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AUTHORS: Aylin YARDIMCI,Arif SARIÇOBAN

PAGES: 19-29

ORIGINAL PDF URL: https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/2470062

Motivation Status of EFL Instructors at Higher Education Institutions[1]

Aylin Yardımcı[2] (iD), Arif Sarıçoban[3] (iD)

Abstract

Motivation, which is important in teaching, has a positive or bad impact on the teacher's performance, which is reflected in student learning as a result of the fact that teacher qualifications are intimately linked to the quality of teaching. The aim of this study is to examine the motivational status of foreign language instructors working at higher education institutions in Turkey based on their reasons for choosing the profession of teaching, their contentment with it, their self-efficacy beliefs, and student characteristics. A qualitative case study research method was adopted for the research and the data was collected through interviews via Google forms used in a similar study in a different discipline. It was aimed to shed light on the motivation status of EFL instructors on foreign language teaching. The results show that foreign language instructors are found to be satisfied with their professions and have self-efficacy skills for foreign language teaching. Additionally, their motivation level showed positive correlation with their students' motivation level and skills.

Keywords: motivation, self-efficacy, foreign language teaching

Yükseköğretim Kurumlarındaki İngilizce Öğretim Elemanlarının Motivasyon Durumları

Özet

Motivasyon öğretimde önemlidir, öğretmenin performansını olumlu veya olumsuz etkiler. Motivasyon, öğretmen niteliklerinin öğretim kalitesiyle yakından bağlantılı olması gerçeğinin bir sonucu olarak öğrencinin öğrenmesine yansır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'de yükseköğretim kurumlarında görev yapan yabancı dil okutmanlarının öğretmenlik mesleğini seçme nedenleri, meslekten memnuniyetleri, öz-yeterlik inançları ve öğrenci özelliklerine göre motivasyon durumlarını incelemektir. Araştırmada, nitel araştırma desenlerinden durum çalışması yöntemi benimsenmiş ve veriler farklı bir disiplinde benzer bir çalışmada kullanılan Google formları aracılığıyla görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. İngilizce öğretim elemanlarının yabancı dil öğretimi konusundaki motivasyon durumlarına ışık tutmak amaçlanmıştır. Sonuçlar, yabancı dil okutmanlarının mesleklerinden memnun olduklarını ve yabancı dil öğretimine yönelik öz-yeterlik becerilerine sahip olduklarını göstermektedir. Ayrıca motivasyon seviyeleri, öğrencilerin motivasyon seviyeleri ve becerileri ile pozitif korelasyon göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: motivasyon, öz-yeterlik, yabancı dil öğretimi

Introduction

Higher education institutions are one of the most effective environments to teach and learn foreign languages. Motivation, which is important in teaching, has a positive or bad impact on the teacher's performance, which is reflected in student learning as a result of the fact that teacher qualifications are intimately linked to the quality of teaching. The relevance of motivation in promoting student learning has long been acknowledged by educational psychologists. Therefore, it is important to shed light on motivation status of foreign language instructors at higher education institutions.

In foreign language learning and teaching settings, motivation largely determines the level of effort of individuals for L2 development which is a key for ultimate level of success. According to Gardner (1985) motivation includes the following components: a significant goal or need, desire to achieve the goal, the perception that learning L2 is relevant to fulfilling the goal or meeting the need, belief in the likely success or failure of learning L2, value of potential outcomes/rewards. According to the Gardner's conceptualization of motivation, the most widely recognised types of motivation are integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. Integrative motivation is based on the desire to learn about or communicate with

