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Prospective ELT students' foreign language reading attitudes and motivation

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Abstract

This article reports the results of a study investigating prospective ELT students' foreign language reading attitudes and motivation. The study also examined the relationship between the participants' academic achievement (GPA) and their attitudes and motivation in foreign language reading and the existence of any gender-related difference in the participants' reading attitudes and motivation. The study was carried out in January 2015 in English Language Teaching (ELT) Department at Hacettepe University. This study was conducted with a quantitative research design using a survey methodology to collect data about the participants' reading attitudes and motivation. A total of 104 undergraduate students (females: 76 and males: 28) enrolled in the department voluntarily participated in the study. Further quantitative data were also gathered from the participants' cumulative grade point average (GPA) scores and their gender. The results revealed that prospective ELT students have positive attitudes and motivation in foreign language reading. Also, there was a statistically significant positive correlation between academic achievement (GPA) and attitudes and motivation in foreign language reading. The results indicated that there was no significant difference among groups regarding reading attitudes and motivation according to their GPA.

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1. Introduction

Motivation has long been researched in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Gardner proposed a model called Socio-Educational Model of Language Learning in which the integrative motivation labelled as the

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main factor in language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). The integrative motivation was defined by Gardner as the language learner's desire to communicate and mingle with members of the target community. Many scholars contributed to motivation research either by verifying, negating, or modifying Gardner's model of second language (L2) learning motivation. Several models of language learning motivation have developed in the literature (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Deci and Ryan (1985) proposed a theory, the Self-Determination Theory, and distinguished the motivation between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation based on the differences of goals and reasons of an action. Eccles and Wigfield (2002), on the other hand, reviews the research on motivation, beliefs, values, and goals, and initiate a discussion of how to integrate theories of self-regulation and expectancy-value models of motivation. They attracted the attention to the dynamic, temporal aspects of motivation from a micro rather than macro perspective (Dörnyei, 2003; Dörnyei, 2005). Mori (2002) and Kondo-Brown (2006), for example, looked at the motivation research from another angle. They underlined that motivation can be domain specific and thus engagement in different language skills may involve a different motivational and attitudinal make up (Mori and Kondo-Brown as cited in Erten, Topkaya, & Karakaş, 2010). Some scholars took a different route from general motivation theories and studies and began to do some research on motivation as one of the main causes of reading. Accordingly, the last several years have seen research investigating the nature and role of motivation in the reading process. Different psychological constructs of L2 reading motivation were brought to the fore by Mori (2002), Kondo-Brown (2006) and Erten et al., (2010). On the assumption that students' attitudes and motivation might be important factors in the success of any reading program, this study attempted to investigate what constitutes foreign language reading attitudes and motivation.

2. Literature review

Attitudes and motivation are two concepts that are highly related to language learning achievement (Dörnyei, 2006). In order to better comprehend these two interrelated concepts, there is a need to examine their meanings carefully. The Latin root of the word "motivation" means "to move". In this basic sense, the study of motivation is the study of action (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Dörnyei (2006) defines the motivation as "the direction and magnitude of human behavior" in terms of people's choices for "particular actions, their persistence and the effort they spend on it" (p.7). Attitude, on the other hand, is described as a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 1). Students' attitudes towards the learning situation influence their level of motivation to learn another language. In other words, they serve as foundations for motivation (Masgoret, Bernaus, & Gardner, 2001). While the learners' negative attitudes and feelings pose an obstacle to progress, positive emotions and attitudes make language learning far more effective and enjoyable (Merisuo-Storm, 2007; Oxford, 1990).

Reading skill, on the other hand, plays a central role in formal education (Hasbun, 2006). Reading is the basic skill for all academic disciplines (White as cited in Lei, Rhinehart, Howard, and Cho, 2010). Therefore, the acquisition of L2 reading skills is a priority for many language learners around the world (Zhou, 2008). The research on the nature of motivation has started to focus on the domain specificity of motivational constructs because of the need to understand learners' attitudes and motivation from a micro perspective (Mori, 2002; Kondo-Brown, 2006; Erten et al., 2010).

Attitudes and motivation regarding L2/FL reading is relatively a new area. Much of this research has been started and inspired by Wigfield and Guthrie (1995, 1997), who worked together to ground motivation research in a domain specific framework. Guthrie and Wigfield (1999) made a contribution to the literature by drawing the attention to some motivational constructs which can be domain specific. In this sense, they defined a new motivation type and labelled it as 'reading motivation'. Reading motivation is described by them as "the individual's goals and beliefs regarding reading" (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1999, p. 199). They underlined that what influences reading engagement is different from what influences engagement in other skills. Wigfield and his associates' Reading Motivation Theory comprises a general dimension that is similar to some motivational factors such as beliefs, values and goals also influence reading engagement. However, their main emphasis is on the factors which are unique to the reading domain. Day and Bamford (1998), similarly, attempted to form a theoretical model of motivation to read in a second language. In their model, two main constructs, which are expectancy and value components, are included to underscore the multi-faceted nature of second language reading. Expectancy is related to the constructs regarding

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