

# Constructing and validating the foreign language attitudes and goals survey (FLAGS) <sup>☆</sup>

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## Abstract

The present study describes the process that was followed in the construction and validation of the foreign language attitudes and goals survey (FLAGS), a new questionnaire based on qualitative data from Tragant and Muñoz [Tragant, Muñoz, C., 2000. La motivación y su relación con la edad en un contexto escolar de aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera. In: Muñoz, C. (Ed.), *Segundas lenguas. Adquisición en el Aula*. Ariel, Barcelona, Barcelona, pp. 81–105]. FLAGS was developed taking into account as much as possible the conditions in which language learners in Spain come into contact with English at secondary school and outside school. The following sections describe the pretesting and piloting phases of the survey involving internal reliability checks as well as analyses of response and construct validity. Going through these phases has allowed us to elaborate a final version of the survey including 41 items clustered around three attitudinal factors ('General motivation' and 'Appeal for English'; 'Attitudes towards instruction' and 'Language Self-efficacy') and three goal orientations ('Professional/Academic', 'Functional' and 'Xenophilic'). The paper ends with a claim to reconsider the concept of integrative motivation, which is absent in our data as well as in other late studies where English is a foreign language as well.

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## 1. Introduction

One of the major contributions in the study of language learning motivation has been the work on the relationship between Gardner's concept of 'integrative motivation' and achievement (for a recent version of the

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model see Gardner, 2001). Partially because of this leading role of integrative motivation, the concept of ‘orientation’, which refers to reasons for studying a second language, has at the same time become a line of research of its own. Several studies have followed up Gardner’s original distinction in the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB; Gardner, 1985) between integrative and instrumental orientations, with the primary interest of looking into language learning orientations. As a result, an array of other types of orientations has been identified in factor analytical studies. For example, Clément and Kruidenier (1983) proposed two additional motives, ‘travel’ and ‘knowledge’, in a study involving a variety of contexts in England and Canada. Julkunen and Borzova’s factor analysis (1996), based on teenagers in Finland and Russia, yielded three other factors (‘challenge motive’, ‘anxiety factor’ and ‘teacher/method’) besides an instrumental and an integrative orientation.

The most important contribution of this focus on orientations lies in the fact that it has helped redefine the concept of integrativeness, which was originally said to involve ‘emotional identification with another cultural group’ (Gardner, 2001: 5). As early as 1983, Clément and Kruidenier identified a ‘friendship’ orientation and added that this factor did not refer to an eventual identification with members of the second language community. A decade later, two other factors (‘cultural’ and ‘identification’ plus ‘friendship’) were found to be related to an integrative orientation in a study of Hungarian secondary-school learners (Clément et al., 1994). But whereas both ‘cultural’ and ‘identification’ factors refer to aspects of the world of English and its speakers, the ‘friendship’ orientation concerns foreigners in general. Today, it seems clear that in contexts where the L2 is basically learned as a school subject, it is more realistic to think of integrativeness within a broader frame of reference. Dörnyei and Csizér have advocated this wider conception: ‘we suspect that the motivation dimension captured by the term is not so much related to any actual, or metaphorical, integration into an L2 community as to some more basic identification process within the individual’s self-concept’ (2002: 453). According to these authors, such a conception does not conflict with Gardner’s original notion but provides a more flexible framework to be applied to a variety of learning contexts. At the same time, it reflects learners’ reactions to a world in which English plays a predominant role.

In addition, a number of qualitative studies offer data that challenge the existence of an integrative orientation in the context of foreign language learning. These studies compile data using instruments such as open questions, focus group discussions, essays or semi-structured interviews, sometimes in combination with questionnaires, sometimes not. In two studies carried out in Asian countries, LoCastro (2001) and Lamb (2004) agree that their learners’ concerns were predominantly instrumental and derived from a concern for international communication, which grew independently of their national identities and caused no interference. Thus, the students’ comments in Lamb were in reference to foreigners and foreign countries in general rather than to a specific English-speaking community. In the same way, LoCastro’s students did not feel that their Japanese identities were threatened by English language proficiency. Lamb further noted that motives appeared to be mixed together in the children’s answers, which made it very difficult to distinguish the two traditionally distinct constructs of integrative and instrumental orientations. Data from Europe with young learners point in the same direction. Nikolov (1999) notes that attitudes towards speakers of English did not emerge in the data (including students as old as 14) and thus concludes that ‘no trace of integrative motivation was found in the answers to the open-ended question’ (of why they studied English) (1999: 47), even though the students are reported to have had direct experience with the L2. These results are similar to those obtained in Nikolov’s previous work (1996 cited in Nikolov, 1999) involving 13- and 14-year olds: out of 147 reasons obtained, there was only one comment about another culture, while most of the comments referred to intrinsic reasons (liking the language, finding it easy), pragmatic reasons (English being useful and necessary) as well as to the role of English for international communication. Nor was any trace of an integrative type of orientation present in Chambers’ study (2000) of 11-year-old British students of German: most answers can be traced back to intrinsic reasons (‘liking or not liking the language’, ‘not being good at languages’, ‘having always wanted to learn languages’) as well as to an interest in communication (‘ability to talk to other people’, ‘holidays’).

There are several possible explanations for the absence of an integrative type of orientation in these studies performed using a bottom-up research methodology. It has often been argued that an integrative orientation may only be characteristic of learners who have experienced prolonged contact with the target culture (Dörnyei, 1990; Oxford and Shearin, 1994). An additional explanation might come from the types of instruments that are used in eliciting orientations from students. By using Likert-scales, one may be inducing learners to

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