreign language in the context of Ecuadorian universities, as recognized by the learners themselves?

Literature review and theoretical framework

Motivation has been considered a highly influencing variable in second language learning achievement. Gardner (1985) states that L2 motivation is the degree of an individual's effort and work to learn a language, who is driven by the sense of achievement that this may produce. Motivation is also defined as a desire to achieve an objective, in combination with effort and energy (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Oxford and Shearin (1994) and Narayanan (2006) said that motivation is the reason for the behavior or behaviors of an individual. Students who are driven by an inner motivation to learn engage and commit to learning activities. Some of the learners' inner motivation may be interest, curiosity, or willingness to accomplish, while others are external, such as social pressure, academic requirement and material rewards. Brown (2000) claims that motivation relates generally to the intensity of an individual's desire to learn. Gardner and Lambert (1972) claimed that motivation could affect students in different ways. For example, it can shape positive behavior and performance towards various subjects and increase effort and persistence in learning.

The impact of motivation in the achievement of L2/FL learning has been commonly recognized by most researches. For instance, Dörnyei (1998) defines motivation as the first incentive for individuals to start learning a language, which is also the driving force to retain the lengthy learning cycle. Motivation for acquiring a second/foreign language is identified as learners' disposition to study a language (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). Motivation encourages active and personal commitment to L2 learning. As it was mentioned before, research findings highlight motivation as one of the key factors that contributes to a successful language learning, and it is also considered the impetus to strive and keep L2 skills after the completion of language study (Oxford & Shearin, 1994, as cited in Huang, 2007). Gardner (1985) describes language learning motivation as a combination of complex variables, including expression of efforts, goals, and favorable attitudes towards the target the language. All these elements including the attitudes of the learner, level of effort, energy and time may help determine someone's level of motivation to master a language.

Undoubtedly, attitudes and motivation frame second/foreign language acquisition. In his studies, Lambert (1955) claimed that there is an interest in studying a foreign language due to emotional link with the target language group or because the learner has a strong interest in their language. Moreover, Gardner and Lambert (1972) concluded that students' capacity to master a second language can be associated with their language abilities, attitudes and perceptions towards the chosen language and its speakers. They also claimed that attitude might affect the nature of the behaviors and views of the student towards the other language, culture and society, and this will determine the inclination to learn that language. Although research results have indicated that attitudes and motivation are connected to effective L2/FL learning, how they do so still needs to be studied in depth (Lightbown & Spada, 1993).

Stern (1983) not only mentions attitudes towards the language and the people who speak it, but also towards the environment in which the language is being learned. With regard to the latter, Entwistle and Tait (1995) describe the learning environment as a whole course-related learning scenario which includes lectures, tasks, exams and a set of learning tools. Brophy (1987) pointed out that when students feel a sense of belonging to the learning environment, they are more prompted to become actively involved in the process of learning.

Additionally, to explain why individuals set certain goals in learning a language, Lambert and Gardner (1959) proposed an instrument to measure the motivational purposes for achieving a language learning and classify them as orientations. They focused on integrative and instrumental orientations. It is thought that successful language students are those who respond positively towards the target language and who are also willing to become part of its culture (Falk, 1978). This motivation is known as integrative motivation and learners who have it are characterized by a positive attitude and a willingness to use that language to communicate and adopt the language's culture (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Gardner and Lambert (1972) also mentioned that individuals are oriented to learn a F2/FL for personal development and cultural enhancement; that is to say, the language is intended to be used to interact with others and become part of their society (as cited in Pourhosein-Gilakjani, Leong, & Saburi, 2012).

In contrast, another type of motivation may also influence the F2/FL learning process. The motivation defined by a learner's orientation or aim to accomplish something useful and specific from that learning process, that is called instrumental motivation (Hudson, 2000). Instrumentally motivated learners acquire the language in order to obtain a benefit, for example, the fulfillment of university requisites, a better job, salary increase or social status.

