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The socio-educational model of second language acquisition: The Turkish context

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Abstract

In the socio-educational model the complex of attitudes toward the learning situation and motivation reflects an integrative motive that promotes language learning. Whether integrative motive exists in EFL settings or whether it is more relevant to ESL contexts has been an issue of debate for years. The present study aims to expand the current knowledge on this issue and investigate the generalizability of the socio-educational model to the Turkish context. In the research conducted with Turkish EFL learners reliability and construct validity of the AMTB, as well as correlates of the major elements of the model with grades in English and their perceived language competence were analyzed.

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1. Introduction

The importance of motivation for successful language learning has been recognized by researchers in social psychology and education for several decades. There are many conceptualizations of motivation in the literature on second language learning and many of these include social psychological constructs as part of their model. In Gardner's socio-educational model of SLA, motivation is conceptualized as a complex of variables, specifically "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes towards learning the language" (Gardner, 1985, p. 10). It is proposed that the individual's motivation to learn a second language has a direct effect on L2 achievement and is itself purportedly influenced by a number of other social-psychological variables. Motivation in this model is supported by two affective components; integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation, and the complex of such attitudes and motivation reflects an integrative motive that promotes language learning. Gardner's research has demonstrated that Integrative Motive including the Openness to Cultural Identification (i.e., Integrativeness) seems more associated with attaining the ultimate level of achievement than other motivational types that lack this component (2006).

Given such importance to its role in language learning, a considerable amount of research effort has been expended on the question of whether integrative motivation exists among different language learner groups and whether it can be linked to ultimate success with the L2. Dörnyei (1990) points out that in foreign language learning

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situations “affective predispositions toward the target language community are unlikely to explain a great proportion of variance in language attainment” (p.49). Integrative motivation may be more relevant to ESL settings like Canada than it may to EFL contexts where learners have limited contact with L2 speakers or their culture and rarely reach beyond an intermediate level. Other scholars arrived at a similarly critical perspective on different bases. For example, Mc Clelland (2000) investigating language learning in Japan calls for a definition of integrativeness that focuses on integration with the global community rather than assimilation with native speakers. Collecting data from over 2000 Taiwan non-English majors at two educational institutions, Warden and Lin (2000) investigated the existence of integrative motivation in the EFL context. Results showed the existence of two motivational groups, i.e., instrumental and required, and two temporal orientations, yet, an integrative motivational group was absent. This finding, the researchers claim, is highly important as EFL teachers trained in the West seem to overlook the central motivations of their students. Lamb (2004), further, investigated the motivation of Indonesian children aged 11-12 years old, learning English in an urban junior high school. Data were collected by means of closed and open questionnaire items, along with class observations interviews with a group of learners. Results revealed very high levels of motivation to learn the language including both integrative and instrumental orientations, but these two traditionally distinct constructs were found to be almost indistinguishable. Based on the findings, Lamb, echoing McClelland, highlights a need to reappraise Gardner’s concept of integrativeness to fit the perception of English as a world language and states that

Meeting with westerners, using computers, understanding pop songs, studying and traveling abroad, pursuing a desirable career- all these aspirations are associated with each other and with English as an integral part of the globalization processes that are transforming their society and will profoundly affect their own lives (p.15)

Yashima (2002) recently has suggested the concept of “international posture” as an alternative to Gardner’s (1985) “integrativeness” with a view of English as a language for international communication rather than communication with a specific L2 groups. International posture captures a tendency of having concerns for international affairs and a readiness to interact with people other than those in one’s own community.

To test his hypothesis, Gardner obtained samples in four EFL contexts, e.g., Spain Croatia, Poland, Romania, using the Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), a self-report instrument with 12 scales which demonstrated validity and reliability (Gardner 1985; Gardner, Tremblay & Masogret, 1997). The tests were administered to samples of students at two different age levels and the results indicated that the internal consistency reliably coefficients, factor structures and correlation of the major constructs with achievement scores in English were very similar to the results obtained in the Canadian context.

The present study aims to expand the current knowledge on the universality of the socio-educational model by testing it in an EFL setting, Turkey, which has not been explored in terms of the relevant issue before and where the demand for learning English has shown a dramatic increase in the last decades.

2. Methodology

The procedure used in Gardner’s studies in the other European countries was followed in the present study*. The participants were one hundred and thirty two secondary school students (15-16 year old), all native speakers of Turkish. Demographic information indicated that they studied English for an average of 7.74 years (SD= 1.54) and 10% of them spent some time abroad.