people who use that language which means emotional or affective factors are dominant in any case. Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, is based on practical value in learning the L2. It is also based on pragmatic use such as increasing occupational or business opportunuties, enhancing prestige and power, accessing scientific and technical information or just passing a course in school. Although the concept of motivation in language learning and teaching have been deeply investigated, there is still need for research on the motivation status of language instructors to choose that profession. Kapur (2019) suggests that teachers have a vital role in bringing about improvements in the classroom and they are given the authority to carry out tasks and activities that will help students grow and develop effectively. They must use teaching-learning methods in such a way that students are able to not only attain academic goals, but also become effective citizens of the country. Teachers must be motivated to carry out their work tasks properly and achieve the required results. They must improve their abilities and competencies in order to improve the whole educational system. It is also critical that teachers improve their professional skills and competencies. Needs and motivation are inextricably linked. Employees are motivated when their needs are addressed, hence their needs have an impact on their motivation. Physiological or psychological inadequacies that stimulate conduct are examples of needs. They can be strong or weak, and they are influenced by environmental factors, so a human's needs will change over time and place (Utomo, 2018, p.334). At that point, it is important to focus on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Maslow's hierarchy of requirements is divided into five stages, starting with physiological demands at the bottom. The physiological requirements are self-evident, and they include those that are critical to human life such as food, water, breathing, etc. The needs get increasingly sophisticated as we progress up Maslow's hierarchy to the second level. The necessity for security and safety becomes paramount at this level. People desire control and order in their lives. As a result, the desire for protection and security plays a significant role in these behaviors. As Cherry (2022) states financial security, health and wellness, and protection from accidents and harm are all essential security and safety requirements. Obtaining employment, obtaining health insurance and health care, contributing to a savings account, and relocating to a safer neighborhood are all examples of behaviors prompted by security and safety concerns. Maslow's hierarchy of social needs includes things like love, acceptance, and belonging. Human conduct is driven by the need for emotional connections at this level. Friendships, family, social groups, and community groups are some of the things that meet this desire. It is critical for people to feel liked and accepted by others in order to avoid difficulties like loneliness, despair, and anxiety. Participation in groups such as religious groups, sports teams, book clubs, and other group activities, as well as personal interactions with friends, family, and lovers, play a significant influence. The need for recognition and respect is found at the fourth level of Maslow's hierarchy. Once the demands at the lowest three levels have been met, the esteem needs take over as the primary motivator of conduct. At this level, gaining others' respect and appreciation becomes increasingly crucial. People have a need to complete tasks and then have their efforts acknowledged. Emotional requirements include things like self-esteem and personal worth, in addition to feelings of accomplishment and prestige. People need to believe that they are valued by others and that they are contributing to society. The self-actualization needs are at the very top of Maslow's hierarchy. People who are self-actualizing are self-aware, concerned with personal improvement, less concerned with others' perceptions, and interested in realizing their full potential (Cherry, 2022). As stated by Guajardo (2011) self-actualization can be understood as personal achievement in the context of teaching, and it is an important component of

teacher motivation. Guajardo (2011) set a list of strategies in order to increase teacher motivation according to the data from Teacher Motivation Framework of Analysis as follows:

- Workload or challenges
- Remuneration and Incentives (largely extrinsic)
- Recognition and Prestige (largely intrinsic)
- Accountability (largely extrinsic)
- Career Development (largely intrinsic)
- Institutional Environment (largely extrinsic)
- Voice (largely intrinsic)
- Learning Materials and Facilities (largely extrinsic) (p.4-5).

Based on the conceptualizations of motivations reviewed above, several studies have been conducted on teacher motivation. According to the results of interviews, Taylor (2013) depicts that one of the most important motivators highlighted by student participants was the teachers' personal motivation, involvement, and interest in the subject and in their students. Many students stated that their motivation in English class was mostly determined by the teacher's attitude. Another study (Csaba, 2018) investigated how motivated corporate language teachers were at work, how they perceived their motivating impact, and how they inspired adult English learners. According to the data, all of the study's participants are highly driven language teachers. Their degree of motivation can be explained in part by the freedom, flexibility, and variety they have found working in a corporate setting, but more importantly, by their never-ending efforts to learn and improve in order to achieve mastery in teaching. Another study (Demiröz & Yeşilyurt, 2012) investigated the goals of in-service English instructors at several Turkish universities in order to better understand their motivational profiles. According to the data, it was found out that Turkish in-service ELT instructors have a high level of mastery goal orientation. More recently, Şener et. al., (2020) investigated how English instructors felt about online teaching, specifically in terms of technological, pedagogical, and institutional issues. Despite the large number of participants receiving emotional support from their colleagues, the data show that participants have experienced a shortage of technical equipment for virtual classes, an increase in workload, and a lack of financial support from the institution. In a similar context, Arslan (2021) conducted a case study to examine the motivations of instructors working in a non-profit university's school of foreign languages for online teaching, as well as the differences in their incentives for synchronous and asynchronous teaching. Instructors had both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for both synchronous and asynchronous teaching, according to the findings. The effects of the current pandemic were also considered motivating elements for the individuals. Extrinsic motivation was realized by the participants as a result of societal changes and technological advancements, and it might be internalized and turned into intrinsic motivation. Another study (Uştuk, 2018) investigated how essential Turkish EFL teachers think ELT motivational tactics are in adult EFL instruction. The findings revealed a number of conclusions about the relationship between the perceived relevance of EFL teaching motivational tactics and the variables studied. Gender has a small but significant impact on the perceived importance of the methods, whereas educational background and year of teaching experience have a larger impact. In addition to the cross-cultural aspects addressed in the previous research, the study found that intra-cultural factors influence EFL teachers' relevant perceptions on the topic. It can be concluded from the review above, teachers who enjoy their work are inspired. This inner motivation appears to be a significant driving force. Factors that demotivate teachers, on the other hand, may have a detrimental impact on this mood and