Based on another classification, motivation can be extrinsic and intrinsic. Heidari-Soureshjani and Naseri (2011) concluded that extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are related to each other. Thus, in extrinsic motivation the aim is the achievement of external benefits like getting rewards. On the contrary, intrinsic motivation results from the expectations originated inside an individual that encourages language leaning. There is no reward except the activity itself. Extrinsic motivation focuses on external rewards and intrinsic motivation focuses on achieving those rewards from the activity itself. In addition to this, it can be said that intrinsic and extrinsic are somehow related to integrative and instrumental orientations, but they are not the same. Both instrumental and integrative orientations can be considered subtypes of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, because both refer to desires and outcomes (Schmidt et al., 1996). Furthermore, intrinsic motivation can become integrative motivation if there is a wish to be part of the L2 culture. This type of motivation can also become instrumental if the L2 learner's goals are utilitarian goals. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are relevant for integrative and instrumental motivation when it

comes to second language learning (Brown, 2000). Therefore, in many cases when we speak about different reasons for learning a language, it could be assumed that we deal with motivational orientations.

Dörnyei (1998) mentions that instrumental and integrative motivation can be combined in most language learning situations. Language learning success cannot be attributed to some integrative or instrumental reasons. The relevance of integrative and instrumental motivation depends on circumstances and contexts in which a FL or a L2 function. A university is definitely composed of groups of people with different gender, social and educational background, age, and etcetera. Therefore, subjects and courses taken may vary. These affiliations will definitely affect the attitudes and perceptions of learners when learning the target language. For instance, learners of English literature are merely not comparable to engineering learners; at least when it comes to what motivates them to learn a new language, as not all may think in the same way (Redfield, Figoni & Levin, 2009).

Despite the importance of both: integrative and instrumental motivations in the achievement of second language learning from distinct angles, it is integrative motivation which has been seen as a major force that contributes to success in a formal learning context, rather than instrumental motivation (Ellis, 2008).

Integrative motivation is emphasized in some research works; however, it has been reported that the reasons most frequently chosen by students are the instrumental ones. Researchers who support an integrative orientation state that students who have it are usually more highly motivated and show more success in the acquisition of the target language. Gardner and Lambert (1972) highlight that students who have favorable attitudes towards the language and wish to incorporate into their speakers' society are more driven than those who perform primarily for the purpose of obtaining a reward. In other words, integrative motivation seems to be more influential than instrumental motivation.

The significance of instrumental or integrative motivation relies largely on the language-learning context. For example, in 2009, a study investigating the motivational orientation of Japanese technology students was undertaken at three Japanese universities: Toyohashi University

of Technology, Kansai University's Faculty of Engineering as well as Osaka Institute of Technology. The objective was to explore whether the students of these majors were more integratively or instrumentally oriented. The findings suggested that these students were instrumentally oriented, when it comes to studying English. It was also reported that their purpose for studying English was primarily academic and profession related (Wang, 2009).

Tahaineh and Daana (2013) also evaluated a community of 184 Jordanian EFL female undergraduates. In this case, the results indicated that these learners' motivation was instrumental. The reasons for them to study a language different from their mother tongue were mainly utilitarian, related to academic reasons rather than cultural ones, showing a positive attitude towards the target language and its society.

Mahreez (1994) evaluated 130 University Utara Malaysia English non-major undergraduates to observe their attitudes towards the English language, finding that their attitude is positive and that their orientation is mainly instrumental. A similar study was carried out by Al Mamun et al. (2012), who applied a questionnaire survey at Khulna University, Bangladesh, with 79 non-major English graduate students to measure their attitude towards EFL. These students had a favorable attitude towards English and were instrumentally oriented, as well. In the same way, Tahaineh and Daana (2013) also did an investigation with 184 Jordanian EFL female undergraduates, finding that their attitude towards studying the target language and its culture was extremely positive, with more instrumental motives than instrumental ones. Goktepe (2014) also conducted research among 90 first-year undergraduates of a Turkish university in business studies who indicated that they learn the target language with the purpose of instrumental goals and in some degree, integrative motivation prevails for learners. Another study on motivational factors and attitude of EFL learners that needs to be mentioned is the one done by Bobkina and Fernandez (2012) who observed 72 EFL engineering students at the Technical University who made visible to the researchers that engineering learners were extrinsically motivated to learn English for which most learners had a favorable mindset. Dital (2012) concluded thorough his research on motivation that there was a positive attitude of the learners who also seemed to be motivated instrumentally as much as integratively. Likewise, Moinvaziri (2009) revealed in his investigation that language learners were simultaneously motivated instrumentally and integratively.

However, Moskovsy and Alrabai (2009) argued that instrumental motivation has functions that are more fundamental in EFL learning than integrative motivation, while Gardner (1985) was of the view that EFL learning is more influenced by integrative motivation because it includes attitudinal factors, which are necessary to maintain the process of language acquisition.