Before the study began, the scales used for the study (discussed below) were translated into Turkish by the researchers and then back-translated into English by two experts in the field of translation. Finally, the translated version was compared to the original scale and differences were reconciled. After some minor changes, the scales were administered to the participating students in Turkish at the beginning of the 2008-2009 academic year.

2.1. Data Collection

Data for the present study came from the AMTB (Gardner, 1985) and Can-do scale (Clark, 1984) and students’ first term final English grades. The AMTB aimed to measure the various components of the socio-educational model of second language acquisition. It has 6 components, assessed through 12 scales, eight with 10 items, two with 8 items, and two with 4 items (Table 1).

The 12-item Can-do scale was adapted from Clark's (1984) larger scale, three items assessing each of the basic skills, i.e., reading, speaking, writing and aural comprehension.

Table 1. Constructs and Scales of the AMTB

Constructs	Scales	Constructs	Scales
Integrativeness	Integrative Orientation Attitudes toward the Target Group Interest in Foreign Languages	Language Anxiety	Language Class Anxiety Language Use Anxiety
Attitudes toward the Learning Situation	Teacher Evaluation Course Evaluation	Instrumentality	Instrumental Orientation
Motivation	Motivational Intensity Desire to Learn the Language Attitudes toward Learning the Language	Parental Encouragement	Parental Encouragement

3. Results

3.1. Internal consistency reliability

The reliability analysis has revealed quite high internal consistency reliabilities for the adolescent sample in the Turkish context as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Internal consistency reliabilities for the Turkish sample

	Adolescents (132)		Adolescents (132)
Attitudes to English People	.77	English Teacher Evaluation	.86
Interest in Foreign Languages	.71	English Course Evaluation	.90
Integrative Orientation	.71	English Class Anxiety	.86
Motivational Intensity	.85	English Use Anxiety	.89
Desire to Learn English	.87	Instrumental Orientation	.66
Attitudes toward Learning English	.91	Parental Encouragement	.88

The reliability coefficients obtained for the secondary school level in the current study are comparable to the European sample. The median value here is .86, while the values reported by Gardner vary from .79 to .88.

3.2. Factor structure of the AMTB

In order to determine whether the factor structure of the AMTB scales in Turkish was similar to the already examined factor structure of the scales for other countries, principal component analysis was conducted followed by Varimax rotation. Three factors common across 28 comparisons in each of four European countries were identified, namely Motivation + Integrativeness, Motivation + Attitudes toward the Learning Situation, and Language Anxiety (Gardner, 2006).

Prior to performing principal component analysis, the suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients of .3 and above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .87, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser, 1974) and the Barlett's Test of Sphericity (Barlett, 1954) was statistically significant, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. The findings of the Principal component analysis revealed three components with eigenvalues greater than 1. Thus, for the adolescent sample, three factors were rotated. Table 3 presents the rotated matrix.

Table 3 reveals that Factor I consists of three measures of integrativeness (i.e., integrative orientation, attitudes to English people, and interest in foreign languages), three measures of motivation (i.e., motivational intensity, desire to learn English, and attitudes toward learning English), one measure of attitudes toward the learning situation (i.e.,

English course evaluation), instrumentality (i.e., instrumental orientation) and parental encouragement. This factor is very similar to that defined as Integrativeness+Motivation by Gardner (2006).

Table 3. Varimax rotated factor matrix for the Turkish sample

	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III
Attitudes to English People	.75	.33	.12
Interest in Foreign Languages	.81	.35	-.01
Integrative Orientation	.86	.12	.05
Motivational Intensity	.63	.32	.45
Desire to Learn English	.79	.47	.20
Attitudes toward Learning English	.75	.47	.16
English Teacher Evaluation	.10	.07	.95
English Course Evaluation	.55	.60	.38
English Class Anxiety	-.09	-.91	-.08
English Use Anxiety	-.16	-.93	-.01
Instrumental Orientation	.86	.12	.05
Parental Encouragement	.54	-.08	.20

Factor II is comprised of the three measures of motivation (i.e., motivational intensity, desire to learn English, and attitudes toward learning the language), two measures of the integrativeness (i.e., attitudes towards English people and interest in foreign languages), one measure of attitudes toward the learning situation (English course evaluation), and finally two measures of language anxiety (i.e., English class anxiety and English use anxiety). The definition of this factor is not clear. The large loadings of the anxiety measures suggest that this dimension has a large anxiety component (actually, a non-anxiety component, because of the negative loadings), but the inclusion of 6 defining (though much lower) loadings suggests that it is more than a language anxiety dimension. Thus, it cannot be linked directly to any of the factors identified by Gardner (2006).