should be avoided as much as possible (İpek & Kanatlar, 2018). Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the motivational status of foreign language instructors working at higher education institutions in Turkey based on their reasons for choosing the profession of teaching, their contentment with it, their self-efficacy beliefs, and student characteristics. The research questions of the current study is as follows:

1.   What are the variables that influence foreign language instructors' decision to become instructors?

2.   What do foreign language instructors think about their satisfaction with their profession?

3.   What are the self-efficacy perceptions of foreign language instructors?

4.   What qualities of students influence instructors' motivation?

Method

The current research is a case study, examining the motivation status of EFL instructors at higher education institutions. The study design was adapted from a similar study in a different discipline (Tünkler, 2021). The participants of the study were 17 EFL instructors working at different universities in Turkey. The data was collected through 10 interview questions adopted from Tünkler (2021). The data collected through interviews were analysed through content analyis. In the analysis, the participants were coded as from I-1 to I-17.

Data Analysis and Results

The first research question of the study seeked for the variables that influence foreign language instructors' decision to become instructors. Therefore, the participants were asked questions in order to find the factors that motivated them to become language instructors at higher education institutions and to evaluate their satisfaction levels with their profession. The results clearly shows that the main factors that motivated the participants to become instructors were interest and love in teaching, inspiration from several sources and altruistic factors. Some quotations from the interviews that put evidence for those themes are as follows:

> *"Passion of teaching."* (I-16)
>
> *"My interest into learning a new language and teaching it."* (I-4)
>
> *"I like teaching, being in front of the class and I know I can teach English."*
>
> *"My father who was primary school teacher, and my primary school teacher influenced me and my teacher of English at high school encourage me to choose it as a profession. And In those days, the teaching profession had a prestige in society. Still it is a holy profession for me."* (I-11)
>
> *"I simple loved learning English and I was influenced by my English teacher in secondary school."* (I-15)
>
> *"Teaching allows me to help the Turkish people in a subject (English language) which can introduce them to more universal ideas and opportunities."* (I-13)
>
> *"One of the biggest factors in choosing my teaching profession is that I can add useful information to people's lives."* (I-10)

It was understood from the interviews that all of the participants mentioned three motivational factors as interest and love in teaching, inspiration from several sources and altruistic reasons.

The second research question investigated the satisfaction status of instructors with their profession. Nearly all of the participants except for I-17 stated that they feel satisfied with their profession and expressed their happiness for choosing it. I-17 stated also stated his/her happiness with his/her profession although it sometimes becomes challenging. The statements of the participants about their satisfaction level as follows:

> "The best decision I've ever made, as they say love the job you have and never work a single day!" I – 1
>
> "I am proud of my profession" I – 2
>
> "I am very pleased to have the chance to train English teachers and teach English as well." I – 7
>
> "I feel good. I enjoy the student-teacher relationship with young adults, as well as the ideas we can talk about which revolve around language and culture." I – 13

Only one of the participants stated that his/her decision of choosing his career was by chance but s/he has no regret about that decision as can be understood from the quotation.

> "It was by chance that I have become a language teacher as a result of my score in the university entrance exam. However, I liked both learning and teaching English. I never regret." I – 3

Additional to the information above, the participants were also asked about the meaning/value of teaching students something. All the answers to the question yielded that it was an important and precious issue for foreign language instructors. The instructors responses can be seen below:

> "The value of teaching something new to students is immeasurable. Sometimes they can teach you something too, which is much more meaningful. Sometimes we must change roles." I – 11
>
> "It is extremely important as I believe this affects our universal future. I believe it is extremely important to introduce young adults to larger and different ideas so as to prepare them for life among people rather than life among Turkish people." I – 13
>
> "It is very precious experience and inspiring. It gives a great feeling of fullfillment and satisfaction especially when you see you can make a difference in people's lifes." I – 7
>
> "It makes my life meaningful." I – 12

It can be understood from the responses that all of the instructors consider teaching as a meaningful value in their lives.