For some authors, for example Dörnyei (2001), integrative and instrumental motivation do not seem to be opposite, but two opinions of an issue. Both are linked favorably and contribute to the objective of language mastering. Agreeing with this, Brown (2000) emphasizes that both integrative and instrumental motivations do not exclude each other, which is seen in learners who tend to choose a combination of both orientations rather than just one when learning a language. He provides the example of foreign students learning English for educational purposes in the United States, who are also seeking to be part of the country's culture. Contributing with this view, Wan-er (2008) also highlighted that, more beneficial learner outcomes can be achieved by combining both: instrumental and integrative motivations during the process of studying a new language. It should also be noticed that the learners' powerful desire to acquire a variety of skills and maintain the interest in learning definitely benefits successful accomplishment of their goals. (Al-Hazemi, 2000).

Methods

The present study, which took place in three public universities in the highlands region of Ecuador, adopted an exploratory research approach. As stated by Reiter (2017), new explanations are to be found out through exploratory research, especially explanations that have been previously overlooked. This can be done through a “process of amplifying [researchers'] conceptual tools to allow [them] to raised new questions and provide new explanations of a given reality from a new angle” (p. 144). The aim of this research study was to find out undergraduate students' perceptions with regard to the motivational factors that influence English language learning in the Ecuadorian educational context. In this regard, 422 university students from different majors decided to volunteer to take part in the study by completing a survey sent to their emails. The group was made up of 155 male students and 267 female students. That is to say, 63.27% (267) were female and 36.73% (155) were male. The study participants reported to have the following characteristics: 53.1

% (224) of the respondents are between 22 and 25 years old; 39.6 % (167) are between 18 and 20 years old; 4.0 % (17) are between 26 and 29 years old; 2.4% (10) are between 30 and 33 years old, and 0.9% (4) are over 33 years old. As it was expected, 99% of the respondents were Ecuadorians and 1% were not. Three different social economic statuses were mentioned: 84.6% (357) of the participants expressed to be from middle class, 14.9% (63) were low class, and 0.5 (2) % were high class. The English language levels that the participants have were also a characteristic observed. The majority of students, that is 69.5% (291), were intermediate level; 20.5% (86) were beginners; 9.5% (40) were advanced, and 0.5% (2) were native-like speakers. Students were also questioned asked about the time they have spent studying English. More than half of them 54.9% (230) declared to have studied English for 1 to 4 years, 22.2% (93) for 5 to 9 years, 15% (63) 10 to 14 years, and 7.9% (33) have studied English for more than 15 years.

Research Instrument

A survey, consisting of 18 close-ended items and one open-ended question, was designed by the authors of the study, and before it was administered to the study participants, it was reviewed by experts in the field of research and applied linguistics. Then the survey was piloted with 60 undergraduate students from two of the participating universities who took it with the aim of helping the researchers to adjust and refine the items of the survey to create a final version of the instrument. The survey aimed to gather data on motivational orientations towards second language learning; factors that impact motivation in English language learning, learning environment, and the culture from English-speaking countries. Additionally, the survey included an open-ended question that prompted the participants to think about the most important reason they have to learn English at university. The software R was used for the data analysis of the study at hand.

Results

The respondents (422 undergraduate students from 3 universities in the Ecuadorian Highlands) completed a survey, which contained 16 close-ended questions with regard to key factors that affect learners' motivation towards English language learning. In this part of the survey, Likert-type scale was employed in order for the students to mention their level of agreement with 16 posed statements concerning different motivational factors involved in English language learning.

In the Likert-type items, the level of agreement utilized was the scale from 1 to 5, being 1 the lowest rating and 5 the highest rating.

Table one shows the result for the first questions in which 78 of the of the surveyed undergraduate students (18.5%) expressed they feel very comfortable when they have to speak English.

TABLE 1. Students who rated how comfortable they feel when speaking English

Rating	Number of students	Percentage
1	9	2.1
2	26	6.2
3	153	36.3
4	156	37.0
5	78	18.5
TOTAL	422	100

Source: self made

As seen in the table below, 121 of all the surveyed undergraduate students (28.7%) indicated that when listening to an English song on the radio, they carefully listen to it, trying to understand its content.