Factor III consists of two measures of attitudes toward the learning situation (i.e., English teacher evaluation and English course evaluation) and one measure of motivation (i.e., motivational intensity). This factor is similar to the Attitudes Toward the Learning Situation + Motivation factor reported by Gardner (2006), though the definition is less clear in the Turkish context.

3.3. Predictive validity of the construct scores

For the predictive validity of the construct scores, two correlations were carried out. First, correlations of the measures with the participating students' first term final grades in their English course were obtained. As can be seen from Table 4, correlations involving attitude toward the learning situation, integrativeness, motivation, and language anxiety are significant and in the expected direction.

Table 4. Correlations between aggregate measures of the AMTB and English grades

Measures	English grades	Measures	English grades
ALS	.35**	ANX	-.40**
INT	.18*	INST	-.02
MOT	.22*	PE	.00

Note. ALS= Attitudes toward the learning situation; INT= Integrativeness; MOT= Motivation; ANX= Language anxiety; INST= Instrumentality; PE= Parental encouragement. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Second, the correlations of the measures with the Cando scale were conducted and the results are presented in the table below. The correlations indicated that students' scores on each measure of the AMTB scale correlated significantly with the scores gained from the Cando scale.

Table 5. Correlations between aggregate measures of the AMTB and Cando scale

Measures	Cando Scale	Measures	Cando Scale
ALS	.36**	ANX	-.71**
INT	.59**	INST	-.36**
MOT	.56**	PE	.18*

Note. ALS= Attitudes toward the learning situation; INT= Integrativeness; MOT= Motivation; ANX= Language anxiety; INST= Instrumentality; PE= Parental encouragement. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

4. Discussion

The findings of the study can be summarized as follows: First, in terms of the reliability of the scales, the reliability coefficients obtained for the secondary school level in the current study appeared to be comparable to the European sample. The median value here was .86, while the values reported by Gardner varied from .79 to .88. Second, the principal component analysis followed by Varimax rotation was conducted to determine whether the factor structure of the AMTB scales in Turkish was similar to the already examined factor structure of the scales for other countries. While the Factors I (integrativeness + motivation) and III (attitudes toward the learning situation + motivation) were similar to the factors identified by Gardner (2006), Factor II cannot be linked directly to any of the factors identified by Gardner. Third, correlations of the measures with the participating students' first term final grades in their English course were obtained. While the correlations involving attitude toward the learning situation, integrativeness, motivation, and language anxiety were significant and in the expected direction, there was no significant correlation between the English grades and instrumentality and parental encouragement. Finally, the correlation conducted between the AMTB and Cando scale indicated significant correlation between the students' scores on each measure of the AMTB scale and the scores gained from the Cando scale.

Compared to the European samples, the correlation involving attitudes toward the learning situation appeared to be relatively higher, suggesting that the classroom environment may play a slightly more dominant role in Turkey. The correlations with language grades obtained from the Turkish sample are similar to the correlations from the European sample except the construct of attitudes toward the learning situation. For the European sample while the best correlates of final grades are language anxiety, motivation and integrativeness in that order, for the Turkish sample the best correlates were anxiety, attitudes toward the learning situation, motivation and integrativeness. The difference was only present for the means of correlations for attitudes toward the learning situation with the correlations values .35 and .16 for the Turkish and European samples, respectively. When the correlations of the Turkish sample were compared to the correlations of the Canadian sample, the results of the present study appeared to be consistent with those obtained in Canada. For the Canadian context, reported mean correlations with language grades were .37 for motivation, .24 for integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation, and .16 for instrumental orientation. The only difference was about instrumentality, which did not significantly correlate with the grades in the Turkish sample.

Results of the study showed that the model and the associated measurement instrument, the AMTB, are appropriate to the Turkish context and to the learning of English as a foreign language. Thus, it can be used profitably by teachers and educators who are interested in individual differences in second/foreign language acquisition.

* Originally, data were collected from students at two different age levels. However, due to the space limitation, only data from the adolescent sample are presented here.

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