The third research question investigated the self-efficacy perceptions of foreign language instructors from several aspects as follows: professional self-efficacy perception, student engagement efficacy, instructional and assessment strategies efficacy. All of the participants apart from one reported to have enough professional self-efficacy. Only I – 13 considered

him/herself as a still developing individual in terms of self-efficacy in his/her profession as s/he has not enough experience is his/her career.

> *"As it is only my first year in teaching, I believe I am getting there slowly but surely. I am starting to be more efficient and self-reliable when taking initiative is necessary on the subjects of grading, problems students face, and paperwork as well. I am able to meet deadlines and I often finish early unless there is an external problem - for which I try to help as well."* I – 13

All of the other participants reported to have a good level of self-efficacy in their profession. Some statements of the participants can be seen below:

> *"Yes, I do. I believe that I have enough knowledge, skills and experience to carry out my job effectively."* I – 3

> *"Yes. I have enough knowledge and competency to do my job as a teacher trainer and researcher. I can overcome lack of knowledge or expertise through reading, searching or experiencing it."* I – 7

> *"I can properly answer all the questions asked by the students, so yes, I've professional self-efficacy."* I – 10

> *"Of course. I had a good training at university and I have believed in the necessity of continuous professional development since the first days of my profession. I tried to use every chance."* I -11

Another dimension investigated under the term of self-efficacy was efficacy of instructors for student engagement. Therefore, they were asked whether they found themselves sufficient in ensuring active participation of students in the lesson/activities. All of the participants reported to have self-efficacy in student engagement and mentioned the importance of student-teacher interaction in classroom. Some of the responses are presented below:

> *"Yes, I do. I like teaching interactively. Thus, I give some assignments to my students so that they will get ready for the next session. I encourage them to share their ideas, experience or solutions to the problems through pair, group or class works."* I – 4

> *"Yes. Interactive scheme I target and I appreciate student production rather than their text-based memory check performance"* I – 7

> *"Partially yes. Except for some instrinsically motivated learners most students care about exams and scores they receive. Using alternative assesment methods, I can ensure that students are more involved. Even if they do not like the idea of reading weekly and completing assignments, they learn in the process as they are more actively involved in through discussions, reflective journal or summary& response writing, peer-feedback, lesson plans, micro teaching performances etc".* I – 8

> *"Yes. I make sure to connect with them on a personal level; I use their names and I ask them their personal experiences to create a connection between not only student-teacher but also student-language. I pay attention to each individual student and make sure that they get the chance to participate in every section of every activity. I pay attention to their levels and give appropriate feedback so as to not demotivate them. By doing so, I also help students hear different accents and*

prepare them for the real life experience of existing in another language. However, there is significantly low attendance in class Y and this affects motivation greatly. I – 13

All of the participants reported to regard themselves competent when asked their self-efficacy in applying teaching strategies, methods and techniques. Some of the responses of the participants are shown below:

"As an instructor, I use different approaches and tools to facilitate learning. Furthermore, as a teacher trainer I need to exemplify some methods for pre-service teachers. I cannot say that I am expert in applying methods but I emphasize communicative methods and use an amalgamation of methods by considering contextual variables." I – 7

"Yes. I do. My way of teaching matches my students' way of learning. I have the knowledge and expereince in using them." I – 11

"I do find myself competent in applying these in class as I am able to give students not only what they are presented with in their books but also additional ways of getting used to existing in the language. I especially suggest that we look for external sources - or do so in class - through what is currently popular like songs, celebrities, games and so on. This way students do not feel like they are doing work but they are instead enjoying their time and become motivated. We practice each strategy, method and technique in class several times and I provide appropriate feedback for each student." I – 13

Although most of the participants reported to find themselves sufficient in evaluating in-class/out-of-class learning, I – 5, I – 8 and I – 13 reported to be weak in learner assessment which can be seen better below:

"Evaluation is a weak area of mine. Instead of numerical data I prefer qualitative data via rubrics and checklists." I – 5

"No. For evaluation we have pre-designed, set exams and assignments, which don't let us to evaluate personally." I – 8

"Not exactly. Evaluating everything that learners have learnt is impossible." I – 13

In contrast with the statements above, most of the participants regarded themself efficient in assessing their learners through several ways of assessment such as st down exams, observation, reflections and presentations.