TABLE 2. Listening to English songs carefully on the radio and trying to understand them

Rating	Number of students	Percentage
1	9	2.1
2	16	3.8
3	107	25.4
4	169	40.0
5	121	28.7

TOTAL	422	100
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Source: self made

The table N.3 indicates that 81 of the surveyed undergraduate students (19.2%) actually try to use English outside the classroom by talking to native speakers, reading books or watching movies in their original version.

TABLE 3. Trying to use English outside the classroom

Rating	Number of students	Percentage
1	25	5.9
2	62	14.7
3	137	32.5
4	117	27.7
5	81	19.2
TOTAL	422	100

Source: self made

Table 4 shows that the majority of students, 303 of all the surveyed undergraduates (71.8%), want to be able to use English for communication in the future, as they do in their mother tongue.

TABLE 4. Wanting to be able to communicate in English well

Rating	Number of students	Percentage
1	2	0.5
2	1	0.2
3	33	7.8
4	83	19.7
5	303	71.8
TOTAL	422	100

Source: self made

As shown in Table five, 121 of all the surveyed undergraduate students (28.7%) would spend all the time learning English if that were possible for them.

TABLE 5. Spending all the time learning English

Rating	Number of students	Percentage
1	13	3.1
2	29	6.9
3	115	27.3
4	144	34.1
5	121	28.7
TOTAL	422	100

Source: self made

As can be seen from the table below, 218 of all the surveyed undergraduate students (51.7%) think their language instructors motivate them to learn and improve the English language.

TABLE 6. Teachers' motivation towards English language learning.

Rating	Number of students	Percentage
1	5	1.2
2	8	1.9
3	69	16.4
4	122	28.9
5	218	51.7
TOTAL	422	100

Source: self made

It was also found that 198 of all the surveyed undergraduate students (46.9%) believed that their English language instructors employ a language teaching methodology, which is both: innovative and interesting.

TABLE 7. Teacher use of innovative and interesting teaching methodology

Rating	Number of students	Percentage
1	5	1.2
2	15	3.6
3	60	14.2
4	144	34.1
5	198	46.9
TOTAL	422	100

Source: self made

Table 8 illustrates that 169 of all the surveyed students (40.0%) believe that the learning activities, presented by their instructors, help them develop their English language skills.

Table 8. In-class learning activities help develop language skills

TABLE 8. Learning activities help to develop English language skills

Rating	Number of students	Percentage
1	8	1.9
2	8	1.9
3	74	17.5
4	163	38.6
5	169	40.0
TOTAL	422	100

Source: self made

As shown in Figure 9, 93 of all the surveyed undergraduate students (22.0%) think the layout of their textbook is appealing, and it promotes their interest for English language learning.

TABLE 9. The layout of the textbook

Rating	Number of students	Percentage
1	14	3.3
2	35	8.3
3	110	26.1
4	170	40.3
5	93	22.0
TOTAL	422	100

Source: self made

It can be seen from the data in Table 10 that 137 of all the surveyed undergraduate students (32.5 %) affirmed that didactic materials used in their English classes are interesting and appealing.

TABLE 10. Didactic materials are interesting and appealing

Rating	Number of students	Percentage
1	7	1.7
2	18	4.3
3	93	22.0
4	167	39.6
5	137	32.5
TOTAL	422	100

Source: self made

From the information showed in table 11, it can be said that 214 of all the surveyed undergraduate students (50.7%) believe their classrooms, including refurbishment or conditioning, equipment, lighting and furniture, are adequate for English language learning.

TABLE 11. The classrooms are adequate for language learning

Rating	Number of students	Percentage
1	4	.9
2	8	1.9
3	55	13.0
4	141	33.4
5	214	50.7
TOTAL	422	100

Source: self made

As can be seen in the table below, 287 of all the surveyed undergraduate students (68.0 %) are interested in traveling abroad and getting to know English-speaking cultures.

TABLE 12. Traveling to and learning about English-speaking cultures

Rating	Number of students	Percentage
1	2	.5
2	6	1.4
3	34	8.1
4	93	22.0
5	287	68.0
TOTAL	422	100

Source: self made

It can be seen from the data in Table 13 that 217 of all the surveyed undergraduate students (51.4%) declared that most of the English-speaking countries are developed and, therefore, they invest more on education and technology.

TABLE 13. Education and technology in most English-speaking countries

Rating	Number of students	Percentage
1	2	0.5
2	7	1.7
3	40	9.5
4	156	37.0
5	217	51.4
TOTAL	422	100

Source: self made

The table below shows that 150 of all the surveyed undergraduate students (35.5%) acknowledged that people from English-speaking countries are more practical and organized, so that there is a lot to learn about their culture.

TABLE 14. A lot to learn about people from English-speaking countries

Rating	Number of students	Percentage
1	2	0.5
2	11	2.6
3	79	18.7
4	180	42.7
5	150	35.5
TOTAL	422	100

Source: self made

The table below shows that 110 of all the surveyed undergraduate students (26.1%) think values, norms and laws from English-speaking countries are more respected than in their home country.

TABLE 15. Respect towards values, norms and laws

Rating	Number of students	Percentage
1	6	1.4
2	18	4.3
3	111	26.3
4	177	41.9
5	110	26.1
TOTAL	422	100

Source: self made

The table below indicates 212 of all the surveyed undergraduate students (50.2%) wish to be able to enjoy and comprehend artistic manifestations or expressions from English-speaking countries, such as music, literature and movies.

Table 16. Wishing to enjoy and comprehend artistic manifestations or expressions

Rating	Number of students	Percentage
1	1	0.2
2	9	2.1
3	67	15.9
4	133	31.5
5	212	50.2
TOTAL	422	100

Source: self made

In addition to the results drawn from the above close-ended questions of the survey, the respondents were asked to think about and explain the most important reason why they learn English. They did so by providing answers to an open-ended question that reads as follows: From your point of view, what is the most important reason that motivates you to learn English at university? Please, explain your answer. The results obtained are detailed below based on identified recurring patterns across the dataset, which contains all the respondents' answers of the open-ended question of the survey administered. The following key notions were learned after the analysis of the qualitative data was carried out:

Most of the undergraduate students surveyed feel motivated to learn English because they want to have better job opportunities, which entails earning a good salary and engaging in professional development, in the future careers.

Additionally, they believe learning English will help them pursue (post)graduate studies abroad after they graduate from their current programs of study. This includes meeting foreign language entry requirements and being able to apply for scholarships. Also, being able to read and comprehend (scientific) articles or papers and books in English pertaining to their university studies is another aspect that motivates these university students to learn the English language.

Academically speaking, the surveyed undergraduate have another reason to study English and it is the legal requirement they have to meet in order to pass mandatory exams and be able to graduate from university. This means they want to achieve the required English level of proficiency to earn their university degrees.

It is also motivating for them to know that learning English will allow them to travel and learn about other countries and their cultures by being able to interact with people in the English language during their visits or stays.

The participants also mentioned that they are interested in learning and mastering English because it is the language of global communication, which could help them open doors in the future.

Furthermore, they feel motivated to learn English, as they think this foreign language allows them to increase and improve their knowledge, as well as experience new opportunities for further learning. For them, English is key for their individual or personal achievement; whereas some students stated that they simply like and enjoy learning the English language because they think it is an interesting and helpful foreign language, that is also necessary in today's globalized world.

To sum up, the university students who completed the survey strongly believe that what motivates them the most when it comes to learning English is their desire to achieve different goals, both in their current undergraduate and prospective graduate studies and future professional careers.

Discussion

When Gardner developed The Socio-educational Model, motivation was defined as a desire to learn a language plus a favorable attitude to do so. It has certainly been seen that, although individuals probably know the advantages of learning a new language, they also know that they can survive without it; therefore, motivation is of paramount importance in L2 learning (Gardner, 1985).

The content analysis performed after applying the survey to EFL students in three different Ecuadorian universities showed that a significant number of them want to use English for communicating properly with other people. Despite this, the number of students who use the language outside the classroom is fairly low. This may be due to reasons associated with the learners' perceptions and a range of factors that affect their motivation and willingness to speak

(Riasati, 2012). This probably explains the reason why only 18.5% of the surveyed undergraduate students feel comfortable when speaking English and similarly, only 19.2% of them would try to practice English outside the classroom by talking to native speakers, reading books or watching movies in their original version.