"Yes. I make a point to go over what we have learned in previous classes through activities, For these, I let the students take the lead and do not correct their mistakes before we finish and let other students think on them as well. I then go over key points that students seem to be missing before moving onto a new subject. For out-of-class learning, I use what I've mentioned above which is a focus on popular entertainment. I give them suggestions on films, music, books, TV shows and make a point to discuss them in out next classes." I - 12

> *"Yes. Evaluation is an inseparable part of the language learning process. Whether students like it or not, I make sure their performance is evaluated regularly so that they are prepared for the important exams."* I – 17

> *"Yes, I do. I usualy assess my students through sit down exams according to regulations as well as alternative assessment tools such as observation, reflection sheets, oral presentations, etc."* I - 3

It is crucial to evaluate the effect of students in the motivation status of instructors as they can be considered as the most important element in teaching profession. Therefore, the last research question of this study investigated the qualities of students that influence instructors' motivation. Firstly, all the participants were asked about their perceptions about the motivation status of their students towards the language courses. The responses of the participants reveal that motivation level of students depend on several factors such as classroom atmosphere, teacher attitude, time, proficiency level, individual differences and their needs and reasons to learn. In order to get a better understanding, some statements are presented below:

> *"Their motivation differs from instructor to instructor since instructors' attitudes towards lesson and students affect their motivation."* I -11

> *"It varies from time to time."* I – 12

> *"I think that they are too relaxed and this leads to a loss of motivation in students. They have no need to be present for the classes as there are no consequences regarding their homework nor their attendance. This makes the classes feel like YouTube videos and significantly diminishes their value. Additionally, when students are put into groups of mixed levels of language use, low level students tent to become demoralized very quickly and tend to quit while higher level students waste time and do no progress. Therefore, they become bored in class and tent to quit as well. Students must be put into appropriately leveled classes to progress together. Moreover, at times grammar courses become too suffocating for students. The book progresses too fast - especially for low level students - for students to properly get used to and practice what they learn. I believe these are very serious problems that need to be addressed immediately because they significantly hinder students from learning the language."* I – 13

> *"It depends on their need and reason to learn."* I – 14

> *"It depends. Some learners are motivated some are not."* I - 15

In order to get a deeper understanding about the impact of students on motivation level of instructors, they were also asked about the student qualities that have an impact on their motivation. The participants demonstrated several qualities to have impact on their motivation such as active participation, interaction, desire to learn, task engagement, enthusiasm, motivation and critical thinking. Some of the statements shed light on those statements below:

> *"I want my students to be active during the class."* I – 2

> *"It is important that my students have interective role in the learning/teaching process. The more responsible and interactive they are in performing tasks and activities in this process, the more motivated I am."* I – 3
>
> *"Creativity, and motivation, critical thinking."* I – 6
>
> *"Interested, responsive students are more motivating for me. However, because of their cultural and educational background most learners are not interseted but opt to be silent."* I – 7
>
> *"Their participation and task engagement."* I – 15
>
> *"Enthusiastics towards learning."* I - 16

Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to examine the motivational status of foreign language instructors working at higher education institutions in Turkey based on their reasons for choosing the profession of teaching, their contentment with it, their self-efficacy beliefs, and student characteristics. The results of the study determined the main factors that motivated the participants to become instructors as follows: interest and love in teaching, inspiration from several sources and altruistic factors. It was also found that the foreign language instructors working at higher education institutions are found to be highly satisfied with their professions. Those results show conformity with several research conducted on this issue so far (Pennington, 1991; Kaski, 2009; Noori et. al., 2014, Bastick, 2000; Amengual Pizarro & García Laborda, 2017; Sardana et. al. 2021). All of the participants also reported to have self-efficacy skills as a teacher as found in several studies before (Pratt et. al., 2021; Çankaya, 2018; Wyatt & Dikilitaş, 2021). Additionally, it was determined that there is a highly positive correlation between the motivation of instructors and students' motivation level and some student qualities such as active participation in the classroom, interaction, desire to learn, task engagement, enthusiasm, motivation and critical thinking abilities as found in other studies (Sahakyan et. al., 2018; Praver, & Oga-Baldwin, 2008).

To conclude, as motivation is an important factor in both teaching and learning foreign languages, it is crucial to define the motivational level and determine the factors that increase the motivational level of language instructors at higher education institutions in order to increase the quality of language teaching. It is expected that EFL instructors with high level of motivation and self-efficacy skills will be able to help their students develop and improve their teaching.

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