Certainly, a key role is given to teachers within any learning process. According to Brophy (1987), educators are to take part as active socialization agents to motivate students to learn. Not surprisingly, more than 50% of the students in this study perceive that their teacher is a motivator for their learning. This goes in line with 46.9% of students who consider that their teachers employ a language teaching methodology that is motivating and interesting. Additionally, it has been found that the nature of activity seems to influence motivation in students, as much as the social goals in the classroom (Sample, 2015). For this reason, it is important to focus on the results obtained when students were asked whether the learning activities presented in class help them develop their English language skills or not. Low percentages as 22.0% of the surveyed undergraduate students think the layout of their textbook is appealing for them. This coupled with 32.5 % of the students who consider that the didactic materials used in their English classes are suggesting that changes need to be made in the way students are taught since prior findings have shown that students learn with activities they enjoy and are not too hard for them (Lepper, 1988).

The issue of improving students' learning has been of interest for many authors. For instance, Sugita and Takeuchi (2015) investigated the effectiveness of motivational strategies in an EFL classroom and the results revealed that motivational intensity levels needs to be taken into consideration when aiming to improve students' proficiency in the English language. Likewise, Tahini and Daana (2013) conclude that learners' motivation and attitude for learning English have to be taken into account through the teaching-learning process.

To that end, it is necessary to ask ourselves what motives students to learn English and that is exactly the reason why several researchers have paid attention to instrumental and integrative orientations after Gardner and Lambert (1972) had proposed the terms Integrative and instrumental Motivation. Integrative motivation involves the students' integration into the target language; as an example, a good number of surveyed students in this study mentioned that they feel encouraged

to learn English because it is the language of global communication that could offer them new opportunities worldwide. Some of them simply learn English because it is fun and useful for their future. Whereas instrumental motivation reveals “a desire to accomplish something, such as obtaining a graduate diploma” (Ehrman, 1996, p.139), integrative motivation involves a positive attitude of the learner towards the language learning process. For numerous surveyed students, the necessity to meet the requirement of learning a foreign language in order to pass mandatory exams and graduate from university is crucial. Others see English as a tool, which will be used for them to get better job opportunities and salaries, and to have access to research papers and important information.

Undoubtedly, attitude of learners towards the target language has been found to be essential. A learner who is acquiring a foreign language adopts the behavior of native speakers of that target language and his attitudes influences his learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, p. 267). This is corroborated by the findings that reveal that more than 50% of students surveyed consider that English-speaking countries are developed and focus on investing more on education and technology. A similar number shows that students want to be able to enjoy and comprehend music, literature and movies from English-speaking countries. All these attractive aspects of English-speaking cultures probably explain why 68.0 % of the university students surveyed are interested in traveling abroad and learn about the countries and cultures whose people are considered law-abiding and organized by some of them. Such beliefs expose an integrative type of motivation in our university students. It is also necessary to keep in mind that when an individual is pursuing either an educational, financial or social goal, an intrinsic motivation is involved (Shenk, 2011).

To sum up, generally speaking, the study participants showed to have both: instrumental and integrative drives towards English language learning, which overlap and interact in different manifestations within their performance.

Conclusions and recommendations

This research extended our knowledge with regard to factors that influence undergraduate students' motivation to learn the English language within a non-English speaking educational context. The motivational orientations for language learning discussed in the study are of

paramount importance for EFL university teachers these days, as the highlighted orientations may have a great impact on non-English speaking students' motivation towards English learning throughout their university careers.

Our undergraduates' responses to the survey revealed that desires, such as better job opportunities, travel, graduate degrees, and future postgraduate degrees have created the idea of a community our students want to belong to. Thus, their attitudes towards the English language and the culture of the English-speaking countries they know about is positive; therefore, all that is being pursued by these university students show overlapping instrumental and integrative motivation.

It is important to keep in mind that learning a new language is not only a cognitive process; but also an ensemble of different types of motivation, emotions and beliefs about foreign language learning. Therefore, it is advisable for teachers to help students identify their motivation and keep a positive attitude towards this process; because what they internalize, is what matches their personal needs, interests and desires. It is equally important to foster English language students' motivation by learning about the factors or aspects that are conducive for successful, effective language learning.

Overall, language learners need to be motivated properly, as higher levels of motivation make them want to learn the target language for different purposes more effectively. If motivation is increased among university students, they will be able to meet their foreign language requirements towards graduation and to better perform tasks that require English knowledge in their future professional careers with ease and confidence. Thus, as reported in this study English language learning is seen as an important element by university students in order to achieve their short-term and long-term goals in today's globalized world.

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